

# Encouraging One Another: Giving Grace with Your Words

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*“Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” (Heb. 3:13)*

Yesterday I received a kind note of encouragement from a friend. It was only about three sentences long but the Lord used it to stir some much-needed strength in my soul.

Receiving the note led me to open up my Bible and dig around to see what the Lord says to us about encouragement. As I read passage after passage, I was struck by how vital this expression of love is for God’s people. In one sense, encouragement is like oxygen in the life of a church. It keeps hearts beating, minds clear, and hands inspired to serve.

Because encouragement is so important to the church, God doesn’t merely recommend it; he explicitly commands it (*1 Thess. 4:18, 5:11; Heb. 3:13*).

## Why We Need Encouragement

God commanded that his people encourage each other because he knows we need it. In the Gospel of John, Jesus warned that *“in this world you will have trouble,”* which he then followed with a much needed encouragement: *“But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (*John 16:33*).

We live in a broken world where everything calls us toward selfishness and despair. Sin steals joy, our bodies break down, our plans falter, our dreams die, our resolves weaken, our perspective dims. We are promised suffering (*1 Pet. 4:12*), persecution (*John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12*), and trials of various kinds (*James 1:2-3*).

When encouragement is absent from the life of a church people will feel unloved, unimportant, useless, and forgotten. God knows his people are in need of grace-filled reminders, so he calls us to encourage each other every day until his Son returns (*Heb. 3:13*).

## What is Encouragement?

Biblical encouragement isn’t focused on complementing someone’s haircut or telling them how good their homemade salsa tastes. That kind of encouragement is important, but the encouragement the Scriptures refer to is explicitly Christian encouragement.

Encouragement is shared with the hopes that it will lift someone’s heart toward the Lord (*Col. 4:8*). It points out evidences of grace in another’s life to help them see that God is using them. It points a person to God’s promises that assures them that all they face is under his control.

The New Testament reveals that encouragement was a regular part of the early church’s life together (*Acts 13:15, 16:40, 18:27, 20:1-2, 27:36*). They shared Scripture-saturated words with each other to spur one another on in faith (*Acts 14:22*), hope (*Rom. 15:4*), unity (*Rom. 15:5; Col. 2:2*), joy (*Acts 15:31*), strength (*Acts 15:32*), fruitfulness (*Heb. 10:24-25*), faithfulness (*1 Thess. 2:12*), perseverance (*Heb. 10:25*), and the certainty of Christ’s return (*1 Thess. 4:18*).

Encouragement was and is an essential way of extending grace to each other.

## How do I Grow in Being an Encouragement to Others?

There isn’t only one “right way” to encourage each other, but here are a few ideas to help you get started.

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1. **Pray for God to make you an encourager.** Ask him to give you a heart that loves others and creativity to know how to show it. Ask him to help you die to self-centeredness and grow in a desire to build others up. Because God delights in helping his people obey his commands, we can trust that his Spirit will teach us how to bless others for his glory and their spiritual good.
2. **Study Barnabas and ask God to make you like him.** Barnabas was nicknamed the “son of encouragement” by the early church (*Acts 4:36*). He was the kind of guy you wanted to have around as you were serving the Lord. He wasn’t just a spiritual cheerleader, but he was a man of great conviction who wanted to see the church flourish and did all he could to make it happen. Ask God to give you and your church a heart like Barnabas.
3. **Make encouragement a daily discipline.** For some of us encouragement comes naturally, for others, not so much. I have a reminder in my calendar each day to send someone an encouraging note, email, text, or phone call. I need this reminder to pause, pray, and then intentionally try to spur someone on in Christ.
4. **Pray for God to show you who to encourage.** Ask God to bring someone to mind that you should reach out to. One way to do this is by praying through your church’s membership directory. Check out this article to learn more about that.
5. **Use Scripture if you’re able.** Nothing encourages us like promises from God’s Word. Make a list of Scriptures that God has used to bless you personally or an excerpt from something you read in your daily devotional. Mine the Psalms, Romans 8, and the Gospels. Find and share riches of God’s grace with others.
6. **Be specific in what you say.** The note I received from my friend included two very specific ways he had seen evidences of grace in my life. When I read them, I was humbled and reminded of the fact that God does actually work in and through me. I needed that.
7. **Regularly encourage your pastor.** If your pastor says something that God uses, tell him about it. Don’t expect him to write you back, but just send a few lines in a card or an email. Nothing encourages a pastor like hearing specific ways God used a sermon or counseling session to work in your life.
8. **Pray that God would create a culture of encouragement in your church.** Ask God to make your church a community that loves each other in specific, tangible ways like encouragement. Ask God to use you to help fan that flame. Don’t get discouraged if people don’t return your encouragement (*Matt. 6:3-4; Eph. 6:3-8*) or if you don’t see fruit from it (*Gal. 6:9-10*). Creating a church culture that glorifies God takes a long time, lots of prayer, and abundant grace. I encourage you to keep at it.
9. **Be wise.** If you want to encourage someone of the opposite sex, use discernment in how best to do it. If I’m going to encourage a single sister in the congregation, I will tell my wife and copy her on the email. If I were encouraging a married sister, I would again tell my wife and copy her and the husband of the person I’m encouraging. You can also use that as an opportunity to encourage both the husband and wife.
10. **Get started.** Who can you encourage right now? Who has blessed you recently that you can thank? What verse can you share with them? How might God use it?

May the Lord do more than we can imagine through just a little encouragement (*Ephesians 3:20-21*).