

The Power of Encouragement

by

Bryan Craig

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Hebrews 3:13



A few years back, I was invited to play golf with my brother-in-law at his country club, and he told me we were going to have a “Fore-Caddy” working with us during the round. I’d heard of a Caddy, but I was not familiar with a Fore-Caddy. This is a guy who would run ahead of us on the course and would tell us where to aim and would watch our tee shots in case we had an errant shot. He also helped us line up putts on some very difficult greens. I’m about a 25-30 Handicap, so I thought to myself, “I can use all the help I can get.” However, I wasn’t expecting one thing which impressed upon me a very valuable lesson. This guy was the most encouraging man I’ve ever met. Any time I would hit a bad shot, he would say something like, “Man, you sure hit the ball well...you were just off a bit.” Or if I would miss a putt, he would say, “That was my bad...I gave you a bum read.” I knew he was being paid to be encouraging and helpful, but I sure did appreciate it. It was the most enjoyable round of golf I think I’ve ever played. Normally, I grind it out and beat myself up the whole round, expecting way too much considering I only play once or twice a year. This time, I played about like I usually do, but I came away feeling energized and satisfied.

It is amazing to consider the power of encouragement. We know it is one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in scripture (Romans 12:8), and we all have known someone who had this gift. These are people we want to be around for we come away feeling so

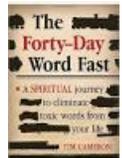
edified. We are all hungering for encouragement each day, and the need is so great that I believe God would have all of us play a part in meeting this need. It's not so hard, is it? Can we pick up the phone and call someone to tell them how special we think they are? Can we send someone an encouraging text? Can we tell someone they look nice today? Can we tell someone to hang in there and not to give up? Sure, we can, but unfortunately, too often we use our tongue in a negative way. In James 3, we are warned about keeping our tongues in check. James says this small piece of flesh is like a small spark which can cause an entire forest fire or a tiny rudder driving a large ship. He says:

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.” James 3:9-10

A friend of mine, Tim Cameron, recently wrote a book about this very issue of the tongue. He says we must rid “toxic words” from our vocabulary as believers. He groups these toxic words into six major categories:

- Judgment
- Negativity
- Criticism
- Gossip
- Sarcasm
- Complaining

He challenges believers to a “40 Day Word Fast,” disciplining ourselves and allowing the Holy Spirit to help rid these words from our mouths. I believe he is on to something. God would not have us tearing one another down, but rather, building one another up and encouraging one another. If you think about the root word in “encourage,” it is “courage”. When we speak encouragement to someone, we are making them stronger and less fearful as they face their battles of the day. What a great gift God has given us, this ability to bless others with our words.



Our Influencers in Bakersfield have a regular practice of speaking encouragement to one another. They heed the verse in Proverbs 25:11, which says, *“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”* And Proverbs 11:25b, *“He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”* So, they will take a huge basket of oranges, and one

by one, a man will take an orange in his hand, speak a blessing of encouragement to another man, and then toss the orange to him. They call it, "refreshing one another." I've been the recipient of a few of these oranges and I've also had the privilege of refreshing others, and I can say it is life-giving!

Not long ago, I printed out a picture of an orange and I taped it to my computer screen to remind me to always be thinking of encouraging someone. Fellow Influencers, let's be Agents of Encouragement, rather than Demons of Discouragement. Someone in your life is hungering for some Encouragement. Start with your spouse, then your kids and then, whomever the Holy Spirit might put on your heart. A few years ago, a man in my Journey group was depressed and suicidal. One of the other Journey brothers felt a prompting to call him and encourage him. IT SAVED HIS LIFE! Brothers, there is Power in Encouragement!

*****Interesting Footnote***

One day after writing this devotional, my wife and I found ourselves in need of some Encouragement. We prayed together, and I said, "Lord, we are pretty discouraged right now. Would you please send us some encouragement today?" My wife and I agreed we would let each other know if the encouragement came. Sure enough, within 2 hours of uttering that prayer, we had 3 different events happen which all gave us encouragement. It seems God is also in this Encouragement business!