

## Encouraging Each Other

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” (Proverbs 25:11, ESV)

Sometimes the smallest of things, a warm pat on the back, a kind gentle word received at just the right time, or an unexpected phone call, text, email or snail mail from a dear friend, can lift your spirits and give you the courage and strength to press on. Other times a loving word of admonishment is needed to bolster our resolve and tweak our angle to get us back on track.

It's pretty easy to get down in the dumps, wondering if you can make another day, and asking yourself “when will the Lord return?” I'm sure Jesus recognized the discouragement and despair felt by His disciples as He told them He was leaving. He responded to their feelings by telling them God the Father would send them another Comforter or Helper to come along beside them and be with them. (John 14:16-18 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.)

1 Thessalonians 5: 11-19 11Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 12We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 14And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16Rejoice always, 17pray without ceasing, 18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19Do not quench the Spirit.

As both Jesus and the Apostle Paul recognized the need for encouragement and strengthening, so we should be open to the Holy Spirit's discernment to see this need in our fellow followers. Neither Jesus nor Paul waited for an invitation to respond, but acted on the recognized need and provided the necessary antidote. Words softly spoken in a loving, non-critical and non-judgmental manner can lift a faltering friend from despondence and discouragement.

Being open to the Holy Spirit's discerning voice means we have to put aside our personal agendas, prejudices and proclivities. We may feel as though we don't 'have the time' to stop and buck someone else up, or maybe we think their spirituality is more mature than ours, they should just take heart themselves, you know, “be not weary in well-doing” type of self-help. The latter's true, of course, but had Jesus intended for us to go it on our own, He would not have sent us the Holy Spirit to live in us.

Let God speak to you today to illuminate opportunities to encourage, strengthen and build up a fellow believer. They're there, we may just have to take our eyes off ourselves for a while, be alert to the Still Small Voice, and be willing to take action.