



# Encouragement

We all need encouragement<sup>1</sup> at times. We also need to offer encouragement to others.

1. At what times do we need encouragement?<sup>2</sup> What are examples?

## Direction of Encouragement

While we might be encouraged in the wrong direction, we usually think of encouragement as being positive. When the Bible uses the words “encourage” and “encouragement,” it’s almost always *positive* encouragement. What does the Bible say about encouragement?<sup>3</sup>

## Need for Encouragement

Everyone needs encouragement at times. What does the Bible say about the needs of believers? Like others, believers get discouraged for various reasons. But the believer’s relationship with God is relevant (applicable) in every situation.<sup>4</sup> Believers need encouragement when their faith is new, challenged, weak or endangered (*Acts 11:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:12-13*).

Believers need encouragement when facing trials, including opposition *because* of their faith (*1 Thess. 3:2-4; Heb. 3:12-13*). Believers need encouragement when facing the conditions of this fallen world while waiting for God’s complete salvation (*1 Thess. 4:18; 5:10*). Believers need encouragement in their endeavors and ministries (*Acts 18:27*). More could be mentioned!

## Responsibility of Encouragement

Christians are to be encouragers. We are told, “encourage one another and build each other up” (*1 Thessalonians 5:11*) and “encourage one another daily” (*Hebrews 3:13*). Church leaders have a special responsibility in encouragement (*2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:15*).

2. As Christians, what is needed for us to encourage our brothers & sisters, and to receive encouragement? Read Hebrews 10:23-25. How can we practically apply this instruction?<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> ‘Encouragement’ – ‘the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope; persuasion to do or to continue something; the act of trying to stimulate the development of an activity, state, or belief’ (*Oxford Dictionaries*).

<sup>2</sup> In our last lesson we talked about ‘trouble.’ We need encouragement when we are facing difficulties, problems, trials, opposition, anxiety, pain, suffering, etc. In general, we need encouragement in hard or bad times. But we may also need encouragement in good times, in particular, to do something we are neglecting or failing to do.

<sup>3</sup> To answer this question, I searched the Bible for the words ‘encouragement’ and ‘encourage.’ Most of the verses listed in this lesson came from that search. Of course, there are other words and phrases that express encouragement.

<sup>4</sup> As believers, whatever we do (work, study, recreation, service, etc.), we should do it with God in mind. We should seek to honor Him in whatever we do (*Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33*). Our relationship with God should affect every aspect of life. Thus He should be involved in addressing every need for encouragement.

<sup>5</sup> ‘meeting together’ certainly applies to ‘church’ on Sunday mornings but it’s not limited to Sunday mornings.

## Aim of Encouragement

The aim of encouragement is to meet a need. The Bible emphasizes particular needs.

3. What is the aim (desired outcome) of encouragement in each of the following verses?

☞ 1 Thessalonians 3:2

☞ Acts 11:21-23

☞ Colossians 2:1-3<sup>6</sup>

We need encouragement in various aspects of life, but the basis of the believer's direction, confidence, strength, perseverance, peace and hope is found in Jesus Christ. So our faith and knowledge of the Lord are relevant (applicable) to every aspect of life.

## Way of Encouragement

Truly helpful encouragement is rightly grounded, motivated and directed.<sup>7</sup>

4. How can we offer encouragement that is rightly grounded, motivated and directed? (Consider 2 Timothy 4:1-2 and Romans 15:4-6)



5. Christian encouragement should be consistent with God's word (the Bible). Does this mean we always encourage others by quoting Bible verses? Explain.<sup>8</sup>

6. What are some practical ways we can encourage others?<sup>9</sup>

## Source of Encouragement

As Christians, we are to be encouragers, but we are *not* the supreme source of encouragement.

7. Based on the following verses, where does the greatest encouragement come from?

☞ 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

☞ Acts 9:31

## Reflection/Application

- Do you need encouragement? The greatest encouragement comes from God and is directed toward God through faith in Jesus Christ. I encourage you to trust in Him!
- Do you need encouragement? Share your need with a mature Christian friend.
- Brothers & sisters, review this lesson and ask God to help you *be* an encouragement.

<sup>6</sup> The 'mystery of God' is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (*Colossians 1:27*). Through the good news of Jesus Christ, all people who receive Christ are united with him; and become members of God's family and participants in God's promises and blessings. See 'Hidden Treasures' under 'The Sufficiency of Christ' on the ICF website.

<sup>7</sup> This is generally true though we are sometimes 'encouraged' to do something positive in response to wrongly grounded, motivated or directed factors. But such action is typically still motivated by positive influences.

<sup>8</sup> In general, sharing Bible verses is an effective way to encourage others, particularly fellow believers. However, encouragement can be consistent with God's word without verbatim quotations. A Christ-like attitude is part of being 'consistent with God's word.' Also, encouragement sometimes involves more listening and affirming than speaking. Non-believers may not respond positively to Bible quoting. We need to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see <http://anextraordinaryday.net/52-practical-and-thoughtful-ways-to-encourage-others/>.