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Sermon Transcript

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# How to Be an Encourager

I wanted to speak on a topic today that I think relates to all of us. Let me start by asking you, have you ever been discouraged? And maybe I should ask is there anybody here who has never been discouraged? I think all of us have. At times we all get down. We can have all kinds of problems. People can have marital problems and difficulties, financial hardships, health problems, illnesses, lack of mobility as you get older, personal weaknesses, sins, stress, difficulties. All of these things seem to plague us from time to time.

Well the question I really want to deal with today is how do we become encouraged? Let's forget about the discouragement. How do we become encouraged as a people? You know, the word encouragement means to inspire with hope. To inspire with hope, with courage. In other words to put courage into a person. To give you spirit. To be heartened. To spur on, stimulate. So brethren, what we are wanting to look at here today is how can we have that type of courage, spirit, and be able to be encouraged.

Well, what I am going to do is to cover three points with you very quickly on the topic of encouragement. And then we will get down to some practical applications of the principle. And I will show you what all of us should be doing.

Let's go to John 14:26 to begin with. And the first principle I think we find mentioned here, because we find, the Bible says, that the Holy Spirit is a comforter.

**John 14:26** *But the Helper, and if you notice the margin it says comforter or parakletos or kletos, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

So brethren, the Holy Spirit is a comforter. So the first point is simply this; we need to pray and ask God to encourage us. If you are down you need to ask God to encourage you because the source of encouragement does come from God. The word here in the Greek, klatos, means one who gives aid. One who comes along side and gives aid and . And the word means an encourager or a comforter. So you will find that God, through the Holy Spirit, does comfort us.

I think through the Holy Spirit God is able to bring to our mind examples of faith. If you are going through a difficulty, God can bring examples of faith to your mind. He can remind us of scriptures that give us faith; examples, experiences that we have had with Him. And God can put positive thoughts in our minds. He can encourage us. He can en us.

In fact, Romans 15:4 shows that this is one reason why we have the scriptures. **Romans 15:4** *For whatever things were written before, talking about the scriptures, the Old Testament specifically, were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

So you find as we study the word of God it gives us hope. It gives us encouragement. It comforts us. Brethren there are so many examples. If you were to go back and just take chapter eleven of Hebrews, the faith chapter, go back and take each one of those individuals who is mentioned as a man or woman of faith and study their life. And as you study you see how God intervened, how God helped them. He gives you courage. It gives you . So God is in the business of lifting people up when they are down. That is part of what God does.

Psalm 30 we read here the example of David. You find that David became discouraged just like you and I do. He got down occasionally. And here was one of those occasions.

**Psalm 30:1-5** *A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the house of David. I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my foes rejoice over me. [2] O Lord my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me. [3] O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. [4] Sing praise to the Lord, You saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. But notice verse 5*

*[5] For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life;*

Sometimes David, I think, was expressing here that God's anger, if God was anger with him, is only for a moment. It is not for a lifetime. God's favor, God's grace, God's concern as He shows here, is for life. And so David was just simply showing that our problems sometimes are only temporary. But God's favor, His love for us, His concern, His grace, is something that we can count on for our whole life.

You might remember in the scriptures there was a time when Elijah prayed to God and asked God to take his life. Mr. Herbert Armstrong, if you go back and read in the autobiography, you might remember when Ambassador College was first starting he had a great deal of difficulty, he also prayed and asked God to take his life. And yet, Mr. Armstrong, I remember him stating quite clearly on a number of occasions, stating that he had a very valuable lesson from that. He said he had to learn to have relaxed faith. You have to learn to relax. Let God do the worry. He had faith. He had confidence that God was going to work things out, but he also did a lot of the worry.

Well, we have to learn to have relaxed faith, and that is to let God work things out and let Him figure it out; not do all of the worry.

So brethren, we need to realize the principle stated very clearly in the Bible, ask and you shall receive. It is a principle. So we need to ask God to give us encouragement.

2 Cor. 1:3, notice what the scriptures very clearly state about God. **2 Cor. 1:3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

Now notice, God is a God of all comfort. The word here again is the same basic family that we found out earlier about the Holy Spirit being a comforter. And it simply means again, the Greek, a calling near, an encouragement, a comfort, consolation, solace. God is a God who gives solace, encouragement, comfort, who helps us, who comes along side to aid us. God does not forsake us. And we need to realize this is a major area again, that God works in, that God is concerned about. This is part of His duties and what He does for us. He is a father of mercy. He is the one that mercy originates with. And He comforts us.

Okay now, the second principle, let's go over to Romans 12 to find that. The second principle is if you are down, ask God to send somebody to encourage you. The first point is to ask God to encourage you. The second is ask God to send somebody along who might be an encourager. I think we all know, and you could probably think immediately, of somebody here in the local congregation who every time you talk to them you walk away inspired. You feel up. This is what I am talking about here.

**Romans 12:3-6** *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. [4] For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,*

Just as you have a human body, not every member of the body has the same function. My eyes have a different function than my ears. I see with one. I hear with the other. The hands have a different function than the feet do. So it is with the body. God has placed us in the Church. Each one of us have different functions; different responsibilities and duties. So we go on to see here, verse 5.

*[5] so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them;*

So God imparts gifts, spiritual gifts to all of us. And so he says use them. And he goes on to enumerate what some of these are.:6 , *if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;*

In other words, inspired preaching. **Romans 12:7-8** *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; And then verse eight says, [8] he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

The word exhort here, in the Greek is the same word that is used for God, that God is a God of all comfort. What it is talking about here is that there are those that God even gives a special gift to be able to encourage; to build others up.

Let me read this verse to you out of the New International Version of the Bible. The NIV translates it this way. " If it is encouraging, let him encourage." In other words if the gift that God has given you is encouragement, then go ahead and use that to encourage others. "If it is contributing to the needs of others, do it generously. If it is leadership than govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, do it cheerfully."

So what you find is that this is a gift that God sometimes gives. A special gift. But brethren I think all of us can be encouragers. And we need to have in the back of our mind that when we see others that we need to try to build them up. If you always keep in the back of your mind that one of the purposes for me to be here is for me to be a builder. When I say a builder, I mean someone who builds, encourages, ens, helps, and to take it from that perspective.

So what you find is that we need to ask God to send us encouragers if we are down.

The third point, and we will go back to 2 Cor. 1 again. We will pick the story up in verse 4. When you have been encouraged, lifted up, inspire, infused with , then ask God to use you to encourage others. We may be down. We may be discouraged. But once we have been encouraged, ask God to use you to encourage others.

**2 Cor. 1:4** *who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

So we go through trials, we go through tribulations, we have tests, we have all of these types of difficulties, God encourages us. God holds our hands. He never leaves us or forsakes us. And then once God does that, then we turn around and we are able to help others.

How many of you over the years, as an example, have lost a job because of the Sabbath for maybe taking off and going to the feast? This last year our youngest son, Mark, who just recently turned 23, and who I recently had the opportunity to baptize, that is one of the blessings of being in the ministry, to be able to baptize people, but to be able to baptize your own son, he had been counseled, he is living over in the Dallas area, and Frank McCrady III had counseled with him and he was ready to be baptized. So he came over to visit us in Big Sandy and I baptized him. But before the feast he lost his job over

the Holy Days. And they just said if you can't be here, you are gone. And so he had to learn the hard way that everybody doesn't always appreciate what we are doing.

Well many of you have gone through similar trials and tests. Now what if there is somebody who is new in the Church and maybe they are threatened with their job being lost? You are able to encourage them because you have been through the same thing. You have been through similar trial, similar tests, so you can go and encourage them. You can say I know what you are going through. I understand. I have been there. I have seen it too.

So, all of us have been through those type of things.

So, brethren, very quickly, the three points are: if you are discouraged ask God to encourage you. Number two, ask God to send an encourager, also. Three, when you are up, you encourage others.

Now let's go in 2 Cor 1 and let's come to fully understand this principle and what we ought to be doing with it. The Church in Corinth was a Church that was down. Why would Paul start his letter right off the bat here in 2 Corinthians talking about God being a God of comfort and dwelling on that quite a bit in this first chapter? Well, they were down. And so Paul starts his letter out because he realizes that they are down. God is not in the business of knocking people down. God is in the business of building people up, ening people and encouraging them.

**2 Cor. 1:5-7** *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. [6] Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation, in other words for your comfort or for your encouragement, verse [7] And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.*

Or the encouragement.

So, he shows that as we go through the trials and the test, we will also be able to turn around and help others.

**2 Cor. 1:8** *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: Now Paul begins to shift the focus a little bit to some of the problems and difficulties that he was having, that we were burdened beyond measure, above , so that we despaired even of life.*

Paul came to the point that he despaired of his life. What was Paul going through? Well probably what 1 Cor 15:32 says. Paul had to fight wild animals in the arena. Now, remember many Christians were killed in the arena. What if you were thrown in with a bunch of lions in the arena and you have to fight? Well, there came a point where Paul despaired, even of his own life as he said here. And some of the commentaries came out that historically 1 Cor 15:32 seems to fit this occasion that he is referring too because he

goes on to say, **2 Cor. 1:9-10** *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, they had been sentenced to death, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, [10] who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,*

Paul said I was put in place where I had to put my full confidence in God and trust Him.

**2 Cor. 1:11** *you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.*

Paul very clearly brought out here that he had despaired even of life. He was discouraged. God intervened. God delivered him. But he said that the Church there in Corinth had helped through their prayers. So brethren, one way that we can have an impact on encouraging other people, if you know that somebody is going through a test or trial, pray for them. Beseech God to intervene and to help them and to comfort them. And they had prayed for Paul, and so he was simply stating that he appreciated that.

In 2 Cor. 7:4,5 we find that Paul was human just like we are. That Paul at times got down. And notice what he says here. **2 Cor. 7:4-7** *Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. [5] For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, So he had persecutions, conflicts, difficulties. People were always trying to kill Paul. Sometimes he had to run for his life. He said, outside were conflicts inside were fears. So Paul is describing what was going on in here, in his mind and in his heart. There were fears. There were difficulties that he was faced with. [6] Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, notice, it is God who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, [7] and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.*

So Paul was going through trials and tests. And you know what God did? God sent Titus to be a comforter to him. And as he said, he was comforted. He was encouraged by Titus. Now not only that, but he was encouraged because Titus came and said you know what Paul, you wrote this letter to the Church there in Corinth, you corrected them up one side and down the other, but you know they are changing. And they are getting it together. And so Paul was encouraged, as he said here, by the report that Titus brought him about the changes that they were making. Titus had been refreshed, as we read here in verse 13, by the congregation.

**2 Cor. 7:13** *Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.*

So, Titus had been refreshed by them and when he came and reported to Paul how the Church was doing, that was a great encouragement.

So another practical principle is simply this, other people are encouraged when they see us going through trials and tests and see us changing and growing and over coming and enduring. Other people are encouraged by our example. So our example counts.

Let's go back to chapter 12 of the book of Romans again. Just for reference, chapter 12:8, the word here in verse 8 again, says he who exhorts in exhortation, and I mentioned to you that this is one of the gifts that God gives. The word here for exhort means to call to one side, or to summon, to encourage, to en by consolation. So part of the definition is to call along side, or come along side or to come near. Brethren, we have to be near one another if we are going to help one another. How can you help somebody if you are sort of stand offish, you are not near them, you are not close to other people, you don't know them? How can we help them? We can't be standoffish and fringers if we expect to be able to help other people. We should be like someone who is cheering others on in a race.

Have you ever gotten out and you have seen a race and somebody is, maybe it is a mile race. I love track meets, and you see somebody out running and maybe they are faltering and they are about to quit, and you on the sideline you, "keep at it, go go". You are trying to cheer them. Do you know what is more encouraging than that? If you are running the race with the individual, and both of you are running, maybe the mile or the two mile, and he is about to quit and you come along side and say, "don't give up, keep going. I think we can make it". And then you are about to quit and he comes along and says "hey, you encouraged me a while ago, don't you quit, let's go. We only have another lap to run".

I remember once at Ambassador College we used to have morning exercise. Get up at 6:00. Go out and you would run a mile and do calisthenics. I remember one day the instructor said we are going to run a mile. That was eight laps. I was all cued up to run eight laps. We ran eight laps and I stopped. And they kept running. And I could not get myself to kick it back in gear again and keep going. I never did that again. I learned a valuable lesson both physically and spiritually because I was geared for eight laps and that was it. Well they ran ten. Well you have to be in it for the long haul, whether it is eight laps, ten laps, twenty laps, whatever it might be. Brethren, you and I are all running a race. And it is a Christian race towards God's kingdom. The book of Hebrews talks about that. And it not a matter of standing on the sideline and exhorting one another. We are all in this race together. So you know what it is like to be in the race. I know what it is like to be in the race. And so we can encourage one another.

I remember once we had an elderly woman in Richmond, Virginia. This woman I thought was an outstanding example of what I am talking about here of exhorting, comforting, other people. When I knew her she was in her late 70's and 80's. She had been a schoolteacher. When she hit 70, they retired her. She was a sharp as a tack. A bundle of energy. And she had a job. You know what her job was after they retired her from being a schoolteacher? She went around serving meals to the elderly. Most of the people that she served meals too, she was older than they were. But she talked about all these poor old people and how much help they need. They get discouraged and somebody has got to help them. And she would go around, I think she did this all through her 80's, she

delivered food to people. She was a great deal of comfort. Maybe there wasn't a whole lot other things she could do, but she knew that this was something that she could do and it would help other people.

Brethren we need to ask God to give us the ability to encourage other people. Hebrews 3:12, I think explains here the necessity of doing this and why it is important.

**Hebrews 3:12-13** *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; [13] but exhort one another, comfort one another, encourage one another, daily, it says. Exhort, encourage one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

So we need to encourage one another on a regular basis. This isn't just something you do as a one time shot, one time deal. You encourage one another all the time. And as he says here, this may, as a result of doing this, may keep somebody from falling away. Somebody being hardened by sin. All of us get down, and if you know what somebody cares for you, loves you, concerned, and just there to help, it can be a tremendous aid.

**Hebrews 10:25** *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

So brethren, we are to be exhorting one another. And as we get closer to the time of the end, much more are we to exhort and to encourage. The Sabbath day is an excellent day to help one another in this way, to build up morale.

Here recently we had a new lady attend services in Big Sandy. Afterwards she gave me a phone call and she said you know what? That congregation was very friendly. They were very warm. She said I felt like a part of it. I was very happy to hear that. You would rather hear that then, boy they were a bunch of cold fish. She was encouraged because the local congregation were warm. She was well received. Do we go out of our way on the Sabbath to encourage anybody who might be a stranger? If there is somebody that you don't know, that you go out of your way to go up and meet that person, to make them feel warm, welcome here. You never know who might be discouraged. You never know who is down. Who has had a rough week. So therefore we need to always be trying to help others. We need to be a carrier of encouragement. Like the old saying about the Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi, he didn't have ulcers, he was just a carrier of them. Well you and I need to be a carrier of encouragement. And perhaps we should have it also, but we need to carry it and we need to pass it on to other people. We need to be able to increase our comfort and encouragement to people.

Proverbs 12:25 gives a principle. It ties in with what we are talking here. **Proverbs 12:25** *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, We all become overly anxious and maybe lacking faith at times, but notice, But a good word makes it glad.*



You do not have to be a professionally trained counselor with a degree, a PHD behind your name to be able to encourage and help other people. We all can encourage. It doesn't matter who we are. We need to be near people. I said part of the word for comfort means to come along side and be near. We need to be able to be near people. When they have a funeral, death, critical injury, in the hospital, sickness, when they are down, that is when people need you to be near them, to help them, to encourage them.

I am reminded of a story a minister told years ago about a man who died in his congregation. The man died and the widow called him and asked him to perform the funeral. But she said I don't want to see you. And he felt very awkward about that. He would have normally gone over to her house and tried to comfort her. He didn't realize, or didn't know what was going on. So he saw her at the funeral just after services and as she was making a b-line for her car. And he was wracking his brains trying to think what should I tell this lady. What can I say? He felt like he was letting down on his job of being there to help her and encourage her. The only thing that he could say as she walked by is, everything is okay. And she left.

A few weeks later he got a letter from her thanking him for his encouragement. He had greatly encouraged her. And he thought what did I say? She went on to explain that she was blaming herself for her husband's death. I don't remember all the circumstances. And she felt that she was not okay with God. She had used those very words. So when he said, everything is okay, that is exactly what she needed to hear. Two words. Everything's okay. He didn't know exactly what to say.

And there had been many times; let me let you in on a secret. You may think that the ministry, being professional counselors, always know what to say. There had been so many times that I have gone into somebody's home who has been sick, lying on their death bed, and I have gone in and I have prayed and I have asked God, please inspire me. Give me something to say to these people. I don't know what to say. How can I help them? How can I encourage the family. What happens so many times I go in, and I leave and I am inspired because I go in and try to help them and I find that I walk out and they have inspired me by their dedication, their faith, their loyalty, and it is amazing how that works. Brethren, that is something that all of us pray because we don't know what to always to say. It is like Romans 12:15, you remember the principle, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

So we come along side of people and as they are being blessed and have abundance, we rejoice. When they weep we weep with them.

I remember the time, I mentioned Richmond, Virginia, back in 1974, my wife Norma and I went to Richmond, Virginia. This is when the East coast had been devastated. Over three hundred people left the congregation there. We walked in that congregation Passover night. That is the first time we ever saw the people there. And they came, literally, my wife will tell you this, they came, all the women, came and flocked around my wife, and they were standing there touching her, they were holding her, they wanted

contact with security. Their security had been ripped out from under them. They just wanted contact with somebody who was loyal, faithful, and who was still in the Church.

Well, over the next two weeks my wife had to fly home. We found a house, she flew home, sold our home, packed and moved. And I was there. Once I was there I was there. The next two weeks I visited everybody in that congregation. We had in home Bible studies every night. Six days out of seven. And got together with everybody, answered their questions. Tried to put oil on the water. Tried to encourage everybody. And had to deal with critics, emotional problems and all of that. Three and a half years later we were transferred to headquarters for the sabbatical program. A lot of people said they were sorry to see us go. You know how that goes when the pastor transfers. Finally, one lady came up and put it all in perspective. She said you know that your wife made you here. I said, huh? She said your wife made you. And she went on to explain. She said you know, your wife is so compassionate, so loving, so tender, that she would cry with us, she would put her arm around us, she would hold our hands, she made you. Because I wasn't that way. They understood that. I have learned that from my wife. That is the reason why you don't marry a carbon copy of yourself. God makes us two, makes one, out of us. And we learn from one another. And she did. She was the one who was able to encourage and be an encourager in that way. In fact, she is my greatest encourager. Those are qualities I think many of us, when we look at our wives, can say that is the way our wives are.

Remember Barnabas was called the son of comfort? How would you like to be called the son of comfort? Somebody who is so well known for comforting and helping other people he is just called that.

**Hebrews 13:5** *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Now here is a promise from God. In the Greek, and I believe I read this in West Word Study of the Bible. Don't hold me to that, but I know one of the word studies that in the Greek we have a double negative and a triple negative, which is translated I will not hear. And if you translated it literally, it says I will not, I will not leave you. I will not, I will not, I will not forsake you.

Now, God only has to say one will not. God doesn't have to say it twice or three times. But in essence, in the Greek apparently, that is the way it is expressed.

The word I will not leave you means cease. God is saying I will not cease to sustain you, or to hold you or uphold you. And the word I will not forsake you means to abandon or desert or to leave you in straights, or to leave you helpless. God promises never to leave us, and never to leave us helpless.

So brethren, what you find is simply this, God will be with us. God will encourage us. God will en us.

In Isaiah 61:1-3 we find that you and I are being prepared to assist Jesus Christ in the world tomorrow. And we are going to assist Christ in being able to comfort mankind. There is going to come a time in the future when this world will have gone through a tribulation and God is going to use us to help, to encourage, those people. So we are being trained now to become encouragers and to help them.

So there are things that the Father and Jesus Christ will do to encourage us through the Holy Spirit. There are things that God expects us to do; to comfort each other. So brethren, let's make sure that each one of us becomes an encourager, and pass it on.