



ROOTED IN ENCOURAGEMENT

ENCOURAGEMENT in the BIBLE

As Christians we are rooted in encouragement. People quote Barnabas the son of encouragement, but the Bible is full of encouragement with 100's of verses from Genesis through to Revelation. In the gospels Jesus' life was one of love, sacrifice & encouragement. Examples are seen with the little children, the poor & needy & afflicted, the woman at the well, & many others. In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 Jesus encouraged the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers & the persecuted. In John 16:33 Jesus spoke to us all when he said, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart (BE ENCOURAGED)! I have overcome the world.*"

WHO CAN WE ENCOURAGE

We all need encouragement & our main source is from God & His Word & promises. In 1 Sam 30:6 "*David was greatly distressed...but (he) encouraged himself in the LORD his God*". My home group have been encouraging themselves by putting up Bible texts at various places in their homes.

Christians should encourage each other. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Paul tells the believers to "*encourage each other & build each other up*". The same message in Hebrews 3:13 &

10:25 "*encourage one another daily*", and when we are encouraged then we can encourage others.

And we have a mandate to help & encourage those who are hurting, feeling weak, who's faith is shaking, who lack hope, have no peace, are depressed, angry, lonely, lacking motivation or vision, who need comfort or are grieving, who are scared & overwhelmed by fear, or frustrated, disappointed, lonely, or feeling unloved.

People at all levels need encouragement, whether they are in politics, church, school, police, the NHS & other key workers in shops. The list is endless.

WHO CAN BE AN ENCOURAGER

World famous pastor & leadership expert John C Maxwell said, "*encouragement is oxygen for the soul... Everyone has the potential to become an encourager. You don't have to be rich. You don't have to be a genius. You don't have to have it all together. All you have to do is care about people & start.*" Every person has a role to play.

The church also has a significant role to play. Pete Greig on Instagram this week said, "*Churches which flourish on*

the other side of the pandemic, won't necessarily be the ones that created the best content during the crisis, but rather those that engendered a sense of belonging throughout the isolation of this season. Never in my lifetime have so many people simultaneously been so hungry for encouragement & love. Simple acts of kindness & thoughtfulness are likely to echo in the many hearts for many years to come. For those of us attempting to lead in this difficult season, let's remember the call to pastor is not to perform, to preach or to manage programmes... but to lay ourselves down daily for others... to listen... to bind up broken hearts... to go the second mile... & above all else to pray diligently." Agreeing with this & in the face of 105,000 COVID deaths in UK announced this week, John Piper (www.desiringgod.org) says, "*Wise Christians know that in the shock & crush of pain & loss, our minds are not usually in a state for instructing. Underneath our feet we need unshakeable truth, but face-to-face we need a friend's embrace (encouragement).*"

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE - PRACTICAL EXAMPLES WE CAN ALL DO

We thank God for modern technology & the many ways people in TCF are encouraging other, so **THANK YOU! Keep it up!** Here are a few eggs:

- *Keeping contact by Zoom, WhatsApp, Email, telephone calls, sending hand-written cards & letters
- *Prayer triplets, home groups, ladies craft, kids' family time.
- *Going for socially distanced walks, sitting in different cars speaking across to other, doing doorstep visits, knitting, shopping, cooking & baking
- *Contributing to personal stories in this newsletter
- *Hearing live & being able to ask direct questions to missionaries in 1st Wed Mission Zoom & in Feb. we start a new community prayer mtg on 3rd Thursdays
- *Jonny has been sending out weekly worship songs & delivering kids' activity sheets, and Georgina is sending out pre-Easter encouraging Bible promises
- *On a personal note, I have been visiting local shops & speaking directly to staff or leaving thank you cards for managers/owners for staying open to supply us through these dangerous times. Next time you are in shop, post office, bank, chemist, food takeaway, etc., take 20 seconds to personally thank them & you will be amazed at their positive response to receiving your encouragement.

REALISTIC ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A HEAD TEACHER TO PARENTS

During the last week some local news programmes have featured an amazing letter of encouragement sent out last weekend by the Headteacher of a Primary School in a different part of Lancashire. I have accessed it directly from their school website, where anyone can read it, and have reproduced it here below in full, removing only names.

Dear Parents / Carers,

January 2021

Today I write to you as a mother first. This week has been tough. Week 3 of the Lockdown and as a parent I have felt the strain this week. My own two children have been set an immense amount of work from their school and I literally haven't been able to keep up with it. Between juggling my own job, my children's school work and generally surviving a pandemic, I really felt the strain this week.

Times are tough at the moment...our mental health is taking a battering. The dark, cold and rainy/snowy weather hasn't helped so we need to support each other and get through this together.

You are probably wondering where I am going with this...

*Well, my main reason for writing is to say WELL DONE! You are surviving a pandemic! Whatever your personal circumstances, we think you are doing a great job! If your child has had lots of microwave meals, stayed up too late, played too much on the Xbox and not finished all their school work...THAT'S OK! We know our pupils are **safe, loved and cared for** and that is the most important thing at the moment. We know that we've got high expectations here and we've set a lot of work each week. All we ask is that you do your best. If your best is a quick 30 minutes of reading or times tables here and there...that's ok! If you want to do all the work we set...that's ok too. Please do not let school work put any extra pressure on you when you are trying to hold down jobs, earn a living and keep your children safe. Everyone's circumstances are very different and we appreciate that.*

Finally, we may be 'closed' to lots of pupils but we are still here emotionally for all of our families. If you need support...a chat...a virtual cuppa, a cry...we are here!

Take care, stay safe and remember we think you are all doing amazing!

Kind regards
Headteacher

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PLEASE PRAY FOR YOUR NHS, from a nurse in ITU, Queen Elizabeth Hosp., Birmingham

I cried because I am tired. I cried because some people don't do what they are supposed to. I cried because I want to do my job well but I am the only one who does my job. I cried because there is so much to do and I can't do it all. I cried because we don't have enough staff. I cried because I want to help the amazing nurses. I cried because they are all broken.

I cried because patient numbers on ITU have doubled. I cried because my house is a mess but I'm too tired to do anything when I get home. I cried because 2020 was so difficult for me and in some ways, particularly with work, it doesn't feel like it's over. I cried because I know what is coming.

