

We are all faced, at times, with the temptation to give up, especially when problems loom large and the going is difficult. At times like that we need someone to give us a little bit of encouragement.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and Hebrews 3:13, God commands us all to encourage one another, and it is an important duty, which He has warned us not to neglect.



What can happen when Christians lack encouragement?

In order to understand exactly what God requires of us we have to appreciate that the biblical concept of encouragement is very different to our usual understanding of the term. For most of us encouragement means giving someone a hearty slap on the back and saying, “Keep up the good work you are doing well.” but that is not what God means. Study the passages listed below to see what you can learn about biblical encouragement.

What Is Biblical Encouragement?

Biblical encouragement is:

- Hebrews 3:13 Urgent and vital.
- Philippians 2:1, 1 Samuel 23:16 Encouragement in the Lord.
- Hebrews 6:18, Romans 15:4-5 Based on the solid foundation of God’s Word.

Have you noticed that the context of each of these verses deals with the need for perseverance through times of suffering and perseverance in obedience, and that biblical encouragement is always closely linked with the idea of the Christian’s future hope?

The word most commonly used for encouragement in the New Testament is a Greek word that means to come alongside to strengthen. It can also mean comfort or exhort. To encourage someone then, is to come alongside him and help him to look beyond His present difficulties and fix his gaze on the hope promised and guaranteed by God to all His children.

You can see examples of encouragement in Isaiah 41:5 – 10, where God is encouraging His chosen people as an enemy approaches their land. Compare the way God encourages His people with the way the heathen people of the coastlands encourage one another. 1 Peter is another good example of encouragement. In it Peter was writing to Christians who were about to face persecution.

Resolve To Be An Encourager

There are some people who seem to be natural encouragers, whilst others, however hard they may try, far from being encouraging leave us feeling weary and disappointed.



Think of the people who have encouraged you most in your Christian faith. What are the things that set them apart from others?



Why is it that when some people try to encourage their words seem hollow and make little difference?



How could you become a better encourager?



Do you have a friend you can turn to for encouragement? If not, how could you go about establishing such a friendship?



Who are the friends who depend upon you for encouragement?



How do you discern when they need encouraging?

