

04 – THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

5.) Love Builds People Up

Eph. 4:29 (Weymouth) – “*Let no unwholesome words ever pass your lips – but let all your words be good for benefiting others according to the need of the moment, so that they may be a means of blessing to the hearers.*”

- ✓ There’s so much in there, we’re going to take it a phrase at a time.

a.) “*Let no unwholesome words ever pass your lips ...*”

- ✓ That word “unwholesome” has a couple shades of meaning. First, it can refer to “profanity and vulgarity”. (Dirty jokes and “swearing”.)
OR ... it can refer to “being harsh and unkind”. The New Living Translation actually brings out *both* of those meanings:

“*Don’t use foul or abusive language*” ...

b.) “*... but let ALL your words be good for benefiting others according to the need of the moment ...*”

- ✓ My words shouldn’t hurt you; they should minister to you in your “need of the moment”. (That implies that I’m paying attention to your need of the moment.)
- ✓ Some people are so self-absorbed that they’re oblivious to what others are going through. (Love doesn’t do that. If I’m walking in love, what you’re going through matters to me.)
- ✓ Love pays attention and looks for ways to build people up.

6.) Love Believes the Best

1 Cor. 13:7 (AmpC) – “*Love is ever ready to believe the best of every person ...*”

- ✓ Too often, we’re “ever ready” to believe the worst. We hear some gossip, and we just assume it’s true. Love never blindly believes a rumor. When you hear gossip, your default position should be, “I don’t believe it. Not until I talk to him/her.” (And then keep your lips “zipped”. Don’t spread the rumor! That’s what love would do.)

7.) Love Gives – (John 3:16)

1 John 3:16-17 – “*We know and, to some extent understand, the love of God for us because Christ expressed it in laying down his life for us. We must in turn express our love by laying down our lives for our brothers. So examine yourselves. If you see someone in genuine need—especially another believer—and you have the means to help them, and you do nothing at all, then how can you claim that you have God’s love in your heart?* (Phillips, INT)

- ✓ Love gives. Notice, he qualifies that. (I’m glad he does.) Sometimes people hear a sermon on love, and they get the idea that walking in love means, “I have to be a doormat”. And “I have to do everything everybody wants me to do”. That’s not what it means.
- ✓ In this verse, he didn’t say I have to give money to everybody who asks for it. He said I should be willing to help with “genuine” needs. (Not every need is genuine.)
- a.) In 2 Thess. 3:10, he talked about a person who CAN work but refuses to. (Physically, there’s nothing wrong with him. He could work. He’d just rather stay home and play video games.) I’m sure he’s got plenty of needs. But you’re not commanded to meet them.
- b.) Sometimes someone calls the church and asks us to pay their rent. But when you talk to them a while, you find out their problem isn’t a lack of money. It’s just really bad money management. (They blew their paycheck and now they want us to bail them out.) Often, they’ll say, “If you had any love in your heart, you’d help me”.
- ✓ Listen, sometimes the most loving thing I can do is sit down with you and coach you. (Sometimes money isn’t what people need.

It's wisdom.)

- ✓ He adds a second qualifier here. He said, "if you have the means". Sometimes you *don't* have the means! *Nobody's* rich enough to help with *every* need they see. But when you see a need, and you CAN help, ask yourself, "what would love do"? Love shows itself in action – (Ja. 2:15-16, 1 John 3:18).

8.) Love Does What's *Best* for You, Not Necessarily What You're *Asking* Me to Do

- ✓ You can see this best in a natural family. If you always say "yes" to your kids ... that's not love! That's "bad parenting". (1 Kings 1:6, 1 Sam. 3:13). Sometimes love *confronts*. Sometimes love *says "no"*. Love is more interested in what's *best* & what's *right*, than it is in what's *comfortable*. (You need to use wisdom in these things.)

The Ministry of Encouragement

Eph. 4:29 – "Never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth. Instead let your words become beautiful gifts that **minister encouragement** to others."

- ✓ I just want to pull out those two words: "Minister encouragement." (We're talking about the ministry of encouragement.)
- ✓ If you want a great example of an encourager in the Bible, the best person to look at Barnabas. (You and I know him as "Barnabas", but did you know that wasn't his real name?)

Acts 4:36 – "For instance, there was Joses, the one the apostles **nicknamed** Barnabas (which actually means "the encourager")."

- ✓ Isn't that interesting? People were so used to Joses giving out encouragement, that they forgot his real name!
- ✓ They just called him "The Encourager".

What is Encouragement? (A Word Study)

(i) To Impart Confidence or Deposit Strength

- ✓ Lots of people lack confidence. You, by your words, can make a deposit of confidence (or courage) into them. Can you think of anyone who could use that? (Can you think of anybody who *couldn't*?)

(ii) To Animate (Give Life To)

- ✓ It was a big deal when they came out with the first "animated" cartoons. No longer was it just an image on a page. *Now* the cartoon character came to life! (That's what "animate" means.)
- ✓ Encouragement *animates*. It puts the life back in! You know that from experience. (At least, I *hope* you do!) When someone comes and sincerely praises you for something, doesn't it just impart life? It puts a spring in your step and encourages you to keep going.

(iii) To Deposit Joy

Acts 15:31 – "So when they were sent off, they came down to Antioch, and after calling together the community, they delivered the letter. When the people read it, they were **filled with joy** by the message of **encouragement**." (GNT)

- ✓ Encouragement is a valid ministry! I hear so many Christians say that they don't know what their ministry is. If you don't know, this is a great place to start!

How Can I Become an Encourager?

a.) An Encourager is a "Seer"

- ✓ He sees what others can't see. (Learn to look for the good.)

- ✓ When Saul of Tarsus got saved, nobody believed it. (Everyone was afraid of him and still avoided him.) Who was it that was willing to come alongside Saul and give him a chance? You guessed it. Barnabas – the encourager. He saw what others couldn't see and gave Saul a chance.

b.) An Encourager is a “Believer”

- ✓ Young Mark accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. Halfway through, he decided it was too much for him, and he went home to “momma”. When it came time for Paul's *second* missionary journey, Mark wanted to try again. But Paul wouldn't give him a second chance.
- ✓ Paul took Silas and left. Guess who took Mark under his wing, and gave him another chance? You guessed it! Barnabas. (Without Barnabas reaching out and believing in him, Mark may have never reached his God-given potential!!)
- ✓ **Everybody needs someone to believe in them. You can be that person in someone's life!**

c.) An Encourager is a “Cheerleader”

- ✓ It's one thing for me to see the good in you. It's another for me to help you to see it! That takes me *verbalizing* what I see! (And maybe a gentle push toward action.)
- ✓ **We've got lots of “correct-ers” and critics in the Body of Christ. But not nearly enough cheerleaders!**

d.) An Encourager is a “Motivator”

- ✓ They say that when Napoleon was on the battlefield, it was equivalent to fighting with another 40,000 men. He was *that* good at motivating and bringing out the best in his men.