

Q2 - My Favorite Strength in You is...?

Biblical Marriage Enrichment

Good morning! Please open your Bible too. **1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)** “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Prayer

Introduction:

I wrote a note to a Christian friend who prays for me each day and especially on Sunday mornings, that note says:

“Christian marriage is a vital witness and testimony to the world of God’s love. Every marriage needs encouragement to be healthy and strong. That’s today’s message, and your prayers are vital in helping me encourage Christian couples. Thank you, for your kind support and prayerful encouragement.” That is my goal this morning. To offer to our couples and everyone a word of encouragement that helps build up relationships and marriages.

I want to do that in 3 ways, by taking a look at the word “Encourage, Encouraged and Encouragement”.

The question that I believe the Lord gave to me that supports this idea and need in a healthy relationship is this: “My favorite strength in you is...?” It’s almost more a statement than a question, but it does have a question nature to it. I want my spouse to know that she has strength or strengths that come from the Lord that help make our marriage very special and meaningful.

I need her to know that I see, and she needs to know that I see a gift from God in her and this gift has a powerful impact on our relationship - what gift or strength is that? It is her “love for the Lord.” She has an unquestioned passion for knowing and living for the Lord. This is her greatest strength. It is the compass needle that always keeps her pointed in the right direction. This does not mean she is perfect morally, but it does mean that it is a strength, often a quiet strength, keep her from moral collapse. She loves Jesus more than she loves me and that makes me love her even more! So, she needs to know that I know this, and that I will honor this strength in her life.

Encouragement focus on strength, not ignoring weakness, but seeks to elevate, to call out, to invite, to build on foundations of strength - it says, “I believe in you,” “I believe God is at work in you,” and I will “defend that strength and support that strength in you.”

Moving forward focused on “strength”.

The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote to the Thessalonian church this command from God in **1 Thessalonians 5:11** “**Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**”

The word “encourage” comes from the Greek word παρακαλέω [parakaleō] its verbal form vb. Is used (109x in the NT), it can be translated depending on the context of the passage as “call, summon; urge, beg, exhort, implore, entreat; comfort, encourage”

Outline:

1. **Encourage** - Verb (a call to action or engagement)
2. **Encouragingly**- Adverb (a call to be supportive or give confidence)
3. **Encouragement** - Noun (a call to describe or declare truth)

All three of these ideas are essential in the life of a husband and wife and in the life of the church, in our personal walks with Jesus.

1. **Encourage** - Verb (a call to action or engagement)- Often it is a calls to action, to obey a command from the Lord. (I.e. 1 Thess 5:11)

Paul uses this idea in several places in his letters:

Hebrews 3:13 (ESV) 13 But **exhort** one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV) 12 Now such persons we command and **encourage** in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

The husband ought to be the first to “encourage” his wife. He should be the first to step to the plate in order to “build her up”. Here is a key understanding, the passage indicates that one’s faith can be built up, strengthened, encourage and what he is encouraging is “depth”. Honey, I love this about you, . . . , I want to help you go even deeper in this matter.” Help me, help you! What words build you up in this area? What things can I do to point you to a deeper growth in these things?” If we don’t ask, we may never know! Take her out for dinner and gently ask her! Be the one who initiates, who leads, who encourages. She WILL love you, respect you, even more than before!

2. **Encouragingly**- Adverb (a call to be supportive or give confidence)

On the **giving** side of encouragment:

1 Timothy 5:1-2 (ESV) Do not rebuke an older man but **encourage** him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

On the **receiving** side of the matter:

Acts 27:34-36 (ESV) 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” 35 And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. 36 Then they all were **encouraged** and ate some food themselves.

Colossians 2:1-2 (ESV) 1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be **encouraged**, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ,

Jesus supports my faith in him in this way: list three ways: **(by his-Promises, Power and Presence)**

A. Promises - “I am with you always!” **Matt 28:20** [John 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; Acts 18:10]

B. Power - “...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” **1 John 3:8** [Heb. 2:14; [Gen. 3:15; Luke 10:18; John 16:11]]

C. Presence - “I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:23 [John 17:23 (ESV) Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5]

3. **Encouragement** - Noun (a call to describe or declare truth)

Philippians 2:1-2 (ESV) 1 So if there is any **encouragement** in Christ, any **comfort** from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

We need to look for moment where we can “identify” strengths in our spouse. To call them out, or declare them, “I love this in you!,” “I really appreciate this about you!,” “The way your handled this situation makes me so proud to be your husband (or wife).” Listen friends, if these kinds of words and phrases didn’t make any difference then you’d not be hearing or reading them in God’s word in Paul’s letters to the churches.

Philippians 1:3-7 (ESV) 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Romans 1:8-10 (ESV) 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you 10 always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God’s will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

Paul identified strengths in these church and he called them out, he declared his appreciation for them and by this encouraged the church to be even more strong.

Acts 16:13-15 (ESV) 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, **she urged us** (**παρακαλέω [parakaleō]**), saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.”

Application:

Look for strengths in your spouse and tell them how much you appreciate how God is using these things in them!

Be supportive of the strengths in your spouse and seek for ways to enable them to flourish.

Identify and talk about the strengths that you see in your spouse and how God shows up or shines through them to you, or even to others.

These things can have a huge impact on your relationships, and on your children as they see you encouraging one another's strengths.

Let's pray.