

The Hope of Salvation is in Jesus

Encouraging words make a difference. Have you ever known someone who believed in you, someone who made you believe in yourself, someone who built you up when you were down, someone who frequently spoke words of encouragement and praise? The kind of person who made you feel you could do it, whatever "*it*" was? That's the kind of person God wants us to be. That's who Jesus was as He encouraged others in His ministry. That's who Jesus is as He enters into our hearts and draws us to His Father. Paul often wrote that words of encouragement and insisted we should build up one another following God's example. Paul says be an encourager, "*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*" [Romans 15:4]

If you do a word search either through a concordance or on-line you'll find all the verses containing words of encouragement in the scriptures and, *what's more*, you'll see God's loving character shining through. You'll see how God seeks to encourage His people to be like Him and to encourage one another in His ways. In these last days of apostasy where everyone seems to be doing what's right in his or her own eyes, we need to seek ways in which we can encourage one another as God encourages us. The ongoing presence of God in our world offers a word of lasting encouragement, which I believe we're obligated to share with others. We should tell our stories of how God has been with us because our testimonies can edify and build others up. Our stories can be a witness of hopeful living. Our life stories can reflect Jesus into the hearts of those we meet and are surrounded by.

First, we're encouraged because God so loved the world that He gave us His own Son Jesus to die for our sins and to be raised again so that we would know the promise of eternal life. To have our sins forgiven is to be saved from the penalty which is death - separation from our Heavenly Father. Jesus gives us hope; Jesus brings us encouragement through the salvation He brings. [s] Because He lives, we can face tomorrow, because He lives our strength, our hope is in Him! Because Jesus lives, we do not only look back at what He has done, we have hope for His return as He has promised.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he believed that Jesus would return soon. Many early Christians expected the same, and so they naturally questioned and speculated about when the return of Christ would take place. At the same time, many believers were grieving the loss of their friends and family who died before Jesus' return. They were downcast and depressed. Aware of the situation, Paul offers the Thessalonians a word of encouragement by reminding them they're children of the light and they're prepared for his return. Paul calls them to live with faith, with love, with hope, and to encourage one another.

We're called to follow Paul's example by offering hope and encouragement to other people through acts of faith and love. Even Paul, who seemed so strong-willed and confident, needed to be uplifted. It was Barnabas, Paul's own "son of encouragement" [Acts 4:36], who lifted his spirit through tangible acts of faithful support.

It's our responsibility to foster the well-being of each other as fellow believers. What are some ways we can do this? In this age of sound bites, quick steps to improvement, and shopping lists, let me share with you 7 ways in which we can encourage one another.

1. **Let Encouragement go straight to the heart.** Bypass the instinct to reach others through their mind. The word "encouragement" comes from a combination of "*en*" which means "*to put into*" and the Latin "*cor*" which means heart. Knowing what a big difference encouragement makes in

your own life, what can you do to help others “to take heart” when the going gets tough and their ways feel long?

2. **Learn individuals’ “love language”** - the special way in which they feel most valued. In his book, *The Five Languages of Love*, Gary Chapman explains that not everyone’s emotional needs are met in the same way, and that it’s important to learn to speak others’ love language. The five love languages are:
 - a. Words of affirmation,
 - b. Spending quality time,
 - c. Receiving gifts,
 - d. Acts of service, and
 - e. Physical touch.
3. **When encouraging thoughts come to mind, share!** It may not have the same effect if you wait. Don’t let shyness hold you back. Instead, as the Hebrews writer encourages us, form a new habit: *“Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today...”* [Hebrews 3:13].
4. **When someone’s discouraged, offer specific, practical help.** If you ask, “How can I help?” the person might be at a loss to answer or may not believe you really mean it. It’s better to ask, “Would it help if I... (*Specific action*) or say, “I would like to... (*Specific action*)?”
5. **Make celebration a regular part of your relationships.** Celebrate others’ victories, large and small-with a note, with coffee together, with a special meal, a congratulatory phone call or just a high-five! Watch athletes on the field or court and see how they encourage one another over each small victory throughout the game.
6. **Encourage other believers with a reminder of Christ’s coming.** It redirects our thinking to an eternal perspective and ultimate deliverance from sin and death. *“We who are still alive and are left will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words”*. We need to be reminded often that our hope is in Jesus and that His promises are trustworthy and true.
7. **Use encouragement for outreach.** If anyone should be known for being an encourager, it should be the Christian. Write letters of appreciation to people at work, your apartment manager, your neighbour, your child’s teacher or your doctor. Often when we interact with these people, we’re asking for their services. Take time just to say thank you!

Are we expecting the same old things in our lives and in the lives of those we love this year? [s]Or are we expecting God to do something new? The challenges posed to us through service, to one another, and through outreach into our community offer us the opportunity either to do the same old thing or to look for God with great expectation. I believe Paul and those he turned to for support lived their lives in this hopeful way. I believe that all that Jesus did and has continued to do for me – and for you – is an example of encouragement and a call for us to not only have our hope of salvation in Jesus, but to discover new, refreshing ways to serve Him.

Our faith can be something old or it can be something new. May Jesus teach us to live in a hopeful way in which we eagerly anticipate His return while reaching out, looking up and building others up through acts of encouragement.

For more information or to discuss the hope of salvation which is truly in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, call 1-519-317-8659 or contact us at office.mbbc@explornet.com.

