

13. A cup of cool words of encouragement

March 8, 2015

There is nothing better than a cup of cool and refreshing water after a sweaty work day outside during the summer time. I hate to admit this, but it is even far better than Monster Energy drink.

A side note, at no extra charge for you guys, DO NOT drink a 5 Hour Energy Drink, followed by a can of Monster Energy drink. A dummy did that once and he thought that his heart was going to jump out of his body. Make a wild guess who that dummy was.

When a person, or even a strong believer in the Lord, is distressed with the pressure of life, it is not unusual for him to be discouraged. The reason for that situation might be a self-inflicted one, or other people intended to harm him.

Regardless of the reason, that person's heart could be at the bottom of dark valley of life where he couldn't even make his direction, left or right, up or down. While he is wandering around and is getting more and more desperate to find his way out, another person from up somewhere shows up and says, "Hey buddy, you've been distressed for a long time down there. Don't worry, I will lead you to the way out from there. It won't take long. Just follow me." Wouldn't that be such an encouragement for the man who was lost and desperate?

Listen, even a little bit of affirmation or encouragement goes a long way in motivational mileage, more than a swift kick in the pants though some of us may need it from time to time.

I like what the German writer of "Faust," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after disapproval is as the sun after a heavy rain."

From chapter 5 verse 12 to chapter 6 verse 8, the author of the Book of Hebrews was pounding the Jewish Christian believers for their sluggish attitude and potential exodus back to Judaism due to their hard life for being the followers of Christ. But verses 9-12 come through the dark clouds with shafts of encouragement to dry them and push away the chills of discouragement and distress.

A. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Hebrews 6:9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

Yes, it is true that blasting is often necessary before rebuilding can start. Now that blasting is done and all the rubble were pushed aside, they needed some constructive assurance of their Christian life.

Let's admit that there were times when we even doubted our own salvation while we were deeply discouraged. While we were down and out, in our weakest moments, we were wondering why the Lord allowed us to go through this difficulty. Of course, our enemy was right there to put doubt in our hearts about Him and our salvation. That is the reason the author of the Book of Hebrews was assuring the Jewish Christians that he and others were confident of these people's salvation and their work for the Lord.

It is obvious that the author of this Book knew these Jewish Christians well and they knew him well, too. It is very special to hear reassuring words from someone you respect. So many times the dignity of self-respect hangs from the fragile thread of other people's confidence in us and assurance that we are trustworthy.

OK, now let's get down to some practical sides. You knew that this was coming, right? When the Lord created everything at the beginning, it was good. But right after He created a man, Adam, the Lord said in Genesis 2, *"It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him."* It was a nice way for God to say, "It is not good." Guys, let's accept the fact that we would do a lot of dumb things without our wives' help, right?

Wives, you are married to your husband, not your child. Just because your husband does some seriously dumb things, that doesn't give you the right to treat him like one of your children. Your husband can do so much better if you give him your affirmation and encouragement of reassurance. Suggest your great and bright idea to your husband and let him think that it was his idea and watch how he finishes it so well.

Husbands, your wife is THE gift from the Lord of your life. She needs your encouraging words, kind words, and assuring words of your love. But not just in words, let your actions speak your love for her. She comes before anything, including your favorite sport teams and your hobby, with the exception of your God Jesus.

But the encouragement and affirmation doesn't stop at the relationship between husband and wife only. It can go in every direction. How about treating your children with assuring affirmation?

I read an article by two psychologists who spent several days at the back of a second-grade classroom. Some children stood very frequently for no reason and the teacher said "Sit down!" to them each time. The psychologists asked the teacher to increase her command of "Sit down," in next few days. The more commands, the more students standing up. Then, the psychologists asked the teacher to replace her command of "Sit down" with a quiet compliment to other children who were staying in their seats doing their work. The result? Far less students stood up.

Listen, whomever we come across, let's speak kind and encouraging words. Of course, it is so much easier to criticize others, but let's try to look for the good side of those who are around us and work with, especially those who are in the Lord Jesus. I am not saying that we have to lie. But we don't have to overemphasize their shortcomings, or criticize them with glee. Whether we believe it or not, the Holy Spirit didn't leave us in charge of convicting and correcting others. That's His job.

Matthew 7:3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

Some Christians who think of themselves too highly believe that they should pull out Bible verses like the sword and start to slash other believers who are down and out and tell them what to do. If you are one of those who would like to criticize others, have you ever considered using Bible verses as a warming blanket to wrap around them and comfort them? The Bible clearly tells us to do this:

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

B. GOD TAKES NOTES

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Living near Green Valley, gives us an excuse to forget a lot of things, right? People may forget others' kind words and works, but our infinitely wise Lord doesn't. Nothing escapes His all seeing eyes and He remembers them all. The only thing He doesn't remember is our confessed sins because they are washed away by the precious blood of Jesus on the cross.

The author of this Book put his total confidence in the justice of our Lord, because He would not overlook a single good work and kind words done on His behalf, nor could He miss our motives that are behind every work and word.

The author was not ashamed to show his appreciation for the work of the Jewish Christians and it is rightly so. I know a pastor who told me that he doesn't tell his church workers, "Good job," because he believes that his comments might take away their rewards in heaven. I wholeheartedly disagree with his interpretation. If he was right, this v10 should not be in the Bible.

Speaking of acknowledgement, I'd like to publicly acknowledge all the work of those who serve in our church. Trust me on this, each Sunday morning service was not done by the worship team and me only. The whole set up doesn't come into existence magically 30 minutes before the service and disappear 30 minutes after the service. Somebody has to haul in every box and every chair for you to sit down. Please thank them before you leave.

Proverbs 3:27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so.

C. DON'T SLOW DOWN, PRESS ON

Hebrews 6:11-12 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The author of this Book was pressing the Jewish Christian to press on. Here we find how to press on to spiritual maturity to reach our full potential.

I find two things:

1) Fight against spiritual laziness so that we don't become sluggish.

It is extremely easy to fall into our own trap of spiritual laziness. Our daily devotion and prayer can become nothing more than a mundane routine which we just do it and get it over with. We need to remember that it is a specially separated time when we meet our Lord privately so that we can hear from Him and speak to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

When we stand before the Lord, who is going to judge what we have done for Him while we are on this earth, our lame excuses won't work. We cannot finger someone

or something to wiggle out our responsibility. Remember, the Lord didn't accept Adam's finger pointing excuse to Eve, nor will He from us.

2) Imitate those who inherit God's promises through their faith and patience.

Did you notice the word 'inherit'? From whom? From the Lord. We don't earn God's promises, we receive from Him by trusting Him and waiting upon His time.

If you have a tendency to struggle with showing affirmation and appreciation to others, here are three suggestions for you:

1) Stop limiting your comments to the weakness of others.

Yes, as I said, there are times we have to blast before we can rebuild. But our goal should be to build up, not to tear down.

2) Before you criticize a person, please take a moment to think about the reason for that person to do or say the things that made you criticize.

And if you can, please think what and how you would act or say, if you were in the same situation.

3) Start focusing on the strengths of others.

This is a difficult part, especially if you don't care for the other person because he or she is doing wrong things.

Grant that some people should not be restored to the previous relationship due to their sins against the Lord and you. Remember, forgiveness is a mandatory as a believer of Christ, but restoration need to be dictated by each situation.

Today, try being a little more generous in giving praise to those around you. Try to be a little more tender, because you may not know how much that person may need that gentle word. Try showing appreciation unto those who serve.

D. APPLICATION

1) A Christian should be the one with outstretched arms more than a pointed finger.

Hope of others can be ignited by a spark of our encouragement.

2) Don't save your kind words for the other people's funerals. Say it today and encourage them with your appreciation and affirmation.

3) Treat others as you want to be treated.

Luke 6:31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.