

## THE PRACTICE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* ~Heb. 10:24-25, NIV

Encouragement is the act of inspiring others with renewed courage, spirit or hope. When we encourage others we spur them on, we stimulate and affirm them. If we are honest with ourselves we all need encouragement; life is hard. But often times we are too proud to admit it.

It is helpful to remember the distinction between appreciation and affirmation. We appreciate what a person does, but we affirm who a person is. Appreciation comes and goes because it is usually related to something someone accomplishes. Affirmation goes deeper. It is directed to the person himself or herself. While encouragement would encompass both, the rarer of the two is affirmation.

True encouragement pumps hope into the receiver and also into the giver. “I’m eager to encourage you in your faith, but I want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other.” ~Ro. 1:12, NLT

We need each other. Think how Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold his arms up, while Joshua fought the Amalekites. ~ Ex. 17:10-12

Paul needed Barnabas (son of encouragement) to accompany him on his many journeys. Scripture says two are better than one. We’re instructed to love, pray for, care about, accept, forgive, serve, encourage and build one another up. We are not called to take each other’s burdens away; we are called to share that burden, to walk alongside. We are called to encourage one another to keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

- Break your LD groups into triads...ask each person in the triad to answer one question:

When has someone encouraged you?

When have you encouraged someone else?

When did you need encouragement and no one was there to encourage you?

In what area of your life do you need encouragement now?

- Pray for one another