



A LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT GOES A LONG WAY

PERSONAL JOURNEY

PREPARATION

- Provide a blank greetings card and envelope for each member plus writing pens
- Ensure each member has access to a Bible, eg book, online, app ...

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Have you heard the phrase ‘A little encouragement goes a long way’? This phrase reminds us that coming alongside others, to support them, to increase confidence and to spur them on, can make all the difference between giving up and achieving something. We can all think of times in our lives when the encouragement of another has made a big difference.

In today’s session we will consider this spiritual gift, also known as exhortation, find out what the Bible tells us about it and consider how our encouragement of others can make a difference to the world.

ACTIVITIES

CHALLENGE

Challenge members to be encouragers in the coming week. Their goal is to notice others doing something good and to tell them. It doesn’t have to be something big or obvious - it might be something other people won’t even notice - but their encouragement could brighten that person’s day.

The next time the group meets, ask how the challenge went and if members had any insights they wish to share.

SHARE

Ask members to share a time when someone encouraged them to try something new, to persevere with something. What difference did their encouragement make?

Connect



PSALM SHARE

Make sure each member has access to a Bible and the book of Psalms. Ask them to find the psalm that's the same number as their door number / age/ day of birth ... Read the psalm and share an encouragement they receive from it.


CREATE

Write each member's name in a separate blank greetings card. Share out the cards and ask members to write something encouraging in each one, bespoke for that individual. It could be something they admire about them, something they've noticed they are skilled at or a positive aspect of their personality. Don't let the recipients see their own card!

Put the cards into envelopes and hand out at the end of the session so each member can take them home, to read and be encouraged by.

BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

Romans 12:4-8

 'For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **if it is to encourage, then give encouragement**; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.'

Can you guess how many times the word 'encourage' is used in the Bible? The answer is 54 times (depending on the translation), and 'encouragement' is mentioned on 32 occasions. The spiritual gift of encouragement is included in the list found in Romans 12:8. The Greek verb used is '*parakalein*' which means to come alongside, comfort, exhort or encourage; and you may be aware that the Greek noun used for the Holy Spirit comes from the same root: 'Paraclete' - the one who comes alongside us, comforts us, inspires and equips us and spurs us on.

So, encouragement is not a soft, fluffy concept. Instead, for followers of Jesus it is a gift that can change lives and change our world. It's more than a compliment: 'Your hair looks nice today ... you're a great pianist'. True spiritual encouragement builds up another person or a community of believers in their faith.

Connect



We encourage through our words, prayers, written communications and through the time we spend together: 'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing' (1 Thessalonians 5:11). In much of his writing, Paul encouraged the early Christians to be encouragers because he understood the power of this gift to maintain and progress the Christian fellowship.

The Bible tells us we can all be encouragers, though some people are given special tasks or become known for their spiritual gift of encouragement.

- * Moses was commanded to encourage Joshua who would be the leader to take the Israelites into the Promised Land: 'But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it' (Deuteronomy 1:38).
- * Barnabas became known as a 'son of encouragement' (Acts 4:36) because of his actions, including helping Paul into his leadership ministry within the Church. He was a spiritual cheerleader with a deeply rooted faith.

We are all called to encourage, and we can cultivate this spiritual gift. So how do we get started?

- * Pray for God to make you an encourager.
- * Check out the life of Barnabas in the Bible. What can he teach us?
- * Make encouragement a daily discipline. Maybe set a reminder on the mobile phone or a note on the fridge to encourage someone in their faith.
- * Pray asking God to show you who you can encourage.
- * Regularly encourage your corps/church leaders.
- * Make a list of Bible verses that encourage you personally.

What a wonderful thing that we can be a part of the Body of Christ and build each other up! Go on! Encourage someone today!

PRAYER

Loving Lord Jesus, thank you for being a relentless source of comfort and strength.

On the dark, difficult and desolate days, we raise our eyes to you, our encourager and champion. Your throne is where our help comes from.

May we never be selfish with that encouragement and that strength. Instead may we be generous with our words and our support for those around us.

Make us swift to cheer others on and to call out what is good in one another. Amen.



SONGS

- ♪ **SASB 815** Help us to help each other, Lord'
Watch the [brass instrumental lyric video](#) by The Salvation Army Oshawa Church (to the SA tune 'Fewster'), the [lyric video](#) by Holy Trinity Church, Dromore (to the tune 'Belmont') or the [acapella lyric video](#) by Acapella Hymns (to the tune 'Balerma').

- ♪ **SASB 1002** I, 'the Lord of sea and sky'
(Note that the *SASB*'s lyrics for last two lines of v1 should read: 'Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?';
Watch the [lyric version](#) by Chet Valley Churches or the [instrumental lyric video](#) by The Salvation Army Video Songbook (the SA 'wrong' version).

- ♪ **SASB 601** Lord, I come to you (The Power of your Love)'
Watch the [finale of The Salvation Army's Congress 2012](#) (no lyrics) uploaded by Regent Hall; or the [lyric video](#) by Shemaroo Eternal Grace feat Hillsong; or the [duet lyric video](#) by Droitwich Spa Salvation Army

WEBSITE AND CONTACT DETAILS

- Connect website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/connect
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- Twitter: @ukifamily
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Family Ministries

Having faith in the family

Providing intergenerational support, training and resources for

Children | Adults | Everyone