
ONE ANOTHER

Part 2 - Encourage One Another

At this time of the year there is a lot of revelry, but we are called to be of sober mind, putting on faith in order to encourage one another and build each other up, patiently doing good to one another, in all of our relationships – especially in the church.

Preferences

We all have preferences. From the music we prefer to the food we eat or even where we shop. Our preferences may be personal, “it’s just the way I like it”. However, preferences also come from the experience we have had. Both positive and negative experiences form our preferences that suit us personally.

Preferences influence the decisions we make but can also lead us to comparison and judgement. Once we start to compare our preference to what others prefer, we can easily slide into negative judgment that can lead to dissatisfaction and criticism.

Comparison vs. Encouragement

“Comparison is the thief of all joy.” – Lisa Bevere.

Comparison ultimately judges something as better than something else. Instead of understanding that things are simply different, we make a judgement that they somehow become deficient. Unfortunately, in trying to support our preference we can easily tear other’s preferences down.

Comparison in everyday life (e.g., comparing spouses, work performance, etc.), can lead to conflict, competition, and condemnation.

The Power of Encouragement

"Encourage" from the original Old French word *encoragier*, which is a combination of the words *en-* meaning "to make or put in" and *coeur-* meaning "heart".

To deposit something into the heart, to speak life and courage into someone.

The scriptural emphasis on encouragement: the word is mentioned nearly 80 times in the Bible, indicating its importance in Christian life.

Encouragement is life-giving: It strengthens, renews, and builds people up, in contrast to comparison, which pulls them down.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-15

- + Christians are called to live in unity, encourage one another, and build each other up.
- + We are to acknowledge, respect, and encourage those who lead and care for us.
- + We are called to live peacefully, help the weak, be patient, and resist revenge or conflict.

Although God's people are united under Christ, it can become too easy to allow differences and preferences to create division if comparison takes hold.

Comparing worship leaders, preachers, or even church programs can create division and disunity within the body of Christ.

The challenge: Are we a church known for encouragement?

Dangers of Comparison

Comparison can lead to:

- + **Competition:** Creating rivalry among people or churches.
- + **Conflict:** Fostering disagreements and division.
- + **Condemnation:** Placing people or ministries in positions of judgment rather than grace.

The Call to Encourage and Speak Life

Encouragement is unselfish and life-giving. It's about speaking life and courage into others, not just offering empty praise.

Encouragement as more than kind words: Ask God how He sees people and speak that over them. Speak life, identity, and purpose into those around you.

Story of Balaam and King Balak (Numbers 22-24): Balaam chose to bless Israel rather than curse them, despite pressure to do otherwise.

- + **Balaam's commitment:** He must say only what the Lord says.
- + **Challenge:** What if we chose to speak only what the Lord says? Encouraging one another by seeking God's heart and blessing each other with words of life, prophesy, and healing.

Let's be a people who encourage one another, not just with nice words, but with life-giving words inspired by God.

Discussion Questions

1. How do your own preferences impact your relationships with others? In what ways can we recognize and navigate these preferences without falling into comparison or judgment?
2. Lisa Bevere says, "Comparison is the thief of all joy." How have you experienced comparison in your own life, and how did it affect your joy or relationships? How can we break free from the trap of comparison?
3. How does encouragement differ from praise or empty words? What are some practical ways we can encourage others in a way that is life-giving and authentic?
4. In 1 Thessalonians 5:5-15, we are urged to live in unity and build each other up. How can we create a culture of encouragement in our church, especially when preferences and differences arise? How can we support leaders and fellow believers in a way that fosters unity?
5. The dangers of comparison are described as leading to competition, conflict, and condemnation. Have you witnessed or experienced these outcomes in church or other communities? How can we avoid these pitfalls and build a culture of peace instead?
6. The story of Balaam highlights the importance of speaking only what the Lord says. How can we practice this in our daily interactions? What might change if we intentionally spoke life, identity, and purpose into others, following God's heart for them?