

Encouragement:

To spur on or inspire with hope



The Bible tells us; “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) Scripture is meant to encourage us, but we must keep in mind that there is two aspects of encouragement. One is to spur us on in our walk with the Lord - literally to *challenge* us to walk in God’s ways. With this in mind, Hebrews 10:24 challenges us to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. The second aspect is to inspire us with hope as seen in Acts 13 and 20 where the Apostles sought to encourage or build up the people. It is interesting that the Spiritual gift of encouragement is also call the gift of exhortation - fitting both aspects of encouragement. We all want to be inspired and built up, but do we accept the spurring on - the challenge to do what is right? Sadly, too many Christians only want the positive words, and do not want to hear the challenging words.

Marriage should be a place for both aspects of encouragement. Who knows us better than our spouse and experiences all of our flaws and short-comings? We need to be open to those words of encouragement spurring us on to living a godly life. We also need to be open to building our spouse up - inspiring him or her with hope. This is especially needed in times of trouble and uncertainty - like we are experiencing in today’s world. We are in troubling times and people need encouragement - they need to be inspired with hope.

It is said that positive words provoke more change than negative, but isn’t that how we usually attempt to provoke change in our spouse, our children, or others? It is possible to be positive even when addressing negative behavior. I think of Ephesians 4:29; “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” We need to be more positive and to seek to build up our spouses rather than tear them down; to inspire and build them up rather than telling them to get over whatever might be troubling them. It requires some effort to change our tendency toward negativity, but we *can* do it!

How can you encourage your spouse today? Your children? Those you come in contact with? Seek to build others up according to their needs - inspire them! There are many words of inspiration in the Bible - search the Scriptures and use the Word of God to encourage others - that is where hope is found!

Helpful Resources: *Fortified Marriages Resource page:* www.fortifiedmarriages.com

The *Fortified Marriages Manual and Workbook* is a great tool to help couples grow in their marriage relationship. Additional information about encouragement can be found in the following:

What Does “Encouragement” Really Mean? by Jenn Arman

Encourage and Support Your Spouse by Gary Chapman

The Power of Encouraging Your Spouse by Ryan Frederick