

Encourage One Another

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of encouragement in our lives, drawing from Romans 15:5 where God is described as the one who gives perseverance and encouragement. It highlights the impact of receiving and giving encouragement, how it shapes our character, relationships, and faith. The speaker shares personal experiences and biblical examples to illustrate the power of encouragement in overcoming challenges, building strong families, and serving in leadership roles within the church.

Scripture: Romans 15:5, Psalms 115:8, Hebrews 3:13, Luke 17:15, Romans 1:21, Matthew 18:20, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "The Power of Encouragement", "Building Strong Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

I want to first of all begin with something from Romans in chapter 15 and verse 5. It's wonderful to see a church where people bring their Bibles. It's very rare to see in Western countries. So those of you who bring your Bibles, you'll know better than.

I have a Bible on my phone as well, but I find that if you just use it on your phone, you won't get to know the Bible. To have a physical Bible makes a lot of difference. Romans 15 verse 5, God is called by a title, the God who gives perseverance and encouragement.

That's a tremendous title. Do you know God is a God who gives you perseverance? That means helps you to endure when the trials are great and helps you to endure in any type of suffering, perseverance and to battle against sin, even if you're repeatedly defeated. Perseverance means you never give up until that Goliath has gone down and the enemy is defeated.

The enemy means the sins in your flesh and who gives encouragement. Encouragement is something very, very important for us to have. And I don't know whether you receive that encouragement from God.

Do you feel that God is always correcting you and rebuking you all the time? Or is he encouraging you as well? We become like the God we worship. I don't know whether you know that it says in the Psalms,

those who worship idols become like them. That's an amazing verse.

Those who worship idols become like them, lifeless, dead spiritually. And if you worship a God who encourages you and you experience God's encouragement, one result will be, listen carefully, you will encourage your wife regularly. You will encourage your husband.

You will encourage your children. So those of you who are married, ask yourself, when was the last time you encouraged your wife or your husband? I don't mean give a message. Encouragement means just a word, maybe an expression of thank you or a pat on the back.

Do you do that to your children? In the early days of my Christian life, I knew God as a God who corrects me. Good. I need it.

In fact, we need it when there's a lot of sin in our life. But I'll tell you another thing. It was encouragement that helped me to overcome sin.

In the battles that we fight against the devil, it's wonderful to have a brother who comes to encourage us. I heard a story of two brothers who were both very discouraged one day. Very heads were down with discouragement.

They were walking down the road and they happened to meet each other. And they spent about five minutes talking to each other, these two discouraged brothers. And you know what happened? They went away encouraged, both of them.

Because the Lord was there. The Lord says, where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst. It's a wonderful thing when you're discouraged, if you have a brother who will encourage you.

It's great to be a brother who's known as one who encourages. I'm not saying we should not correct our children. The Bible says we should.

I have done that with my four sons, but I've also encouraged them many times. If you read this book of mine called Here Are My Sons, I would encourage all of you to get a copy and read it. This is what I wrote to my four sons when they were in college.

And it's full of doctrine and theology and understanding because the Bible says we must establish our children in the truth. And there's a lot of encouragement as well. It's a habit we must develop to encourage one another.

How often should we do it? Hebrews chapter three, verse 13. Hebrews chapter three, verse 13. Encourage one another day after day.

That means if I missed one day in 365 days in a year, I've slipped up. You don't have to encourage the same person every day, but you know we meet people, even unbelievers you meet in the office, they need some encouragement. Don't just try to convert them.

Be a witness of a God who is loving, caring, cheerful. If your people in your workplace see you as a very happy person, always going to encourage them. One day they may turn to the Lord because they know that you have a faith.

You don't have to preach about Christ. They'll see something and be drawn to you. When a light is shining, people can see it even without the light making any noise.

If you read the life of Joseph in the prison in Genesis, you'll see one thing. I don't have time to turn there. The thing that opened the door for him to meet Pharaoh and become second to Pharaoh, it was one thing.

He saw Pharaoh's cup bearer and his baker sitting there discouraged one day and he went to encourage them. He himself is in prison, 28 years old, in prison, already in prison for about 10 years. His parents are far away, but he went to encourage somebody.

Imagine if you were in prison and you go around encouraging people, you must really got to know God. And remember, he lived before Christ, before the Holy Spirit and all that, how much more we can do it. Joseph's life is a great challenge to me, should be to all of us, especially to men.

Without the Holy Spirit's power, without the Bible, he stood against adultery and lust wholeheartedly as a young man, great example. And he encouraged people. And it was through his encouragement that he came in touch with Pharaoh's cup bearer, who later, two years later, introduced him to Pharaoh.

Tremendous results that come from encouraging one another daily. I want to urge you to develop this habit. If you don't have it, most of us don't have it.

We have to learn it. Our natural tendency is to correct people, to correct, correct, correct. Don't do this.

Don't do that. Don't do this. We keep telling our children.

Yeah, we need to tell our children, don't do this, don't do that. But if that's the only thing you say, they'll think that is their name. I heard of a child who went to school, was a small boy, and the teacher asked, what's your name? He said, my name is Johnny Don't, because that's all he kept on hearing in his house.

Don't do this. Don't do that. He said, Johnny, don't do this.

Johnny, don't do that. Johnny, don't. He thought that was his name.

Does your wife or your children think that is their name? Don't. There are habits we have to develop, and it doesn't come automatically. We have to work on it.

So that's a little message I want to share with you, and I pray it'll help you from today for the rest of your life. God's word is given to us to encourage us and to help us to follow him. We need encouragement all the time.

Other brothers and sisters around us need encouragement. There are a lot of struggles that many of you face in the Gulf countries, which others don't know. A lot of people in India think all you do is make a lot of money, but I'm sure you face trials and tests, possibility of a loss of job, et cetera.

Encourage one another. You can encourage people by email. You can encourage people on the phone.

You can encourage somebody when they come to visit you. You can encourage people even if you casually meet each other for two minutes. So it's a habit which I took a long time to develop it.

As an elder, I have to correct many people, but I also have learned to express appreciation. Many people have not learned to express appreciation. It's a bad habit among us Indians that you ask somebody to

express appreciation, they'll finish in one sentence.

Correction, they'll take 25 sentences. If you learn to appreciate others, if you learn to appreciate your wife, when was the last time you said thank you? When was the last time you knelt before God and said, Lord, thank you for the wonderful wife you gave me? I've done that. I even say it directly.

When was the last time your wives knelt down before God and said, Lord, thank you for the husband you gave me, faithful to me, unlike so many unfaithful husbands in the world. Be thankful. It'll change your life.

I'll tell you one last story. Ten lepers came to Jesus once. You read about it.

You know the story in Luke 17, when you get time, read it. Luke 17, 11, 12. Ten lepers came to Jesus and they raised their voices and said, oh, Lord, have mercy on us.

Luke 17, 13, and he said, go and show yourselves to the priest. As they were going, they were cleansed. And one of them, only one, the other nine went to the priest.

And they looked at their hand and they probably said, well, I was actually improving the last few months and this has just become better. I can't say anything special happened. They had all types of excuses.

But one man said, no, I was really a leper, but I'm completely healed. I want to turn back and say thank you to the Lord. He went back and when they were asking for healing, it says in verse 13, they raised their voices.

And this man, when he went back to thank God, he again raised his voice. He didn't say gently, thank you. He shouted out verse 15 with a loud voice.

The Holy Spirit emphasizes that. He prayed with a loud voice. He thanked with a loud voice.

When you pray for something, it's good to pray wholeheartedly. And when your prayer is answered with an equally loud voice, thank the Lord. Only one tenth of people, 10 percent of people come back to thank the Lord.

And you know what he got, the Lord said to him, you see down there. Where are they? He he said to them in verse 19, he told this one man who came back to him, your faith has saved you. That's what the margin of my Bible says, that's exactly what it says in the Greek, your faith has saved you.

In other words, you are you get salvation. Now, what did the other nine get healing? What did this man get healing plus salvation? What a difference. One nine people got healing and then they died.

I don't know where they went. This one man not only got healing, he got salvation. He became a child of God.

How did how did that happen? One reason. He learned to give thanks, giving thanks is a habit we must develop. Just like encouraging others, sometimes when you get time, if you read in Romans one and you see the backsliding of people described in Romans one all the way from verse 21 to verse 32, Romans one, 21 to 30 is the backsliding of people which finally ends.

In the becoming haters of God, verse 30, you know, many, many bad things in verse 30, 31. But where does it begin? What is the first step in backsliding? Verse 21, they did not give thanks to God. Remember

that all your life.

OK, today I want to speak also to two people. I'll take only 10 minutes. First of all, to Sunil Jacob, who's been a very faithful elder.

You probably know him as an elder, but I know him as a faithful elder because I've been in touch with him all the years he's been an elder. He's not a very old person. He's a young brother.

He's younger than my sons. And God has given him great grace as a young person to be an elder, to be faithful. I know many elders who backslide and get puffed up with pride.

God has protected him all these years. I give God the glory for that. And I thank God for his support that he has given to Thomas and Prince.

Those of you who have been in Sharjah from the beginning, the church in Sharjah or Dubai had a very difficult time in the early days because you lacked good elders. You had some pathetically poor elders in the early days, and I had a lot of trouble with them. Till finally, you got these brothers, Thomas and Sunil came and then later on Prince.

That's when the church really in Sharjah really became stable. And I could see that God was in this church, and that's when this church moved away from being a secular Malayali church to an international church, the way it should be. But there's no difference.

I thank God for Sunil's support in that to the church, to the elders and all this time and for his family and how God has helped him in many ways. And now he's leaving, I understand, for another country, as God has let him, miraculously opened the way for him. I want to thank God for his ministry, and I pray that wherever he goes, God will make him a blessing.

And so since he's moving away, I've decided along with the other elders, your elders, to appoint Aaron as another elder there. It's like a birthday gift. I just noticed that it was his birthday the other day, but God remembers all these things, you know.

So we want to pray for Aaron today and set him apart as an elder. In CFC churches, there are two things which are very different from other churches, among many, many other things, because we preach the new covenant and victory over sin almost more than any other church. But in the leadership of the church also, we have no pastors because you never read a pastor as an office.

Pastor is a gift, like apostle, prophet, teacher. These are gifts. Nobody goes around saying, I'm prophet so-and-so, or I'm teacher so-and-so.

So it's wrong to say I'm pastor so-and-so, completely wrong. Ephesians 4.11 says there are five gifts, evangelists, for example. Nobody says I'm evangelist so-and-so, but some people say I'm pastor so-and-so.

I don't know why. It's because they don't respect God's word. Acts of the Apostles, you never read of a pastor.

The word is not even there. But you read about elders in 1 Timothy 3, it says appoint elders. In Titus 1, it says appoint elders.

But just like the rest of Christians, they disregard God's word completely. They say we know better than God. God says appoint elders, but we will appoint a pastor.

Why do we have more than one elder? Because the church is a body. And Jesus said where two, at least two, are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them. One man alone cannot do it.

Minimum two or three or more. That's in Matthew 18, 20, where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of the Lord's presence is there when there are two people. And then there's a balance.

You know, God has made the human body in a balanced way. See, if you draw a line down the middle of your body, it's exactly equal on the right side and left side. That's what brings the balance to the body.

Imagine if you had only one side. That's how a pastor is like a man who's got half a body. What can you do? That's why there's so many problems where there are pastors.

So we follow scripture where we believe in elders. The second thing is we don't pay any of our elders. We have about 150 elders now in our maybe 100 churches in 10, 11 countries that the Lord has raised up, CFC churches.

But not one of them is paid. They're all serving, they're working hard and I've never been paid in 47 years. I take care of my own expenses by God's grace.

So that's the other characteristic. And we thank God that all these years we've had brothers who are willing to serve the Lord and it requires a lot of sacrifice to serve the Lord. I'll tell you, I many times I say elders are like the toilet cleaners because whenever there's a problem in a church and believers are many believers have problems, they're like little babies.

And, you know, babies have diapers which are always dirty. And many new believers are like that. Their spiritual diapers are always dirty.

There's something or the other going wrong in their life. And even when they're grown up, some people get grown up and they still need diapers. Well, spiritually they are.

And then who's going to clean it up? The mother comes and changes the diaper and the elders are like mothers who there's a problem somewhere. Two brothers not get along with each other. A husband and wife don't get along with each other.

I've had to face that type of problem in our churches many times. I've got to change the diaper for those people. And then I'm happy to see after some time they learn to keep themselves clean.

So it's a constant job. That's why I say elders are like toilet cleaners. A lot of muck and dirt that comes up in relationships between people.

And they have to be patient like a mother to go and clean it up. So we are appointing actually someone who is willing to do that. And one who is willing to wash people's feet.

That's the other thing I say. A toilet cleaner and a washer of feet. That's what an elder brother is.

And I thank God for you. I really appreciate your present three elder brothers. They have really had that attitude of a servant.

I know other churches, even in CFC churches, where some elders act like lords. You're very blessed in Sharjah to have elders who have been like servants to serve

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