

Encouraged - Encourager

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Have *you* needed encouragement in the last few months? Most of us would say “YES.” Did anyone come alongside and speak a word of encouragement *to you* or do something *for you* that “picked you up”? Hopefully, you can say “YES” to that question as well. If you said “Yes” to both questions, did you know a special responsibility has now been given to you? We’ll get back to this responsibility issue, but first we want to share with you a little about the first two questions.

Should being in need of regular encouragement depress us or make us feel like we must be abnormal? NO! Being in need of encouragement is a condition of life — we will experience this need if we live life without our heads in the sand or without shutting down our emotional side. Jesus Himself experienced such a need. Remember Jesus in the Garden? He was so distraught He sweat *great drops of blood* and prayed earnestly that *this cup would pass from Him* (Matthew 26:39).

And when He came back to His inner circle of disciples who were supposed to be praying with Him and found them asleep, don’t you think He was disappointed in them and longed for encouragement? I know, you can say that Jesus was the God-Man and was *perfect* and, therefore, did not need encouragement. But we remind you that it was not only likely but even necessary for Christ to experience these common human conditions of discouragement, disappointment, heartache, etc. How else could He be said to have experienced all we are faced with yet without sin? (Hebrews 4:15)

Remember some of the incidents in Christ’s life when He outwardly displayed deep emotions? Here are a few.

Jesus *cried* in sorrow at Lazarus’ grave (John 11:35).

Jesus *wept* over Israel saying how often He yearned to gather them like a mother hen gathers her chicks, but they would not come to Him (Luke 13:34).

He experienced great *hunger* and *thirst* in the desert temptations (Matthew 4:2).

Jesus must have been deeply *disappointed* in Peter when he attempted to keep Him from His destiny, passionately declaring “Never! [The cross] shall never

happen to you.” Jesus replied to Peter, “...you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:22-23).

After Peter had denied Jesus three times, Jesus *...turned and looked straight at Peter* in such a way that Peter *went outside and wept bitterly* (Luke 22:61-62). What a look of unbelievable sadness that must have been!

Jesus must have felt overwhelmingly betrayed by Judas’ kiss of betrayal as he led the soldiers to Jesus (Luke 22:47-48).

Many more examples could be listed because Jesus came to be the *suffering servant* and needed to experience the same emotions of life we do in order to be our special **High Priest** — one who understands our infirmities and can plead our case. He lived on this earth and really does know how we feel (Hebrews 4:15). Though Jesus drew His strength from the Father, others must have had some part in encouraging Him, as well. Consider the special love relationship He had with the Apostle John and with Lazarus and his two sisters. These friends must have frequently come alongside the Master during those times He needed encouragement and refreshment. They may not have said much, but they were *there*. Jesus obviously had a very special place in His heart for John, for it was to John He assigned responsibility for His own mother while hanging on the cross. And His love for Lazarus, Martha and Mary was evident in the time He spent with them. He knew their home was a refuge of rest.

We too need encouragement — perhaps God makes sure of that! Trials are a part of life. If you don’t know that by now, you **will** sooner or later. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 4:12, *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* Trials push us to seek comfort and help — from God and from other believers. Through this process, we learn how to “administer grace” to each other.

Yes, we all need encouragement — that is a given. It is nothing to be ashamed of. We don’t have to hide or deny our need, because it is *everyone’s* need. And since it

is everyone’s need, our being comforted and encouraged gives us a special sensitivity and ability to provide that **same comfort and encouragement** to others.

But even more than the ability, we have been given the **responsibility** to pass it on. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, we are told the *God of all comfort* is the One who comforts us in all our troubles *so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received of God.* In other words, He doesn’t intend it to stop with us. He wants us, in turn, to give comfort to others. After all, who is better equipped to comfort than one who has received the comfort of God?

As believers it is our responsibility to pass on the encouragement we receive to others.

Responsibility? Yes! But a burden? No! When we have been comforted and then have an opportunity to give comfort, it is a great privilege, and we experience promised blessing when we pass on comfort to others.

Let’s slow down our rapid pace this week and look for the people around us who are in trouble — who need a word of encouragement. Let’s determine to be the comfort to them that God has equipped and commanded us to be!

There are people all around you in pain and confusion. Do you see them? Will you stop and speak a word of encouragement? Will you inconvenience yourself long enough to give them a hand? Will you pass on the comfort God has given you?

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