

# LIVING WELL #4: ENCOURAGING WELL

ESV TCL 2025/10/12

**Q.** How does Jesus help us to encourage well?

1 Peter 1:10-12 (*the Spirit of Christ ... in the prophets*) implies that all of scripture is from Jesus through his Holy Spirit and is for our benefit. We can also learn how to encourage well from the examples of Jesus and his people through the ages.

## 1. A DEFINITION OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement: Lacking courage, confidence, hope or enthusiasm, feeling disheartened or demotivated.<sup>1</sup>

**Q.** What things discourage you most? Why?

**A.** Failure, obstacles, unkind words, pessimism, low mood, ill health, each other?

*Larry Crabb: 'We meet at the level of our layers, determined to remain safely hidden behind our protective manoeuvres. Our primary commitment is to avoid exposure, to appear acceptable, ...'*<sup>2</sup>

Is that just psycho-speak, or biblical?

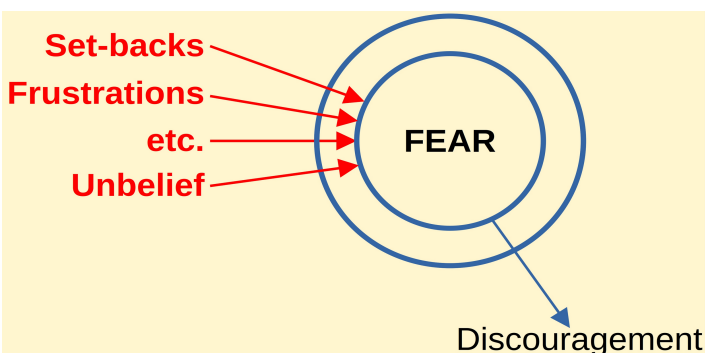
## 2. A BIBLICAL MODEL OF DISCOURAGEMENT

Set-backs and frustrations feed people's fears which result in discouragement, and lead to sin.

e.g. The failed entry to Canaan.

*Numbers 13:25-29 At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. <sup>26</sup> And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness ... <sup>27</sup> And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.*

*<sup>28</sup> However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."*



Or, the apostle Paul on the subject of bring up children for the Lord:

*Colossians 3:21 ... do not exasperate your children, lest they become discouraged. DWL*

<sup>1</sup> Culled from a wide variety of different sources.

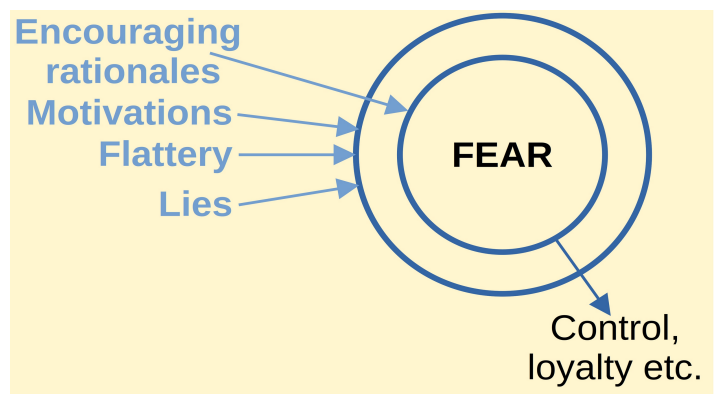
<sup>2</sup> Larry Crabb & Dan Allender, *Encouragement*, Zondervan, 1984.

### 3. A WORLDLY MODEL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Genuinely encouraging rationales can help us to overcome our fears.

Mere motivations (e.g. threats), flattery or other kinds of lies pressurise us to overcome our fear, but are not Christlike encouragement e.g.:

2 Samuel 11:24-25 [A messenger] "... Uriah the Hittite is dead also." <sup>25</sup> David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."



So, much more is needed for genuine, long term, encouragement.

Larry Crabb writes (helpfully):

'1. People are hurting more deeply than we know, and

2. Relationship with Christ provides resources ... to heal now and perfectly for ever.'<sup>3</sup>

### 4. BIBLICAL WORDS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

In the Hebrew Bible, the notion of encouragement is often expressed as 'strengthening' either of the 'hands' or the 'hearts' of those who need to be encouraged:

Judges 7:10-11 [the LORD to Gideon] "... go down to the [Midianite] camp ... <sup>11</sup> And you shall hear what they say, and afterwards your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp."

Specifically, the Hebrew word *cha.zaq* (חָזַק strengthen) is used for 'encourage', e.g.:

Deuteronomy 1:38 Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter [the promised land]. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

In the NT, the Greek word for encourage or exhort is often *parakaleō* (παρακαλέω comfort, urge, exhort, encourage etc.), e.g. (of Barnabas):

Acts 11:23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ... *ESV*

Acts 11:23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. *NIV*

Exhorting or encouraging is to be done in God's name or Christ's name, and in the Spirit's<sup>4</sup> power.

Barnabas was a well-known encourager, hence:

Acts 4:36-37 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. *ESV*

Both words and deeds can encourage.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit. p 15 (hardback)

<sup>4</sup> The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Paraclete, as in John 14:16.

## 5. A BIBLICAL MODEL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The book of Proverbs teaches us how powerful words can be:

*Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, ... .*

But, more is needed for genuine, spiritual, God-honouring, encouragement

– key verse:

*Ephesians 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> ... [which] makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

Here, Paul is teaching that words are not enough on their own, behind the words there must be love.

Love is what enables us to be truly and lastingly encouraging and encouraged:

*1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.*

Also, the actual power behind encouragement is not merely psychological, but from God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit's (see Acts 9:31 below) working in us:

*Colossians 2:1-3 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

**Q.** What is the essential dynamic here? **A.:**

Good news of Christ → Paul's struggle → tells the Colossians → encouragement for them.

Also, good examples encourage us to emulate them, e.g. Paul's example in Colossians 2:1.

Encouraging ourselves is also important; we must talk to ourselves (not just listen):

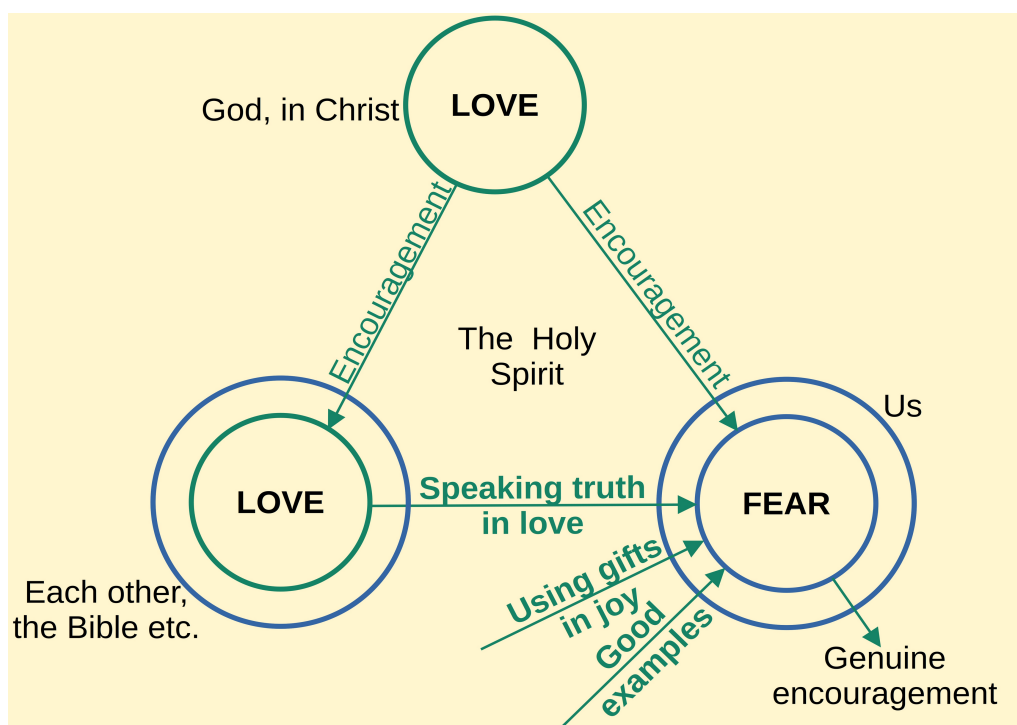
*Psalms 42: 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul ... ?*

*Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation <sup>6</sup> and my God.*

Using the gifts that we have encourages us; using those we do not have tends to discourage.

But, the real, actual, motivating, lasting, encouragement must come from God the Holy Spirit:

*Acts 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged [=παράκλησις paraklēsis] by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. NIV*



## 6. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES TO COPY

**Q.** In addition to the command:

*Ephesians 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love ...,*  
what biblical examples are there for us to make use of?

**A1.** Jonathan encouraging David:

*1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened [=חָזַק (cha.zaq)] his hand in God ... "You shall be king". ESV*

**A2.** Jesus' example of how to encourage in God's name and the Spirit's power.

*2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup> encourage<sup>5</sup> your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. NIV*

Another key verse to discuss:

*Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

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<sup>5</sup> Optative mood.