

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ALL!

INTRODUCTION

We live in a critical world. All too often the opinions we hear and express are negative ones, and we will all have lived with the pain and rejection this can cause in our lives. A report on mental health once stated that for every critical comment we receive, it takes nine affirming comments to even out the negative effect in our lives. Through his word and his daily presence, God himself encourages us, and in turn he requires that we should encourage each other.

This month we are going to discover what the Bible says about encouragement from God, and then see how we can all be great encouragers to each other.



PREPARATION

✦ Make sure you have been given a sheet of *Bible Promises* and the *Encourage One Another* poster.

BIBLE READING/THOUGHT

‘Encourage one another daily’

HEBREWS 3:13

‘Encourage one another and build each other up’

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

As babies we are constantly encouraged from the moment we are born – always being motivated to the next step of development, supported and praised in every way possible as the stages of human growth are achieved. As parents and grandparents we want the best for our children and we seek to encourage them in whatever way we can. Our role in this is vital, and experts would tell us that if a child is unmotivated it is likely to be because there is little encouragement at home. Whatever our age we are all God’s children, and as our loving Heavenly Father he seeks constantly to encourage us. He is our source of eternal hope, and we need to remember just how much he loves us because the devil will seek to drain us of our joy in the Lord and rob us of the encouragement in him that is rightfully ours.



STORY

The devil was having a car-boot sale, and all of his tools were marked with different prices. They were a fiendish lot. There was HATRED, JEALOUSY, DECEIT, LYING, and PRIDE – all at expensive prices. But over to the side of the yard on display was a tool more obviously worn than any of the other tools. It was also the most costly. The tool was labelled DISCOURAGEMENT. When questioned, the devil said, ‘It’s more useful to me than any other tool. When I can’t bring people down with any of the rest of my tools, I use discouragement because so few people realise that it belongs to me.’

As God’s children we are called to encourage each other – not just during the tough times, but every day. We shouldn’t need to find an excuse to encourage one another but rather need to look for opportunities as often as we can.

William Arthur Ward wrote, ‘Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticise me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you.’

In a world that seems to be full of criticism and discouragement, we are called to bring the light of the Lord’s encouragement.

‘May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved and us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.’

2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

PROMISE JAR

Make a Promise Jar by decorating an old jam jar or coffee jar with stickers, jewels and ribbons. Fill it with folded *Bible Promises* notes. Select one each day and talk together about it. Take time to remember that all of God's promises can be relied upon fully – they are never broken – and we can take encouragement every day from this great truth.

WORD PLAY

Play a game of each finding one word to best describe yourself: kind, generous, outgoing, shy... Now play again, but this time the word has to begin with the same letter as your Christian name: Perfect Paul, Amazing Ann... Finally, choose a word that you would like other people to describe or remember you as: faithful, loyal, patient, loving... Would anyone describe you as an encourager? Why or why not?

20 THINGS...

Watch together on YouTube Kid President's '20 Things We Should Say More Often' and talk about the encouraging things you can say to each other as a family and also to your friends.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Decide together to do something special to encourage your family and friends. You could make and send cards, buy a small gift, bake a cake, invite them for a meal or go and visit them. By encouraging someone else you are sure to be encouraged yourself!

ENCOURAGEMENT FILE

Create an Encouragement File by buying or making a box to keep cards, letters, school reports, emails that encourage you. You can decorate this box together if you want to. Then if you ever have a day when you feel sad or discouraged, you can open the box and read the things you have put in it as they will help you remember just how special you are.

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Complete together the *Encourage One Another* poster to display somewhere you will see every day. While you are doing this, listen to some worship music and consider how much God loves us and encourages us to be our best selves.

SONG TIME

Spend time listening to, reflecting with, or singing along to...

- ♪ 'Blessed Assurance' by Fanny Crosby/William Himes
- ♪ 'On the rock' by William Hastings/Andrew Blyth
- ♪ 'On this rock' by Philip Coultts/Peter Graham

Visit www.salvationarmy.org.uk/faith-at-home

REFLECT

God himself is the source of our encouragement. He encourages us through his word, through the presence of his Spirit and through the words and actions of others. He also wants us to encourage others to come to know Jesus as their Saviour and Friend, so we must try to follow his example so that his goodness can be seen in our lives.

Each week take time to talk together about how your words and actions have encouraged others.

SHARE

Encourage the person who gave you this Faith@Home sheet by telling them what you have enjoyed most about the activities on it. You could make them a card to say thank you which they can put in their own encouragement file!