

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Encourage and Build-up One Another

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”

I Thessalonians 5:11

“Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

I Thessalonians 4:18

“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another (lit., ‘yourselves’) day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Hebrews 3:12-13

The word that is translated as “encourage” (Gk. - *parakaleō*) is a fairly common word in the NT. It occurs 109 times as a verb, and has two related noun forms that occur 29 times (*paraklēsis*) and 5 times (*paraklētos*). It is a compound from the word, *kaleō*, meaning to “call, summon, invite” and *para*, meaning “alongside”. Thus, its basic meaning is to “call alongside”. It has a wide range of usage. It can mean to call or summon someone *else* alongside of you, ...to help or comfort you (Matt. 26:53; Acts 16:9). Or, it can also mean to call someone alongside of you to help *them*, or speak a word to *them*. It is used to either earnestly ask, implore or beg for something (Acts 28:20; Rom. 15:30; II Cor. 8:4); or to speak authoritatively a word of exhortation, or admonition (Rom. 12:8; II Thess. 3:12; II Tim 4:2); or to console and comfort someone (II Cor. 1:3-7); or to encourage them, as in the passages above. The more common noun form (*paraklēsis*) refers to “comfort”, “consolation”, or “encouragement” in almost all passages. Jesus used the other noun form of this word (*paraklētos* - ‘Helper’) to refer to the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:7), and the apostle John used this same word in reference to Jesus (I Jn. 2:1 - ‘Advocate’). One significant implication of this is that we are to *ask for* the help we need. The help of the Holy Spirit is *not* automatic, ...*nor* is the advocacy of Jesus. We need to *ask or call them* to come alongside to help us in order to obtain their assistance.

The passages for today’s study are the reverse of *that* scenario. Here, we summon someone alongside so that *we* can minister to *them*. It’s like saying, “C’mere, I have something to share with you.” Again, the word picture is significant. We are not taking charge *over* someone, or *talking down* to them. We are coming alongside, ...actually, we are *inviting or summoning them to our side*. This is a relationship of equality, companionship, and healthy interaction. There is no hint of authority, rank or domination here. The *opportunity for interaction is voluntary*. It can be *declined*, if the other person is not open to receive from you, right now. Other people are not *required* to respond to us, when we invite them to talk. If they do not *want* to talk with you, that is *their choice*. Their reticence may not have anything to do with you. It may be that they are simply having a bad day, or are just not ready to talk. Or, it may be that we have not *earned the right* to speak into their life. It is important that we *not* be offended, if someone does not wish to share with us.

On the other hand, it is important to recognize that this is one of those “one another” responsibilities that the Bible says we are to do for one another. It is a reciprocal pronoun, which means that the communication is supposed to work *both* ways. I should *expect* that there will be times when *you* will invite *me* alongside of you, to share a word of comfort, encouragement or exhortation, ...*and*, there will be times when *I* should also summon *you* alongside of me to speak into *your* life. This ministry is supposed to work from *both* directions. As we have seen in this series, the Body of Christ is supposed to be a highly interactive community of relationships. Not only do we *need the perspective of others*, ...because we have blind spots, and because we can benefit from the experiences and insights of others..., but we also have the ministry of the Holy Spirit revealing things about one another that *He* wants us to share. It is *God’s intent, design and purpose to use interaction between brothers and sisters in Christ to help us grow and mature*. Remember Paul’s description of how the Body develops and matures? “...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, even Christ, out-from whom the whole Body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the Body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15-16). There is no way around it. God *intends for Christians to grow through healthy interaction with one another*. This interaction is to be *truthful, loving and led by the Spirit* of God. It is a central ingredient to developing a successful personal walk in Christ, and it is essential to discovering effective Body-life as a group.

This is not a new thought or principle. It is consistent with OT teaching, as well. For example, Prov. 27:17 teaches that “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Also, Prov. 6:23 says, “The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Again, “He whose ear heeds wholesome admonition will abide among the wise. He who ignores instruction despises himself, but he who heeds admonition

gains understanding” (Prov. 15:31,32). Again, “Let the righteous smite me in kindness (lit., ‘loyal-love’) and reprove me. It is oil upon the head. Do not let my head refuse it” (Psa. 141:5). Or, another example, “Like a gold ring or an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear” (Prov. 25:12). These are just a few examples of many such verses in the OT. Remember, too, the *Shema*, the statement of faith and daily prayer of Israel (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41), included the admonition, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” Paul is simply advocating that Christians expand this practice beyond the nuclear family to include the brothers and sisters in Christ. **Through both Old and New Testaments, the primary engine of instruction, admonition and discipleship was speaking truth into one another’s lives in day-to-day situations.** Calling someone aside to give a word of instruction, exhortation or encouragement was *normative* for those who were seriously following the Lord. **People in pursuit of God have *always* relied on the counsel and encouragement of others, and of the community of faith, to stimulate growth and keep them accountable.**

**Calling people aside to speak a word of encouragement or exhortation may be an uncomfortable thing. You may not feel qualified to do so, or you may feel that this is too invasive.** Many of these fears come from thinking of this as a “top-down” type of interaction, ...like you are lecturing someone, or chiding them. It doesn’t have to be that way. Again, **we are *all* struggling with stuff. We *all* have issues and “growth edges”. If we can acknowledge *that*, then we can remove the “I’m better than you” mentality and feeling.** No. I am inviting you alongside of me as my equal, my friend, my brother or sister in Christ, whom I value and care for. **I desire to speak something into your life that will be *beneficial* to you. I want *you* to succeed. I want *you* to be healthy, to do well, to fulfill your calling in Christ.** I want *you* to be filled with the joy of the Lord, the delight that comes with victory in Him. **Whether I speak a word of exhortation, or comfort, *this is my desire.*** If you really believe *that*, if you think I really *do* have your best in my heart and mind, then you will give a hearing to what I would share. You would know that I speak from genuine concern and love, even if I am wrong or misguided. **You don’t have to be defensive, or have to explain everything to me. You can hear me out, and tell me you appreciate that I cared enough to share with you.** If it is good stuff, relevant stuff, then take that, and leave what may be amiss. **If you respectfully hear me out, it will be easier for me to do the same when *you* come to *me* with something for me.**

**Note the *other* verb in the first verse at the top of this study.** We are to “encourage (invite alongside to speak truth to) one another *and* build up one another.” **To “build up” means to strengthen, encourage and fortify that person.** The word to “build up” literally means to “house-build”. It may also have the implication of knitting that person into relationship with you and others in the Body, to make them feel welcome, significant and important. **Interestingly, in the Greek, the second “one another” is not the typical word for that phrase. Instead of “one another”, it actually says “y’all build up, one the one”, or “build up, each of you, each of the others”. This has two implications: (1.) We are *all* supposed to do this.** We are all, each one of us, to speak into one another’s lives. Each one of us is to call someone aside and personally say an encouraging word to them. **(2.) We ought not to overlook anyone.** *Everyone* needs to hear an encouraging word, or a word of exhortation. We all would benefit from that, and, in a healthy church environment, every individual should experience personal attention from someone. This is an important responsibility that Paul lays at the feet of *each one* of us. We cannot put this responsibility on the “welcoming committee”, the “hospitality ambassador”, or the pastor. Nor is this a part of the service when we all turn and greet one another. No. **This is an intentional, *personal* invitation to another individual to come alongside and hear something that will sharpen, strengthen, comfort or encourage them.** Now, I am not saying that each of us will do this each week, or even with every person in the group. The point is that *none of us is exempt*. There will be Spirit-led times, heart-prompting instances, where God will put something on your heart for someone else. It may be a burden, an emotion, whether clearly defined or not. It may be a word picture or thought or message you experience that is about that person, and is meant to be communicated to them. It may be a word of correction or instruction that comes to you that you feel God wants you to deliver. Or, it may simply be something that you spontaneously notice about the person that is positive or new. It doesn’t always have to be a heavy, deep thing. **Remember, the *purpose* of what you share is to be for their upbuilding, their betterment, their strengthening.**

**We have three examples at the top of this study.** The first is in the context of staying alert and sober in the midst of spiritual conflict and the distractions of this world. **We are to “armor up” and stay in fellowship with God, as our source of salvation and victory.** This is a general word of exhortation and encouragement. The second example is a word of comfort for those who have lost loved ones. **We are to remind them of the great hope we have in Christ’s return and the resurrection.** The third example is a reminder to watch out for each other, so that none of us falls away from walking with God. **We are to exhort and encourage one another on a regular basis to keep us from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**