



Making It *Personal*

Encourage One Another: A Key to Continuous Revival

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the archetype of all revivals, was shared and multiplied as the disciples continued to “gather from house to house, devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Practicing this time-tested model for relationships is still essential for continuous revival and Christ-centered community. The following exercise will help you assess how well you are doing with giving and receiving encouragement daily.

Do you GIVE Encouragement?

Counselor Larry Crabb has defined encouragement as “the kind of expression that helps someone want to be a better Christian, even when life is rough.” Are you taking opportunities to provide encouragement to those around you?

Minister to One Another (1 Peter 4:10) Check all that apply in the past two weeks. Have you:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> written a note of encouragement? | <input type="checkbox"/> taken a meal to someone sick or home bound? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> checked on the well-being of a friend, church member, or neighbor? | <input type="checkbox"/> mentored a less mature believer? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shared words of affirmation? | <input type="checkbox"/> prayed with someone? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reached out to a newcomer at church? | <input type="checkbox"/> planned an activity with another family or friend? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> invited someone to your home? | <input type="checkbox"/> given time or money to meet a need? |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> asked, “How can I help?” |

Greet One Another (Romans 16:16)

- T F When at church, I approach and greet guests.
- T F I introduce new acquaintances to my friends.
- T F I regularly invite believers to my home.
- T F I make an effort to remember people’s names.

Care for One Another (1 Corinthians 12:25)

- T F I visit or call those who are sick or shut in.
- T F I share my resources with people in need.
- T F I try to find out how people are really doing.
- T F I work at being a good listener.

Exhort One Another (Hebrews 3:13)

- T F I am involved in discipling another believer.
- T F I motivate people to reach their potential.
- T F I confront people going the wrong way.
- T F I encourage others to obey biblical truth.

Pray for One Another (James 5:16)

- T F I often ask people how I can pray for them.
- T F I stop to pray with people as needs arise.
- T F I pray regularly with my spouse and children.
- T F I often pray privately for those facing struggles.

Do you RECEIVE Encouragement?

Jean Vanier wrote, “There is no ideal community. Community is made up of people with all their richness, but also with their weakness and poverty, of people who accept and forgive each other, who are vulnerable with each other. Humility and trust are more at the foundation of community than perfection.”¹ Are you willing to receive the ministry of broken people saved by grace?

Receive One Another (Romans 15:7)

- T F I’m just as willing to share my needs as I am to help others with theirs.
- T F When someone gives me advice, I’m willing to listen.
- T F I don’t “pick and choose” who I’ll learn from—if it’s true, I want to hear it.
- T F I include a variety of people (ages, backgrounds, etc.) in my circle of friends.

Restore One Another (Galatians 6:1)

If someone pointed out what they thought was a sin in your life, how would you respond?

- Become offended and express it
- Dissolve into tears or walk away
- Point out the obvious sins in their life
- Thank them for their care and concern

Meet with One Another (Hebrews 10:25)

- T F I gather with other Christians regularly for worship.
- T F I regularly attend a small group for fellowship and prayer.
- T F I am consistently accountable to someone in my weak areas.
- T F I invite others to help me see my blind spots.

Do you FIGHT the “Encouragement Killers”?

J. I. Packer has identified three common hindrances to biblical fellowship and encouragement. Do you have any of these symptoms?

Self-Sufficiency. This sin announces to God and others that we are adequate in ourselves. Self-sufficient people usually ignore relationships until they hit a crisis and need something. Do the ways you use your time promote or undermine encouragement? In the last two weeks, have you:

- shared a meal with a friend?
- had a meaningful conversation about Christ?
- involved yourself with one of your children’s interests?
- listened to the feelings of your spouse?
- expressed genuine concern over someone else’s needs?
- spent more time with people after work than watching television?

“Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10).

Bitterness. In this context, bitterness is a sinful reaction to something gone awry. If ignored, it will poison your approach to others. Consider these manifestations of bitterness, and check any that apply to you:

- Unfulfilled expectations:** “I’ve opened my life to them, and they didn’t follow up. I thought we would become close friends, but instead they spend all their time with someone else.”
- Offended pride:** “Your correction was inaccurate, and I’m insulted that you’d even think I could do such a thing. I’ll never open my life to you again.”
- Jealousy:** “Why is *he* the group leader? Can’t the pastors see that I’m far more qualified?”
- Gossip:** Telling someone privileged, negative information about another when the recipient is neither part of the problem nor part of the solution. This breeds mistrust and bitterness.

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).

Secrecy. Some people were raised with the rule, “You don’t talk about your private life with other people.” But there can’t be much fellowship or encouragement if you take this rule into your relationships with other believers! Do you have habits or heart attitudes that keep you from being honest about your needs?

- T F Because of my heritage, I’m naturally stoic and reserved, so I tend to keep to myself.
- T F I was an only child, so I’m just not comfortable with talking to others about my problems.
- T F I’d be embarrassed if people knew my faults—that’s no one else’s business!
- T F Maybe I’ll go along with this fellowship stuff—as long as somebody else goes first!

“Confess your sins to each other . . . that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

¹Quoted in John Ortberg’s *Everybody’s Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, p. 29.

30 Days of Christ-Focused Friendship

Regular accountability from other believers is critically important to spiritual growth. One way to begin this practice in your life is to ask a Christian friend to try a “spiritual encouragement” experiment with you for the next 30 days. Here’s how it works:

1. **Pick a friend** of the same gender who shares your commitment to follow Jesus.
2. **Ask if you can connect daily** for the next 30 days, in person or by phone, to talk and pray together about your mutual pursuit of Jesus.
3. **Take a few minutes to discuss** the blessings, questions, or struggles of the last 24 hours and explore together how God’s Word applies to the situations you are each facing.
4. **Plan and share** spiritual goals.
5. **Pray** for each other.