

## Encouragement turns lives around

Text: Rom. 15:5-6

## Introduction

- A. Words are powerful! I shall return, let's just be friends, I love you!
- B. Words have been known to started wars, brake friendships, and marriages. On the other hand words have also ended wars, and have brought reconciliation to relationships. Words are powerful.
- C. Yet we sometimes do not realize the power for words because they are used so much, every day our mail boxes are full of words, we have the internet which is filled with more words than we could possibly retain in our heads. Then turn on the TV, radio, or pick up a news paper and we bombarded by more words.
- D. I guess it is because we use so many words we forget the power that words have. Words, encouraging words which have we have been talking about the past couple weeks has the power to turn lives around.

## Body

- I. With all the ways words which are used I am going use my words to help turns lives around for the good and the cause of Christ.
  - A. In (Acts 13:5ff), we read about young man named John Mark who was an enthusiastic worker for the Lord. In fact, he loved God so much that he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.
    - 1. However, along the way, John Mark decided to return home and leave the missionary effort.
    - 2. Later in (Acts 15:36-39), Barnabas wanted to invite John Mark to join them for another journey, but Paul did not want too. As a result, the partners went separate ways, Barnabas with Mark and Paul with Silas.
    - 3. Read (Acts 15:36-40).
    - 4. Can you imagine how devastating it was for Mark when Paul refused to let him go on the next missionary journey? He could have been so discouraged that he quit the ministry or even gave up on God.
    - 5. However, Barnabas (Son of Encouragement) stood beside his friend John Mark despite his past failure and encouraged him in the work of the Lord. He lifted John Mark up and gave him another chance and inspired him to continue in the ministry.
    - 6. Barnabas used words to build up and encourage the life of John Mark.
  - C. Each time we encourage someone, it may change the course of his or her life.
    - 1. Too often we can diagnose people unfairly and label them a failure. Moreover, we treat them as failures. However, in reality, we should believe in and encourage them and when we do; we can change the course of their lives.
    - 2. Barnabas' encouragement changed John Mark's life. Think about it, what would have happened if Barnabas would not have encouraged John Mark? Would he have quit? Would Paul have thought him to be useful as we see 2 Tim. 4:11? Would he have been used to write the Gospel according to Mark?

- D. Encouraging words can turn people's lives around for the good like a teacher in New York decided to honor each of her seniors in high school by telling them the difference they each made. Using a process developed by Helice Bridges of Del Mar, California, she called each student to the front of the class, one at a time. First she told them how the student made a difference to her and the class. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters which read, "Who I Am Makes a Difference.'
1. Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this acknowledgment ceremony. Then they were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom and report back to the class in about a week.
  2. One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. Then he gave him two extra ribbons, and said, "We're doing a class project on recognition, and we'd like you to go out, find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra blue ribbon so they can acknowledge a third person to keep this acknowledgment ceremony going. Then please report back to me and tell me what happened."
  3. Later that day the junior executive went in to see his boss, who had been noted, by the way, as being kind of a grouchy fellow. He sat his boss down and he told him that he deeply admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon and would he give him permission to put it on him. His surprised boss said, "Well, sure.'
  4. The junior executive took the blue ribbon and placed it right on his boss's jacket above his heart. As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school and we want to keep this recognition ceremony going and find out how it affects people."
  5. That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, "The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the junior executives came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I'm a creative genius. Then he put this blue ribbon that says 'Who I Am Makes A Difference' on my jacket above my heart. He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you. I want to honor you.
  6. "My days are really hectic and when I come home I don't pay a lot of attention to you. Sometimes I scream at you for not getting good

- enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess, but somehow tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid and I love you!"
7. The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he couldn't stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, "I was planning on committing suicide tomorrow, Dad, because I didn't think you loved me. Now I don't need to." (Chicken Soup For the Soul, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, HCI, pp. 19-21).
  8. At this moment, there may be someone in your life that needs your encouragement. It may give them the hope that they have longed to have. Our encouraging words can turn lives around.
- E. I don't know about you but I am going use my words to help turns lives around for the good.
1. Antwone Fisher was born in an Ohio correctional facility while his mother was incarcerated. By then his father had already been dead for two months. As a result, he grew up a ward of the state in foster care. For longer than thirteen years, he lived with a couple who abused him horribly. Daily he was beaten down—physically, verbally, sexually, and psychologically. He was often tied to a post in the basement and beaten. His foster mother used to brag that she had once beaten him until he was unconscious.
  2. By the time Fisher entered the third grade, he had lost any natural love for learning. In addition, the constant rebuke from his foster mother that he was the worst child in the world had convinced him that he couldn't learn and had no future. He failed fourth grade and was scheduled to repeat it. But then something wonderful happened. His foster family moved, which put him in a new school district. His new teacher was Mrs. Profit.
  3. Under Mrs. Profit's care. Fisher began to change his thinking about himself, He says, "If self-esteem was what you used to fill up like a tank of gas, his foster family had siphoned mine out to nothing. Mrs. Profit helped changed all that. Despite his gains, his academic progress was still meager by the end of the year. He was in danger of once again failing fourth grade. But then Fisher got another break. It was decided that Mrs. Profit would stay with her class of students and continue teaching them in the fifth grade. And it was then that an event occurred that would change his thinking forever.
  4. It happened one day during reading, Fisher, a terribly shy child who sometimes stuttered, was asked to read along, and instead of panicking, he read well, including successfully sounding out a difficult word. Then Mrs. Profit praised him, saying, "I'm proud of you. I want you to know that I really struggled over promoting you, and I'm so glad that I did. You are doing very well this year." Those words made something click in Fisher's head. He writes,

5. “Her honest, careful words are the equivalent of lighting bolts and thunderclaps. Outside I shyly accept her praise, but inside I’m flying with the birth of a revelation. It’s the first time I’ve ever realized that there is something I can do to make things different for myself. Not just me, but anyone....This lesson is a piece of gold I’ll keep tucked in my back pocket for the rest of my life.
  6. These encouraging words changed the direction of Antwone Fisher’s life, he did not choose the hopeless path of drugs and crime of his mother, father, foster brother, and friends. He went on to serve in the military and became a screenwriter in Hollywood. He has become a responsible citizen and family man he always desired to be with a wife and daughter. ( John Maxwell, Encouragement pp.79-81).
- II. Antwone Fisher’s life shows what Richard M. Devos once stated, “Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive push, A smile, A word of optimism and hope. A “you can do it” when things are tough. The Bible has been telling us for centuries what many are just finding out today that encouraging words can turn peoples lives around for the good.
1. Pro 15:26, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are pure.”
  2. Pro 16:24, “Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”
  3. Pro 27:9, “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.”
  4. “I wish there was some way that I could communicate to you the incredible blessing which affirming words impart to people. I wish, too, that you could sit in my office, and hear the terrible damage that individuals received from not hearing encouraging words. Evil and cruel words can tear down and lead people in a wrong direction and usually have a destructive end.
  5. You know on the other hand words like:
    - a. I’m proud of you!
    - b. Way to go!
    - c. You did it!
    - d. Magnificent!
    - e. I knew you could do it!
    - f. What a good helper!
    - g. You’re very special to me!
    - h. I trust you!
    - i. What a treasure!
    - j. Hurray for you!
    - k. Beautiful work!
    - l. You’re a real trooper!
    - m. Well done!
    - n. That’s so creative!
    - o. You make my day!
    - p. You’re a joy!
    - q. Give me a big hug!

- r. You're such a good listener!
  - s. You figured it out!
  - t. I love you!
  - u. You're the best!
  - v. You sure tried hard!
  - w. I couldn't be prouder of you!
  - x. You light up my day!
  - y. I'm praying for you!
  - z. You're wonderful! I'm behind you!
  - aa. You're God's special gift!
  - bb. I'm here for you! (John Trent, Ph.D., Vice President of Today's Family, Men of Action, Winter 1993, p. 5)
5. These words have great power! We have tremendous power to affect the lives of the people around us. Encouragement from you could be the difference-maker in someone's day, week, or even life, sending that person in a whole new direction. Isn't this what the Bible has been saying all long? Doesn't God want us to be pointing people to Heaven? There is not a better way to this than by using our words wisely and kindly!
  6. Rom 15:2-7, "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."
  7. "Encouragement is the process of inspiring others to live with greater hope and courage." (Aubrey Johnson, p.45).
  8. Isn't this what Jesus did in His ministry as record in the Gospels? Isn't this what Rom. 15:2-7, is encouraging us to do? Isn't this the Christian way?
  9. To chose our words wisely because our encouraging words can turn people's lives around for good and point them towards Heaven?
  10. You know parents only have about 18 years to encourage their children to live on their own and raise a family of their own. Most school teachers only have about 1 year to teach and inspire their children. And most preachers only have about 20-30 minutes on a Sunday morning to encourage the congregation to stay faithful to Christ and share the good words of Life. The time is short no matter how you look at it, I don't know about you but I am going to chose words that will encourage, build up, and words that will change people's lives for the good and for the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
  11. Jesus is about changing lives for the good, which is why He came to this earth to die on the Christ, and be resurrected on the third day, because He wanted to change the direction of the lives of people for the good, for Salvation, for the forgiveness of sins, and gift of eternal life! You notice in reading the Gospel

Jesus began and end his ministry upon with words, and these words are recorded for us to live by and change our direction for all eternity.

12. Heb 1:2, "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."
13. Have you chosen to believe the words of Jesus and accept His gift of salvation and eternal life? You can by confessing Christ as Lord and Savior, Repenting of your sins, and putting Christ on in baptism for the forgiveness of sins and be raised to new life. So you can go in a new direction.
14. Mat 7:24, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."
15. Mat 7:26, "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand."
16. Jesus words are powerful, how will you respond to Jesus words that can change your life? If you would like to respond to the invitation do so now as we stand and sing.

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