

ENCOURAGEMENT - EPHESIANS 6:19-24

We think of Paul as being super spiritual, mature and in a close relationship with God. Yet he still needed the support, prayers and encouragement of his Christian friends.

1. Can anyone give an example of a person whose encouragement led them to take on a whole new area of activity which has brought them a greater level of success or satisfaction?
2. How do we encourage people when things are likely to get worse? For example a friend hears that he has a terminal illness? Ephesians 6:23-24
3. Discuss the poem below by William Arthur Ward. How true is it in your life?
Flatter me, and I may not believe you.
Criticize me, and I may not like you.
Ignore me, and I may not forgive you.
Encourage me, and I will not forget you.
4. In spite of the coming trials and difficulties the Ephesus Church could have new heart breathed into them because they would be able to experience God's peace, faith, love and grace. No one could take these things away. Do you think that we often take these things for granted? Have you experienced trials and difficulties where they become more real to you?
5. According to research the average person's anxiety is focused on:
40% -- things that will never happen.
30% -- things about the past that can't be changed.
12% -- things about mostly invalid criticism by others.
10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress.
8% -- about real problems that will be faced

It follows that 92% of our stresses or anxieties can be relieved by just a word of encouragement... Discuss

6. Paul probably didn't find that encouragement came easily. Being naturally gifted can make it difficult to understand the struggles that others go through. Paul was self-disciplined, he had neither wife nor children to rub some of the rough edges off him. In many ways it would have been difficult for him to identify with ordinary people. Do you agree?
7. **2 Cor 1:4** *He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.* Incidents like this may have made Paul less harsh & more encouraging. Share an event in your life that has made you more empathetic and understanding.
8. Paul's friend Tychicus is mentioned only five times in scripture. He is described as being 'a dear brother', a 'faithful servant in the Lord.' 'a trustworthy messenger' and 'an encouraging example'. He was humble and dependable. Come beating, shipwreck, or prison, Paul could always depend upon Tychicus who was always there. Do you know anyone like this?
9. Are you an encouraging person? In what ways can you be more encouraging?