

Articles and Sermons :: Encouraging Others -poonen**Encouraging Others -poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/7/25 12:24****Encouraging Others***by Zac Poonen*

Paul and Barnabas strengthened the souls of the disciples in the churches they had established, "by encouraging them" - so the record reads (Acts 14:22). We too can strengthen others through a ministry of encouragement - not only through the preaching of the Word, but also by offering appreciation where it is due.

Jesus was always quick to give a word of appreciation where due. He praised a centurion for his faith (Matt. 8:10), a repentant woman for her love (Luke 7:47) and Mary of Bethany for her devotion (Luke 10:42; Mark 4:8,9). To His faithful disciples, He said, "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials" (Luke 22:28).

Paul when writing to the churches - even to the most carnal ones - usually found something to appreciate in them. To the church in Corinth, riddled with factions, disputed and immorality, Paul began his letter thus: "I can never stop thanking God for all the wonderful gifts He has given you, now that you are Christ's. He has enriched your whole life. He has helped you speak out for Him and has given you a full understanding of the truth; what I told you Christ could do for you has happened! Now you have every grace and blessing; every spiritual gift and power for doing His will are yours during this time of waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He guarantees right up to the end that you will be counted free from all sin and guilt on that day when He returns. God will surely do this for you, for He always does just what He says, and He is the One Who invited you into this wonderful friendship with His Son, even Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:4-9-TLB). Only then did he go on to say, "But, dear brothers, I beg you in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves" (verse 10).

Paul tried to begin with something positive. So must we. This does not come naturally to all of us. Most of us tend to see the negative side of others first. But if we submit to the discipline of the Holy Spirit, we shall find Him showing us something to appreciate in everyone.

A teacher once spread a large white sheet of paper with a small ink-spot in one corner, in front of his class and asked the children to write down what they saw. All of them described the small ink-spot and no-one mentioned the large area of unspotted paper. So too, in human relationships: We often tend to concentrate on people's minor defects and do not see the good in them. Altering one's outlook requires determination but it is worth the effort. Gradually the habit of noticing people's good qualities can be acquired. The next step is to tell them how much one appreciates those good qualities.