

Unpacking the Preach

Date: 14th November 2021
Sermon Title: Gifts of the Spirit: encouragement
Bible Passage: Romans 12: 3 - 8

Introduction

Take time to read the passage from a few different translations.

- Which of the spiritual gifts mentioned in vs.3-8 do you think is the most important?
- When you think of 'encouragement' what comes to mind?
- What kind of 'encouragement' do you respond to best: rewards for doing well, threat of punishment, fear of failure, someone being with you through the trial, something else?

Recapping the Preach

Stu mentioned that experiencing discouragement is a part of life, in fact Jesus warned us that 'In this life you will have trouble' (John 16:33). He mentioned some examples from Scripture where people experienced discouragement: from people, from being tired and worn out, from the 'trash and rubble' in life and from having our confidence knocked.

- Which of these discouragements stand out to you?
- What are some of the things that leave you feeling discouraged (having lost confidence or enthusiasm, disheartened)?
- What do you normally do when you feel discouraged?

Stu described encouragement as 'to motivate, encourage and console others so that they mature in their walk and grow in their faith and be effective in discipling others and engaging in mission'. He went on to describe what biblical encouragement should look like: 1) comfort with presence 2) challenge with words 3) inspires by staying faithful. This is quite different to how people usually think of 'encouragement' as stroking (saying, 'there there it will all be OK) or jumping in to fix things or telling our own war stories.

- Why do you think that God chooses to promise us His presence in our difficulty, rather than simply sorting out the problems?
- Why do you think presence brings comfort and encouragement?
- When we encourage people we can challenge them with words reminding them of God's promises. How do you think this helps motivate and console people?
- What are some 'go to' promises of God which motivate and console you?
- When we challenge people with words we also warn, rebuke, reprimand them so that they follow Jesus more closely (ie. speak the truth in love). Why is it difficult to do this?
- Read the story of Jonathan and his armour bearer in 1 Samuel 14:1-14. Why would Jonathan have felt encouraged by his armour bearer's actions?
- Is there someone in your life who you are 'heart and soul' with?

Response

- Is there anything from the preach and passage that you will be taking away to reflect on or work on?
- Who and how can you encourage someone today or in the week ahead?

Prayer pointers

- Pray for the gift of encouragement.
- Take time to share prayer requests and pray for one another.
- Pray for friends and family who you know need encouragement today.

Additional resources:

If you need some additional resources the below websites are useful:

- <https://www.gotquestions.org>
- <https://enduringword.com>
- <https://www.biblica.com>
- <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/>