

## WARM UP

The Greek noun used for "encouragement" is paraklesis, which means a calling to one's side or aid. The word para meaning "by the side" and kaleo, "to call". So encouragement is what I call an "alongside ministry". As Christians we may not all be ministers or called to preach but we all have a unique ministry, and that is to be an encourager. Remember that a word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success. Will this come naturally? No! It has to be cultivated.

## BACKGROUND

Praise and encouragement is not only gratifying but it is the source of fresh energy imparted to the recipient, and its effect can actually be measured in a laboratory. Dr Henry H. Goddard, from New Jersey USA, used the ergograph, an instrument devised to measure fatigue. When a tired, weary child was verbally encouraged and praised while using the instrument, the child's energy-curve was seen to soar. But when words of criticism or fault-finding were spoken and measured, they had a remarkable opposite effect.



## READ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

### QUESTIONS

1. What reason is given in our verse for God comforting and strengthening us in our hardships? Discuss and give examples of encouragement in your own life.
2. When you don't feel like it but still go out of your way to encourage and praise someone else, what does that do for you?

3. The Council of Apostles at Jerusalem sent a letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia about food offered to idols and circumcision etc. Read what they did when it was read (Acts 15:30-32). Could you write a letter, make a phone call, send a card or email that would have the same effect? Discuss practical ways of encouraging one another.

4. Barnabas was given a name by the Apostles. What was it and why? (See Acts 4:36.) In Hebrews 3:13 the writer says we must do what? Are you? Some verses for encouraging others: Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 32:8, Psalm 91:11,12, Isaiah 41:10,13, Isaiah 54:17, Jeremiah 33:3.

## 7:20 IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER

### MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER

I will purpose to go on a "treasure hunt" to find positive things to praise and encourage my wife and children for in an ongoing way, showing an attitude of gratitude!

I will cultivate the art of blessing people with my lips, renouncing all forms of negativity.

## CONSIDER THIS

I heard of a dear old lady who had been a school teacher for over 40 years. One day a man who was successful in business decided to write her a letter. He wanted to thank her for the warmth and dedication that she as his school teacher had invested into his young life which contributed to his success as an adult. That lady said it was one of her most treasured possessions. She also sadly mentioned that of the hundreds of youngsters she had taught over the years, this was the only letter of thanks and appreciation that she had ever received. Maybe all of us need a few more drops of Barnabas' blood in our veins!

## WRAP UP

As a group think of practical ways of being an encourager, and share your ideas. Remember Jesus first made friends before He made converts. By encouraging and uplifting even the unchurched, you will earn your right to be heard and find a way into their hearts. People generally don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care!