

BUILD UP One Another

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[0 : 0 0] We've been here at St. Paul's, the Barnett family. We've been here for three months. And one of the things that was not written into my contract, but strongly suggested, was to take part in a thing called park runs.

Has anybody heard of park runs? Yes, some people. What park runs are they? They happen at 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning. And lately it's been quite cold at 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning. And it's a 5K run. And there's actually a number of people from church that do it. And you could do it too, if you like. And so I was heavily encouraged by the team to join.

And look, it's nice to get out and run first thing in the morning. It's pretty cold and exhausting. But it's all about the last 200 meters. Not just because they are the last 200 meters, but also what happens on this run is you kind of, you crest a hill and you come down these last 200 meters and there is the finish line.

And there are all these people standing there shouting encouragement. You can do it. Come on. Don't stop now. Why are you lying down? Get over that line.

[1 : 1 6] It spurs you on. It helps you put on a boost of speed to get over the line. It is great to be encouraged. And it's great to encourage.

It is great to build up. And it is great to be built up. Because our words are powerful. They can spur people on. They can encourage.

They can build up. But our words can also tear down. Our words can cripple. You are a hopeless runner. Don't even bother finishing.

We're going home. You can walk home. I wonder which of these two is the more natural way of speaking for you. Is it encouraging or is it tearing down?

Is it speaking in passive, aggressive ways that damage? Pointing out people's faults and niggling at one another. When we come to the Christian faith, it is often described as a race.

[2 : 1 7] It's not quite the same as a 5K park run at 7am on a Saturday morning. But the whole life. The race following Jesus is not over in 30 minutes.

It's 30 years, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 years. And in that time, we may fall down. We may stumble.

And we are going to need to be picked up many times in our lives if we are to make it to the end.

That last day when we either meet Jesus when he returns or we die and we meet Jesus.

And the challenge for us today is to think about how we use our words as we run this race. It is easy to tear down, to cripple, and to cause people to stumble with our words, not even thinking about what we say.

It is much more difficult, but so important to be shouting encouragement to one another as we head toward Jesus. And so let me pray as we have a look at God's word as he speaks to us today.

[3 : 2 8] Let me pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we ask that you would help us to consider our words, help us as we consider how we encourage and build up one another.

Lord, we know that you love us so much. Help us to love each other with our words as well. And we ask this in your Son's name and for your glory. Amen.

And so we're going to be considering why we should encourage people, and then there'll be some helpful tips to encourage people.

And so firstly, encouraging one another is what Christians are supposed to do. Hebrews chapter 10, which was read for us, is this great passage of the Bible, which explains what the sacrifice of Jesus has done and how it brings forgiveness.

And so the author gets to the implication in verse 19. And it starts with therefore, because Jesus has sacrificed himself. His sacrifice is once for all.

[4 : 36] We don't need to continually make sacrifices. Therefore, we are to do these things. And the author of Hebrews has the phrase, let us, and he has the phrase since.

So have a look from verse 22 with me. If you've got your Bibles open, if not, please open them. And if you need a Bible. So since we have confidence to enter the most holy place, two, let us draw near to God.

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another. And all the more as you see the day approaching. There are three commands, three lettuces, if you like to eat lettuce.

[5 : 48] There's three let us. First of all, let us draw near to God. Let us hold to the hope we have in Christ and let us encourage one another and spur on and build up.

Now, I'm sure that if you've been in church for any length of time, you've heard of those first two. Drawn near to God. Run away from your sin that so easily entangles.

God has done so much for you. Don't chase after other things and hold to the hope we have in Christ. Don't hope that other things will bring you joy.

These are very common themes in the Bible. And they're things we talk about here at St. Paul's regularly. But it's the third command that we're going to focus on. The author of the Hebrew adds that we should be encouraging one another, that we should be spurring one another to love and good deeds.

It's right up there in importance with drawing near to God and holding to the hope in Jesus to encourage one another and to draw near and hold hope.

[6 : 58] And we see the same theme running through 1 Thessalonians that Adrian read from chapter 5. He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing. Encourage. Build up one another. This is what a Christian does because Jesus has died for us.

Just like obedience and sharing the gospel are the right response to God's love and grace, so is encouraging one another. Now, you may not know this about Steve Jeffery, but he is actually a pretty good runner.

You might not know. He's been away. He's probably been running a bit. I don't know if he's beaten his PB. Maybe we can ask him later. He has. Congratulations, brother. But not only is he a good runner, he knows how to run.

And so on my first park run, on my first time running the park run, Steve was running next to me. And it was encouraging and also quite annoying because I had to stay with him.

[8 : 12] He's like, come on, keep running. Don't stop. I was like, oh, I just want to lie down a bit. And I'm not sure if you run, but I always run faster when I'm running with someone else.

As we run the Christian race, as we are heading to Jesus, how great is it that we can run alongside one another?

It does not need to be a lonely run, but it's a partnership. And look, let me plug community groups again. These are a great place to run the race together.

having people in your corner, standing on the sidelines or next to you as you run, encouraging you when following Jesus is hard.

It's hard to be a Christian. You encourage them when they stumble and your brother or sister fall into sin and they do something stupid and you pull them out. They can challenge you when sin takes over.

[9 : 14] They love you in despair, laugh with you when you are laughing and cry with you when you are crying. Christians are saved and united with one another to encourage one another and to build up each other as we run this race.

And so that is the first reason why we run. We run because that's the first reason we encourage one another and that is because it's what Christians do. The second reason is because the end is near. So these two passages, Hebrews 10, 1 Thessalonians 5, they give us another reason to encourage one another. Hebrews 10, let us spur on one another to love and good deeds and encourage one

another all the more as you see the day approaching.

That day is that day when Jesus returns. 1 Thessalonians 5, because the day of the Lord is coming, we should therefore encourage one another and build each other up.

Both of these passages tell us to encourage and build up one another because the end is near. It's just like those last 200 metres of that park rung.

[10:30] We are close to the end of this race. Now we don't know when the day of the Lord is. We don't know the day that Jesus will return. And in the same way, we don't know when we will die.

We don't know when God will call us home. But what we do know is that Jesus could return at any moment. It could be this minute.

I feel like pausing for a whole minute and saying that I won't. Now the end might not feel like it's soon. It might feel like it is a long way away.

But because it is soon, we need to be ready. We need to be waiting for Jesus to come back. We need to be expecting Him to come back. And we need to be encouraging one another to keep trusting in Jesus.

Keep drawing near to Him. To keep holding on to God. We need to have another person focused that says, I'm going in this direction.

[11:32] Come with me as I follow Jesus. And so we encourage one another because the end is near. And third, we encourage and build up one another because the race is hard.

Hebrews 3 says, encourage one another daily as long as it is called today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Encourage one another because our sin wants to deceive us.

We live in a time when we are distractible. I've read some studies recently and they suggest that our attention span because of technology is now shorter than a goldfish.

I'm not sure how you feel about that. I'm not sure if you feel like I'm going to go and beat those goldfish. but our attention span is now less than nine seconds.

It is easy for us to get distracted. We are just easy to get distracted and it's easy for us to get distracted by sin. Running in the wrong direction. Instead of following Jesus we turn around and want to chase something else.

[12:49] We're to run following Jesus obeying him because he died for us but we turn around and we chase our selfish desires that war within us. In that direction I'm not pointing at anybody in particular in that direction is all the money and power that I can have.

If I have all the money I want I can have all the things I want and if I have power I can be in control and I can chase all the sex that I want. The race following Jesus is hard and so we need people to encourage us to keep going.

We do it in general ways to everyone from up front. I'm hopefully encouraging you right now to keep running the race but we also need the people in our lives to keep pointing us to Christ and to say following Jesus is worthwhile even when it is hard.

But we also need encouragement in our lives because we also receive many hard words. We live in a broken world where everything calls us to despair.

Everything points out that this world is broken. It calls us to selfishness. Sin it steals our joy our bodies are breaking down our plans falter our dreams die our resolves weaken our perspective dims there is suffering there is persecution there are trials it is pretty simple life can suck being a Christian is not always easy there are very real problems in our lives we might find it easier to just sit down and think this race following Jesus is just hard life is busy so maybe I'll just have a week off church and it turns into two weeks maybe I'll just stop going to community group because I'm tired and all these things end up to isolation and distance from the people who help us keep going we need to build up we need to encourage and we also need to be encouraged because when encouragement is absent from church when encouragement is absent from us as people we'll feel unloved unimportant useless and forgotten

[15:30] God knows that we are people who need a daily reminder of his grace and so he calls us to encourage each other every day until his son returns so we encourage first of all because it's what a Christian does we encourage because the end is near and we encourage because life is hard but what does this look like now that we know we are to do it what does it actually look like to encourage someone let me just quickly read the start of a couple of Paul's letters the welcomes to his letters I'm not sure if when you're reading Paul you just skip through the start of Paul's letters and get to the good stuff let me just read from 1 Corinthians 1 1 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus for in him you have been enriched in every way with

all kinds of speech and with all knowledge

God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus to be revealed that's 1 Corinthians 3 tell me if you pick up any themes as we go through Philippians 1 I thank my God every time I remember you in all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus 1 Thessalonians 1 we always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers we remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ lastly Colossians 1 we always thank

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all of God's people the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven did you get any common thread anyone it's not rhetorical you can shout out at me that's all right yes what was a common thread praise Jesus Paul thanks God he makes it really clear who he's thanking he's thanking God that's that's the first way that we to think about encouragement we thank God and Paul makes it really clear who gets the glory the glory all goes to God these aren't words to puff up someone's head to make their ears too far apart from last week and second he tells them what they're doing right the Colossians church in this case they're trusting God the Thessalonians are working hard the

Philippians well they've been great partners so thank God tell them what they're doing right and third Paul acknowledges that it's all God who enables them to do this it's God's gift from Colossians their faith sprang from heaven their faith was not from themselves this is a great picture of what building up and encouraging another person could look like can you imagine if you were these churches and you got that letter from Paul that would have been wonderfully encouraging start with thanking God be specific but we do need to be careful to be encouraging and building up in the Lord and not just building up a person in their self confidence and their own ego because flattery and encouragement are two different things flattery or even compliments can be a motivation to be liked I could say who can

I pick on Adrian Adrian you just your haircut is just glorious your head is just a beautiful circle and look at him he's smiling he's going red in the face but it's flattery he feels nice and he likes me that's that's all that interaction is flattery can be superficial it is quick it's immediately satisfying look he's still smiling that smile might be there for another 30 seconds but encouraging and building up is loving truth telling we live in a time where it's really easy to be encouraged and built up in a little way by social media you post a picture or you write a comment in the hope that you will get liked I really want people to like this pretty picture of myself

[20 : 39] I spent four hours putting on makeup got the right filter in this modern socially connected world the way that we affirm and encourage one another is just by clicking a button and saying yeah I like you and I like this photo so here you go I've affirmed you I've built you up aren't I a good friend no number of likes is going to satisfy a person even if I get 100 or 200 likes there's always a desire for more maybe if I put another photo up tomorrow with a cute dog I'll get even more likes maybe take the right photo of my food I wonder what would happen what would happen right now if I took a photo a selfie of myself with all of you beautiful people and put it up on Facebook I wonder how many likes we could get I wonder how people would respond to that so I want to do this experiment if I can I want to see how many likes

I can is anybody give consent to taking a photo it's kind of hard to get all of you in so which part of the church should I get these ones here there's no one here sitting in this spot how about I if I come down and do this okay now I'm not going to encourage you to go and like it if you see that photo on Facebook later it's up to you but clicking on a photo is easy you can come back tonight to church and see the results but it is much harder than just clicking on a button to actually encourage someone encouragement that says I thank God for the person he has made you to be I appreciate you and I appreciate how you serve with the gifts that

God has given you it is much harder than clicking like but it is also much more important it speaks to the person's heart it speaks to the person's skills and the way God has made them and we might think look I'm just not good at that speaking words of love that's not my love language I'm not good at that so it doesn't matter I'll love people in other ways I won't speak to them but I'll buy them a gift God tells us that we need to speak words of encouragement and to build up one another now one

of my issues personally has been that my sense of humor means that I often make jokes at other people's expense you can know if I like you because I'll put you down and make a joke at your expense that's historically Adrian smiling at this isn't that a shame that he knows this it's really hurtful because what

I'm doing is I'm tearing someone down making a joke about them laughing at them to build myself up I have sarcastic humor that jokes oh you're great at something you're you know Adrian you've got a circle for a head or whatever I said before and that got a cheap laugh but I put people down to build myself up I'd like to blame all the sarcastic English humor I watched growing up but it is just my fault it is something I still struggle with putting other people down to make myself feel more valuable so I'm really aware of it and there's another name that people use for it these days they call it banter I don't know if you've heard of the word banter young men in particular will rip into each other and say all kinds of hurtful things but they argue it's playful it doesn't matter we're just joking around what are the words that are coming out of our mouths are they designed to build up or do they tear down at the expense of someone else encouragement is shared in the hope that it will lift someone's heart towards

God it's evidence of God working in their lives to help them see how God is using them it points a person to God's promise that assures them that all that they face is under God's control let me encourage you make encouragement a daily discipline for some here encouragement is just what you do some people are really great encouragers you may be sitting here going yeah I'm great at encouragement I'm already good at this but I think for many of us you're more like me we tear down because it's far easier we need to make it a daily discipline to encourage to text to email or even do it in person and we need to pray to God to show you who needs encouragement you never know who in your life is really struggling who is stumbling who needs to be contacted and when you do a be specific don't just stumble around and say

[26 : 10] I'll keep picking on Adrian Adrian you're great I think you're good be specific like Paul was with the churches encourage your pastors encourage Steve you can even send Steve a text encouraging him right now you can encourage and thank God for your community leaders your community group leaders the people who serve you morning tea and soup because it's soup Sunday today encourage and thank them when Steve preaches next week give him specific encouragement let me challenge you don't just say good sermon pastor don't just come up to me after church and say something just because I'm telling you to now either be specific when we encourage and build up people and let us be praying that God would create a culture here at St.

Paul's of encouraging and building up one another that we would speak loving words that are specific pray that God would use it like a fan to a flame to build us up in love with one another and let me just put a little caveat here be really wise when you're encouraging and building up someone of the opposite sex make sure you stay away from any language that could be perceived as flirtation now this week as I've been preparing this message I've been really challenged by this and so I've been trying to encourage as many people as I could and so maybe you received a text from me this week so I sent a couple of people a text I found it really easy to send out texts to say hey Adrian I didn't send you a text but let me pretend I really thank God for how deliberate you are in mission and it's great that God has gifted you with those skills I've been sending out those texts and then

I tried to do it in person with someone and it was really awkward it was really weird I love the person that I was speaking to but it was just like oh hey Adrian this is awkward and the person I was speaking to said oh that felt really awkward someone else in the room said oh that was awkward and so does that mean I just go okay from now on I'm just going to send you a text I don't encourage in person you know if I see someone really struggling I go into a room and send them a text no we just need to be better at I just need to practice because I think it would be easy for us to leave here today thinking yes I'm going to become a great encourager but the reality is that for us we will forget by dinner we'll forget by after we have soup

Sunday for lunch I want everyone to practice this right now so let me encourage you take out your phone and I'm going to give you two options I want you to visualize it someone that you are going to encourage and write down what you are going to say so you can either write down what you're going to say there's pens in front of you there's cards in front of you write it on the back of your hand take those cards in front of you I'll give you this once use these for a different purpose that's okay write down encouragement or if you would prefer get your phone out and send someone a text right

now I'm actually not joking we're going to do this right now I'm going to take out my phone in a minute and I'm going to send someone in this room I haven't decided yet I'm going to send someone a text encouraging them and the model for us I really thank God for you Nick do I have this you want to go back a slide brother

I really thank God for you I really appreciate how you use your gifts and that you've been given by God so I could say to my darling wife hey Alyssa I really thank God for you and how he has made you an awesome wife and mother God has truly blessed me richly now that's not that hard that didn't feel that awkward nobody else shouted out that was awkward you know hey Frank just wanted to let you know I really thank God for how he has made you a great encourager really appreciate it cheers bud so we're going to do this right now get your phone out write down a piece of paper we're going to practice this because we need to so take your time don't think too much just send it don't overthink it I haven't received any messages yet but that's okay I'm going to pray for us and then we're going to come to a time of communion heavenly father lord you love us so much you love us with an unbelievable amount of love father we thank you so much for the life the death and the resurrection of

[31 : 32] Jesus lord thank you that we get to be a people that are brought into your family loved forgiven united humbled before you and lord we ask that you would help us to build up one another help us to be encouragers father we ask that this would be a fan to the flame of our community that we would grow in love for one another and that we would grow in love for expressing it to one another give us the gift of encouragement help us be like Barnabas the son of encouragement to not just come to church and go home but to speak words of love to see deeply how you how you have gifted to appreciate what you are doing in other people's lives as you even continue to work in our lives

Lord and we ask all of this in your son's name and for your glory amen another wonderful way we have of encouraging and building one another up is in the Lord's Supper