

The Power of Encouragement. - Shane

Great message from Sean!

Writing this preach has been stretching, and gave me a new appreciation for what Dad (Pastor Sam) does on a weekly basis on top of what he already does.

I'll be carrying on from where Sean left off and speaking on another 3 points on encouragement.

During my message I'll be asking a lot of questions. And i'm doing this so that in answering the questions and drawing your own conclusions, you'll better understand and the culture, as a church, that we are trying to bring about last longer.

Paul Scanlon talks about 'intrinsic' vs 'bolted on' change.

- 'Bolted on' i.e the people that join a gym as a new year's resolution, with a wrong motivation.
- 'Intrinsic' - People who go because they understand that it's good for their health and will benefit them in near and distant future.

I want us to bring about a culture and environment of encouragement that will last longer than 2 weeks because: It's good for the health of the church and will benefit us in the near and distant future. One of my dreams that come out of this, is that our church will become so encouraging, it will be such an uplifting environment that the only problem is for people trying to keep themselves humble. And obviously that each person is leading and impacting to the best of their God given abilities.

4) What does encouragement do? What is the impact of encouragement?

The next great impact that encouraging has on people is that it draws out the God-given potential in people and it allows people to see themselves as God sees them. It pulls out potential'

An example of this that was seen in the Bible is when Jesus is calling his first disciples, the story in Matthew of Simon-Peter and Andrew fishing. Jesus says *"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men"*.

Another example is when Jesus called Matthew to be his disciple. He looked past what they were, and where they were, and instead saw what God wanted them to be. Matthew was a tax

collector and in those days tax collectors were renowned thieves. Society had written them off. However when the world saw them as nothing but sinners, thieves and cowards hiding behind the law, what did Jesus see in them? Jesus saw the men that God could use. It was through those men that thousands would come to know him. Through those men the sick would be healed. Through which the early church was birthed and founded and would change the world for the coming millennia. Us sitting here today is a product of Jesus looking past what they saw themselves as, and leading them to fulfill their God given potential.

The way I look at encouraging is you're **Changing People's Trajectories** of where they're going.

Let me explain. One preacher that I watched whilst reading around the subject put it this way, **'It gives that person vision for victory'**. it gives them perspective of what they're capable of.

He went on to give the analogy of when you go to the gym. You've been working out early at 7 in the morning everyday and maybe you're not quite seeing the results you wanted. You still can't fit into those jeans or your figure still doesn't seem beach ready. Then someone out of nowhere asks that key question *"have you lost weight?" "you're looking slimmer, what have you been doing?"* the next day you work out even harder! And why's that? Because someone has rewarded you with a compliment for all your hard work. As Sean said before from *Proverbs 3* *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due"* God wanted us to realise the importance of rewarding people for the works they do.

People thrive off encouragement, myself included.

When I started a group up in Newcastle with a friend, i'm not gonna lie... it came with it's own challenges. Mostly the challenges were to do with the prep and coming ready to answer questions the group might have on the topic that week, which required reading around the subject.

Questions would pop up, i'd do my best to answer. After a few weeks one of the members who came said *"Shane I wish I could speak about the Bible like you do"*. I wasn't really expecting it, and it hit me a lot harder than I can really express. Who can bet that next week I prepped even more? I wasn't expecting or depending on a compliment, all I did was be faithful with what God had put in my hand which was to lead that group. But from that i've never been so eager to see what other revelation God would give me by reading and meditating on his word. I went from someone who did prep more out of obligation, to someone who couldn't be more hungry for his word: **It changed my trajectory.**

Matt Hoffman *"the things I am most encouraged in are the things I will become best at"*

And if you notice, my friends comment wasn't an exceptionally profound encouragement or anything, but you'll find that sometimes it's not the encouragement itself that hits hardest it's the timing... That month in my academic year was probably my most full on month in terms of workload and serving in church... I felt like I was beginning to find my limits, my energy/strength, or rather, they were finding me. That short sentence spurred me on, to keep going. It gave me **Vision for Victory**. *Galatians 6:9 - And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

I wasn't exactly losing heart but I was beginning to feel burnt out... but that word lifted me up and out and gave me perspective.

Another small side-thought, if I asked you who the most influential people are in your life who would you picture? Think for a moment. In one way or another, the people you would've thought would also be the people that encouraged you the most. People like your parents, your family, your spouse. People who actively would've told you that they want nothing but to champion you.

Another deep sounding quote from Sir William Arthur Ward *"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."*

Don't you think that it's interesting that the most influential people in our lives are the ones that encourage us the most? Wouldn't you want to be that person in someone's life? Biggest Positive Influence in someone's life purely because you encouraged them the most?

I believe that encouragement is only as good as the conversations that go on with that person and about that person when they're not around. There's no point saying, "Sean, I see the gift of leadership on your life, and I can tell God is gonna use you mightily" if for the rest of the week all I do is put him down and tell him what a joke he is. I'm then limiting his growth and I've just undone any nourishment that he had gained. If I encourage him today but throughout the week all I did was slate him, then it's like providing that nourishing soil but then putting that plant in a small dark box. It's remaining environment above ground when it's exposed to the outside world has been caged and gives it nothing. You've prevented its growth.

It's also important that you only speak positively of each other when someone's not around. It's is very easy to slander someone and to gossip about someone when they're not about. It's almost natural. A weird fact I heard years ago: If you look at yourself in a mirror for 4 seconds you will find 7 things you don't like about yourself. When we look at people we automatically try and find what's wrong with them, we see their downfalls and what makes them human.

We want to constantly be encouraging each other championing each other to win. You can write this down: **'Where there is no encouragement, there is automatically discouragement'**

Where there is a lack of encouragement, there is discouragement. I'll tell you now if you're not being a voice in someone's life, a positive influence who speaks life into a person then someone or something else will be that voice, that influence. There are 101 other opinions out there that anyone can listen to, and usually they're not good opinions.

I think the youth of today need more than most, to be told that they are good enough, to know that they don't need to change their body to suit a certain mould, to realise there is someone who loves them unconditionally. If they don't hear that from us then the voices and influences in their life will come from social media, come from people in their schools, and will be the news. Where there is a lack of encouragement, there is discouragement.

Proverbs 25:25 - As cold water to a weary soul, So is good news from a far country.

Cold water to a weary soul, it's refreshing, encouragement quenches the soul. If someone isn't getting encouraged or "receiving good news" then what can we say about it? If it's not getting spiritual water it becomes weary, it becomes dry, and lifeless. What did Ezekiel do to things that were dry and lifeless? He spoke life into them, He LITERALLY spoke life into them. *"These dry bones shall live"*

It can be seen as disrespecting the call on his life.

It's almost a self-perpetuating cycle and the only way is up. I'm not saying that after one compliment people will instantly just shoot off, but think of an environment of encouragement more as a nourishing soil, where people are fed and therefore can grow.

Some of the most critical/deeply impacting encouragements I've ever received in my life aren't always the prophecies I receive from the various prophets that visit this church. A lot of the time they're the small but regular encouragements I get that are usually unexpected.

Appendix/Verse list

Proverbs 3:27 - Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of your hand to do so.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Galatians 6:9 - And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Proverbs 25:25 - As cold water to a weary soul,
So is good news from a far country.

Proverbs 12:25 - Worry weighs a person down;
an encouraging word cheers a person up.

Proverbs 31:31 - Reward her for all she has done.
Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.