

Encourage One Another!

By Shari Miller

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

Who would you consider a great encourager in your life? Why? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

Identify specific ways that you have encouraged a professional church worker in your sphere. Share with a partner or in the small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

During this Bible study, we will explore our God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the encouragement He shares with His people. We will look at various workers in the Bible who encouraged and who received encouragement for their ministry among God's people. We praise and thank God for His gifts of grace and salvation because of Jesus. We can admonish, forgive, and encourage one another, particularly those who work for the Lord in our midst. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 urges us to ... *encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, We come before You today to thank You for creating and sustaining our lives. We confess that we have sinned against You and thank You for the gift of salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Savior. You encourage us by sending Your Holy Spirit, in Word and Sacraments, who works through our lives. The Spirit, our Helper, enables us to encourage and build one another up as we share Your message of salvation with those around us. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Our God of Encouragement

Read **Psalm 46**. Identify specific situations and the ways that our God encourages us through these inspired words. **Answers may vary. Could include God helping His people and being their fortress in times of trouble, in times of physical distress, and during upheaval throughout the world.**

¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. ⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. ⁶The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. ⁷The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. ⁸Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. ⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. ¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" ¹¹The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Faith Talk: Read again **Psalm 46:1**. What do the words ... *a very present help in times of trouble* mean to you personally? **Answers may vary.**

What did our Savior accomplish for us in **Philippians 2:5–11**? **He was born, lived a perfect life, suffered, died, rose again, and lives and reigns in heaven.** How does reading these Bible verses or reciting the Apostles' Creed in worship offer us encouragement in our walk with the Lord? **The affirmation of what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus, will encourage us as we sin daily and need our Lord's grace and assurance of salvation [and grace.]**

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by

taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

According to **Hebrews 6:13–20**, what is the encouragement that we have to hold fast to the hope set before us? **God's purpose and oath (promise) are sure; His Word is true and unchangeable. The hope of eternal life is like an anchor in the storms and tempests of life. Jesus rose from the dead, and lives and reigns in heaven. We, too, are encouraged to hold onto the hope and promise of eternal life with our Savior in heaven.**

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Who gives us faith, nurtures our faith, encourages us to grow in faith through the Word, and gives us the power to share that faith with those around us? See **John 14:26** and **Acts 1:8-11**. **The Holy Spirit, the Helper, gives us the power to be witnesses of Jesus Christ with the Good News of salvation.**

John 14:26: But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Acts 1:8-11: ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

According to the following Bible passages, how does the Holy Spirit, the Helper, work in our lives? **Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments)**

1 Thessalonians 2:11–13 The Word of God

¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. ¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Romans 6:3–5 Holy Baptism

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Matthew 26:26–28 The Lord's Supper

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

If time permits: Read the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus in **Luke 9:28–36**. How was the transfiguration encouraging for Jesus in light of His mission here on earth? **He was encouraged and strengthened to**

continue His work on earth. For His disciples? **They, too, were encouraged that Jesus was Lord, and would remember this experience as they would see His death and resurrection; and as His followers, experience subsequent trials during their work on this earth.**

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

God's People of Encouragement

Our loving and gracious God of encouragement asks that we share that encouragement with one another. Read again **1 Thessalonians 5:11**. What action is paired with encouragement in this passage? **Building one another up.** Why? **Answers will vary.**

¹¹ **Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**

Read **Hebrews 13:7**. Who are God's people encouraged to imitate? **Our pastors, teachers, church workers, parents, grandparents, and all those who teach God's Word and lead us in the faith** ⁷ **Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.**

What does Paul say will mutually encourage him and the Romans in **Romans 1:11–12**? **Their shared faith in Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord**

¹¹ **For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—** ¹² **that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.**

Faith Talk: Why would God's people want to encourage their spiritual leaders and workers in the church? **Answers will vary.** Consider **1 Peter 5:8** and discuss why this encouragement is so important. **The devil would delight in the downfall of those who teach and preach the Gospel. If leaders fall, then others will follow.**

⁸ **Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

Look up the following Bible passages. Identify the encourager and the person or group that is being encouraged. In addition, identify what type of encouragement is given.

Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28 **Moses was charged by God to encourage Joshua. Joshua would enter the Promised Land and Moses could model leadership and give him strength for his great task.**

Deuteronomy 1:38: [God said:] ³⁸ **Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.**

Deuteronomy 3:28: [God said:] ²⁸ **But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.**

1 Samuel 18:1, 3 **Jonathan encouraged David with his friendship and love.**

¹ **As soon as he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.** ³ **Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.**

2 Chronicles 35:1–2 **Josiah encouraged the priests to continue faithfully in their duties as outlined by the Lord.**

¹Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem. And they slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. ²He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the Lord.

Acts 15:30–32 Judas and Silas, representing the Church Council, delivered a letter of encouragement to the Gentile believers in Antioch. In addition, they offered their own encouragement and strength.

³⁰ So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³² And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

Philippians 4:1–3 Paul encouraged Euodia and Syntyche to get along in the church, so the message of the Gospel would not be hindered, but could be successfully shared with others; called brothers, friends.

¹Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. ²I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Colossians 2:1–3 Paul encouraged the Colossae and Laodicean Christians as he let them know that they were in his thoughts and prayers.

¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 4:7–9 Tychicus, sent by Paul, along with Onesimus, encouraged the Christians at Colossae with the news about Paul's activities and the spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles. In his letter, Paul praises the workers.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

Read **Romans 15:4–7**, **Philippians 2:1–4**, and **Philippians 4:4–9**. All three Bible passages deal with the relationships between our Christian brothers and sisters. What specific encouraging characteristics given by the Spirit are needed in the body of Christ? List at least ten characteristics. **By the power of the Spirit – endurance, being in the Word, live in harmony, glorify God, welcome one another, love, be in full accord, be of one mind, unselfish, humble, care about one another, rejoice in the Lord, be reasonable, peace, think about worthy things.**

Romans 15:4–7: ⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Philippians 2:1–4: ¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 4:1–9: ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

As their pastor, why would Paul's joy be "complete" (Philippians 2:2) if his parishioners exhibited these characteristics? Would the same be true for your pastors, teachers, other church workers, parents, grandparents, and all those who teach us God's Word and lead us in faith? **Answers will vary, but could include the concept that it would lift Paul's spirits and make him joyful if the faith of the Philippi Christians was lived out among their congregation. Pastors, teachers, and church workers would also be completely joyful to see these traits lived out in their congregations.**

Read Acts 27:33–36. What type of encouragement is given? **Paul encouraged his shipmates to eat food and thus, encouraged their spirits. Often satisfying physical needs will lead to a bolstering of spirit and a change in attitude.**

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. ³⁴ Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves.

If time permits: See the following Bible passages for examples of women who gave this same type of encouragement: 1 Samuel 25:18, 23, 35a; 1 Kings 17:8–16; Luke 7:37–38; Luke 10:38; Luke 10:39; and Acts 18:1–3. Can you think of others?

Abigail 1 Samuel 25:18, 23, 35a: ¹⁸ Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. ²³ When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. ^{35a} Then David received from her hand what she had brought him.

Widow of Zarephath 1 Kings 17:8–16: ⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to him, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

Woman who was a sinner Luke 7:37–38: ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Martha Luke 10:38: ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

Mary listened to Jesus Luke 10:39: And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

Priscilla (and Aquila) Acts 18:1–3: ¹ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

If time permits: Read Acts 18:24–28. What success story about encouragement is related? **Priscilla and Aquila gently taught Apollos the truth that the Christ was Jesus. Apollos was also encouraged to**

continue his ministry and became a great leader in the church. How can admonition in a loving manner be encouraging? **We want to be accurate in our teaching or if we are doing something wrong – if this is approached in a constructive way, the Good News of Jesus can be shared successfully in truth.**

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group specific ways that you can privately and publicly encourage a professional church worker or their spouse in your midst. Make a list and a timeline to accomplish this.

Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

Faith Walk:

1. Encourage and thank a pastor or other church worker who has imitated faith to you and been influential in your life. Be intentional — write a note, send a card, or speak words of encouragement.
2. By the power of the Spirit, encourage a special woman in your life of the salvation you share together in Christ.
3. Look for opportunities to encourage Christian brothers and sisters and then just do it!
4. Find out the special days in your professional church workers' lives. Encourage them to celebrate or celebrate with them.

Closing Litany (based on Colossians 3:12–17):

Leader: Help us, dear Lord, as Your chosen ones, holy and beloved,

Group: To put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Leader: Help us to bear with one another and if we have a complaint against another,

Group: To forgive each other as You, Lord, have forgiven us.

Leader: Enable us to put on love that binds us together in perfect harmony.

Group: Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and help us to be thankful.

Leader: Let Your Word dwell in us richly,

Group: As You help us to wisely teach and admonish one another.

Leader: We thankfully sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in praise to You.

Group: We give You thanks, Father, as You help us to do everything in word and deed,

All: In the name and for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Closing Song (sing together): “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (LSB #649; LW #295; TLH #464).

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry and mother of two grown children, is a free-lance author and musician living in Helena, Montana where she attends First Lutheran Church. Shari is the LMWL Montana District President. She has written numerous articles and studies for the LWML.