



FIXER UPPER

WEEK 4: Encouragement

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Fixer-Upper is a popular TV series starring Chip and Joanna Gaines, who take broken-down old houses and transform them into beautiful homes. We are using the TV series as a means of talking through the potential for God to transform even our most challenging relationships into something beyond what we might have ever imagined possible. Our approach is to do a “deep dive” into a few core Biblical values, each of which has the capacity to radically change the way we interact with our spouses, children, parents, friends, neighbors and co-workers. In this series, we will be demoing some old attitudes and behaviors in order to make room for the good work God wants to do in our lives.

INSPIRE COURAGE

Hebrews 3:13 (NIV) ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

Merriam-Webster defines encouragement as “to inspire with courage”¹. It seems pretty obvious, perhaps even a little boring as one of our relational tools, but when we learn what it is, and what it is not, we see the power it has to change our relational dynamics and change the trajectory of lives. Encouragement is not “en-happymet” or positive thinking. It’s not flattery or exaggerated compliments to make people feel better about themselves. The Biblical use of encouragement goes beyond Webster’s definition. To encourage is the act of imparting courage to embrace God’s identity and calling in their life. To follow God in everything he has for them: their identity in Christ, their calling in Christ, their life in Christ. Biblical encouragement is inspiring people to embrace all of who they were made to be in Jesus Christ, to become like Him.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

What did the author of Hebrews mean by “hardened” in our passage? Why does the author warn us against this? How frequently does he recommend encouragement? List some benefits.

What does it mean to be deceived by sin? Give some examples, some real life experiences where you were “duped” by sin.

SEE THE MASTERPIECE

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Genesis 1:27 (NIV) So God created mankind **in his own image, in the image** of God he created them; male and female he created them.

The Bible says that we are the masterpieces of God; made in His image. God made us for a purpose and a future. But there is also mud on His works of art. That's what sin does; it mars the beauty of His creation. We can choose to focus on the mud or we can choose to focus on the masterpiece. Your focus matters; it can define two very different types of Christianity. There is a type of Christianity that focuses on the mud. It looks for the sin - the cracks and stains. It searches for what is wrong with the picture and defines people by their flaws. It centers very much around what it is against and is very doubt filled, judgmental, and condemning. There is also a type of Christianity that focuses on the masterpiece. This focus doesn't deny the mud, but chooses to see beyond it. They call out the beauty and the value of the masterpiece in the midst of the mud. To really be an encourager is to call out the beauty and majesty of what God has put in us; to see the world through the lens of God.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

When you look in the mirror, what do you see, masterpiece or mud? What would God say about you?

Read **Deuteronomy 6:7**. What guidance does it give us to live a lifestyle of encouragement?

DECIDE TO ENCOURAGE

1 John 3:1 (TLB) See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children—think of it—and we really are! But since most people don't know God, naturally they don't understand that we are his children.

Relationships can be radically affected by encouragement if we make space for it. It can't be microwaved. We need time to see the things you want to call out. Even if the sin hurts you or aggravates you to the edge of crazy, choose to put on Kingdom glasses to see the masterpiece over the mud. Encouragement needs to be authentic to fan the flames of courage in people to go after all that God has for them. When you call out their royal identity, make it real. People know fake and/or exaggerated flattery and it is damaging to our credibility and the relationship. Make encouragement specific. Give specific examples, call out the situation, describe how the person was like Jesus in that moment: His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His patience, His wisdom, His love. Connect the person to hope for something bigger and bolder with Jesus; to walk in the life that God intended for them.

There can be an inclination in people to see the mud when they look in the mirror. To see things that we wish were not there, things that we hope no one will ever find out. And it becomes hard to believe that God would ever love us, that He would have plans and a purpose for us. We can become hard, cold, distant. If we let Him speak into our lives through the encouragement of others over time, He can change the trajectory of our lives to something way beyond what this world offers. **Warning** - when you experience the power of encouragement, you will be addicted!

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

Have you experienced encouragement that has catapulted you? Changed you, the direction in your life?

If you do not practice encouragement regularly, what holds you back?

Is it hard for you to accept encouragement? To believe it when given to you? What holds you back?

ACTIVATION

Proverbs 18:21 tells us that “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Speak life into those around you, including yourself. Find someone this week, and honestly speak life into each other.

ENCOURAGEMENT

May the God of Glory take you from glory to glory, higher and higher!

PROVIDE US WITH FEEDBACK

We are excited about the potential these studies have to help each of us process the weekend message at a deeper level, and to see God change our lives in significant ways. In order to make these guides as helpful as possible, we would love to hear which elements are most helpful, which are least helpful, as well as any other comments, questions or suggestions. Feel free to send your feedback directly to Jon Holmberg at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

Has God been prompting you to lean out over your ski's a bit? Have you had a desire to write, but not sure how to start to scratch that kind of itch? This may be your chance. We are currently looking to expand our team of writers. If you have experience, or no experience, writing studies or devotionals... it's not a big deal – Let God guide your fingers. If you would like to investigate this a bit more please contact me at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encourage>