

The Ministry of Encouragement



Jim Cymbala December 21, 2019

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith ... if it is encouraging, let him encourage” (Romans 12:6, 8).

Of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of encouraging is probably the least appreciated. We constantly hear about the need for solid teaching and proper leadership in a church, but when was the last time the “gift of encouraging” received its proper due? Our need for it is so acute that the Spirit has granted special grace for some of us to specialize in building people’s faith. Just as not all of us are gifted to teach or preach, not everyone has this special anointing to encourage others.

“That you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Romans 1:12). Being strong in the Lord enables us to minister to others who are weak. This is particularly true for encouraging and strengthening someone else’s faith. Our own robust faith spills over to lift up those who are struggling. Faith-filled words and actions act as antidotes to the hopelessness people feel when they have lost their grip on God.

Most often encouragement is conveyed through the words we speak. Consider what Paul says to the Thessalonians: “Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Like Paul, we can encourage others by sharing the teaching of the Scripture and speaking about salvation in Jesus. Remember, “Faith comes from hearing the message” (Romans 10:17). As we speak God’s Word, faith can be born in those who hear it.

When Paul was separated from the believers he cherished, he revealed another avenue for edifying their faith: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:16-17). When Paul could not speak encouragement to the church, *he prayed* that the Holy Spirit would carry on the same work within the believers.

In the same way, if we cannot personally encourage our fellow believers, we can lift them in prayer. What a privilege!

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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