Bible Study on Encouragement

When you were first learning to walk, did your parents spank or discipline you if you did it incorrectly? No--they clapped, sang, hugged you, and got very excited that you were able to walk. How about when you first learned to ride a bike? Did they take your bike away because you were not able to ride it (without training wheels) on the first try? Of course not. They rejoiced with you as you accomplished a goal--to learn to ride your bike without help from Mom, Dad, or training wheels.

Similarly, aren’t we called to encourage each other when things are difficult or when we take a few steps away from the Lord? Jesus has called us to a life of love and encouragement--a life in which we see each other as equal, regardless of our flaws, and tells us that we are to:

Hebrews 10: 24 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

We are supposed to intentionally think about how we might encourage each other toward the life Christ has called us to live. Our jobs are not to discourage or destroy the hope or hearts of those around us. Jesus has called us to help each other. He knows better than anyone how difficult this life is if we are left alone. He wants nothing more than to help us through the difficult times. That’s why He has given us each other--so that we may help each other through the love and comfort we have received from God:

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ, our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort."

Good, bad, ugly, beautiful; doesn’t matter to God. His mission is that we would care for and encourage each other along every step of the way. His objective is for us to learn to care for each other in the same way He cares for each of us, and to use that love and compassion to encourage each other.

Here are some examples of ways in which we can encourage each other:
If someone you know is struggling to overcome an addiction of any type--whether it’s food, drugs, alcohol, or even work--offer to help them get into a Christian-based recovery program.

Offer to be an accountability partner to someone who needs help either getting up early enough to spend time reading their Bible, or setting time aside during the day to do it.

Send inspiring verses to those who need to hear them.
Send flowers, cookies, etc to those who are struggling to let them know you care.
Pray with someone. Don’t just say "I’ll pray for you.". While that’s good, it’s far better to pray with someone right in the moment in which they ask for it. You never know if you’ll have another chance.

Listen. When someone is going through a difficult time, listen to them. Don’t try to give advice unless they ask--just listen with empathy and provide encouraging words to consider surrounding their situation.

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

Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage on another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Jesus knows that time is short. We have precious little time left to win others to Christ. We have even less time to help those who are already Christians, but are struggling needlessly and feeling so very alone. We are called to "let our light shine before men..." (Matthew 5:16). Shining light disperses any darkness and helps those who are blind and need desperately to see.

Encouragement gives us hope--hope that gets us through each and every day. Let’s remember to encourage each other so that the body of Christ will shine like a beacon in the very dark night. It’s that light that will draw others to Christ, as they see us living differently from the rest of the world.