



Love Like Confetti

Part 3 – Encourage One Another

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We're going to talk about encouraging one another. I'm excited to have fun with you guys because every time I prepare for something I just become more mindful of it in my own life. There's a verse I wanted to share with you guys in Proverbs 16: **24 Gracious words...** or encouraging words or redemptive words **...are a like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.** Think about that. Encouraging words are sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

I was in Woodland Hills staff meeting this week and Amy Cunningham was telling me she was making some treats for Ted that involved honey. Later on, she was getting some popcorn together and somehow the honey was just everywhere and Ted was like, "What is this?" Honey gets everywhere and it's sticky. So, when you think about encouraging words, they stick. Honey is sticky and it's messy, but it's also delicious.

When you think about the biblical context of what honey is here, when there are millions of slaves in Egypt and God says, "I'm going to take you to a land flowing with milk and honey," what was the sign of milk and honey? Milk and honey was a phrase for a land that is fertile, a land that is plentiful, a land that is flourishing because if there is honey, then there are lots of flowers and life because those bees are creating honey off of the nectar and that meant there was a lot of life. If there was milk, it meant that there were cows grazing on healthy grass to produce milk or goats doing the same thing to produce milk. So, a land flowing with milk and honey was healthy.

A mouth that is speaking gracious words is healthy. Also, there weren't any Kilwins back then. There weren't any fudgery shops. When you talk about what their delicacy was, honey was it. There might have been some cocoa beans, but they loved God's natural nectar, which was honey. They would grab a honeycomb and that was sugary and delicious and much healthier than the chocolate that we are pounding in our faces today. Sorry, all you chocolate addicts.

Here's the other part of that. If gracious words are like a honeycomb and they stick, hurtful words stick too. Whoever the idiot is that came up with the phrase, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me..." That's just not true. "I'm made of rubber, you're made of glue, whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you." No, it doesn't. I don't know who came up with that. I get the idea to not let words affect you, but the reality is they do.

If I were to be honest, your words... There are five love languages and one of those love languages is words of affirmation. Mine is words of affirmation off the chart. The reality is if you say a hurtful word,

it may not scar externally, but it scars internally. Maybe sticks and stones scar externally, but the reality is words can scar internally. We have no idea, Woodland Hills, how powerful words are.

Think about this for a second. When God created the world, he didn't create it with his hands. He spoke. **Words have power.** When God brought Adam to life, he didn't use his hands to bring him to life. What did he use? His breath brought Adam to life.

Our breath, our mouths, our lips have a lot of power. Because of the culture we're in with social media and news and everything else that's pitting us against each other, whether you're a conspiracy theorist and you think it's Russia pitting us against each other or whatever it is... I'm not here to say that. I'm here to say this. We're here to encourage one another and culture fights us from encouraging one another.

It's hard for some of us to encourage. If I told you – I'm not going to because I don't want it to be awkward for you – to turn to your spouse right now and tell me one thing really encouraging and positive about them, for some of you, that might be difficult. For some of you right now with a rebelling teen, it might be even more difficult to encourage what that teen is doing awesome at. So, we guard our encouraging words.

We also do this. We don't encourage others sometimes because we're envious of what others have or the way God is using them and not us. So, rather than encouraging them for doing awesome things or for the way God is using them, we'd rather not encourage them at all because we don't want to lift them up. **We can't guard our encouraging words especially from fellow believers. We should be the most encouraging people that there are.**

I asked my wife's permission to share this story. My wife would give you the shoes off her feet. She's the most sweet, gentle, quiet spirit, giving, loving, amazing mom I know. She's a giver, she's sacrificial, she loves Jesus, she's amazing. So, I asked if I could share this story because there's one thing she refuses to share – with me, the boys, with any guest, with anybody at a restaurant – and that's her dessert. My wife loves her dessert. She doesn't eat it very often, so when it comes around, she's extra protective.

Whenever we have guests over at our house, I make the giant pizookies, which are skilletts filled with chocolate chip cookie. The other night, we had three guests over at our house; they were staying with us. There were three of them, so I figured Steph and the boys could share one. They are the size of your face and then you scoop like... I've got Blue Bell Chocolate Mint, Cookie Dough, and then Vanilla, so two scoops of melting ice cream on top of that hot cookie out of the oven with the skillet and the hand thing so you don't burn yourself. I got it for all three of the guest and I thought, *I'm just going to make one for her and both the boys. The boys don't need a lot of sugar right before they go to bed.*

She says, "Oh no, no, no. You can make the boys their own cookies."

I'm like, "Sweets, you don't need that whole cookie." And I wasn't making any insinuation on her weight whatsoever. I'm not that dumb, right? It's like the wife that says, "Do I look fat in this," and the husband responds, "Do I look stupid?" You don't respond to that.

I just went along with it. I was like, *She's not going to eat all this anyway, so I'll just make four pizookies.* She literally gets mad. She is mad.

She's like, "No, I'm not sharing with the boys." She was dead serious. Then she eats half of it and she's stuffed and then she's apologetic. She's like, "Oh my gosh, yes, the boys can eat it. I can't eat anymore."

It is hilarious how much she loves her sweets and I love that about her, but **we shouldn't guard our encouraging words like we guard our desserts.** We have to give away the sweet nectar, we have to give away the encouragement, the health to the body, the sweetness to the soul. Are your words sweetness to the soul? Do they encourage? Do they lift? Do they build up?

Here's why, as believers, we at Woodland Hills need to be the most encouraging. It's because I promise you that when you walk out those doors today and the rest of the week, you're not going to hear a lot of encouragement. I can promise you that. Social media, Fox News, CNN, MSN... I don't care where you get it, work or wherever you're at, you're not going to find a lot of encouraging environments. That's why when people do find places of work that are encouraging, they want to stick there because it's so life-giving.

I have a really easy verse for you guys to memorize this week. This is one of the very first verses I memorized because it's just like a little kid's book: 1-2-3-4. Matthew 12: 34. It's the easiest verse you're ever going to memorize. Matthew 12: 34 says, "**For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**" So, if you want to know what's in the heart, see what's coming out of the mouth.

As a matter of fact, Jesus said this in a couple of ways. He also said, in Matthew 6: 21, "**For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.**" So, where you spend your time and money and where you speak is a great indicator of what's going on in your heart. Do you want to see what you value in your heart? See where you're spending and giving your money. Do you want to see what you value in your heart? See where you're spending and giving your time. Do you want to see what's in your heart? See what you're speaking.

To contextualize this for Millennials and Generation Z, I could say this: For out of an overflow of the heart, the tweeter tweets. Or the Instagramer grams. Or the snap chatter snaps. For out of the overflow of the heart, the things that we're projecting, that comes out. Whatever is in the heart, Jesus said, is going to come out.

Gossiping Mouth = Man-Pleasing Heart. So, you can look at this. If you have a gossiping mouth... What's coming out of the mouth is pointing back to what's inside the heart. So, a gossiping mouth usually points back to a man-pleasing heart. What gossip does is it puts somebody down. So, you step on somebody else to try to elevate yourself and feel better about yourself. That's a man-pleasing heart.

That's trying to get other people to approve of you and disapprove of somebody else. That's the fearful thing about gossip and how it goes down to the inmost parts, as the writer of Proverbs says. When you talk about a man-pleasing heart, we have to be encouraged with Galatians 1: 10. Am I trying to win the approval of man or am I trying to please man? For if I were trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. You see, someone who is secure in Christ and being a servant of Christ isn't worried about a gossiping mouth because they're not worried about a man-pleasing heart. They know they are already approved in Jesus.

Filthy Mouth = Impure Heart. If someone usually makes inappropriate sexual comments or refers to inappropriate things, that's a great indicator that they might be addicted to pornography or they are looking and filling their minds with a lot of impure things and it's coming out in their mouth. I can usually identify teens... As you know, I spend close to 340 days a year with teens. Usually, what's coming out of their mouth when I'm in the background is a good indicator of what they're filling their heart with. David says, in Psalm 5:10, ***Create in me a pure heart and a steadfast spirit.*** And when we see, in the Book of Psalms, the prayers that David prays, when he began filling his heart with pure things, the prayers that were coming out of his mouth were much more pure and holy; they weren't filthy. So, a filthy mouth usually indicates an impure heart.

Critical Mouth = Bitter Heart. If we're always critical toward everything our spouse does or we're super critical of our kids and they can't do anything right or we're critical towards our bosses or those above us in leadership and we're just always critical, it's a good indicator there's some bitterness there that you're dealing with. A critical mouth usually points back to a bitter heart.

Ted talked about this last week with Ephesians 4: 31-32. "Get rid of all bitterness, brawling, slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate toward one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you and I." So, if you're critical towards everything your spouse does, and it seems like nothing they can do is right and they're always walking on eggshells, who are you bitter at? What are you bitter towards? Who are you bitter towards? What's the bitterness in there? Why are you so critical?

Boasting Mouth = Insecure Heart. Have you ever noticed how people who are great never have to tell you how great they are? Roger Federer does not walk around bragging, "I'm pretty good at tennis. You should check me out." Michael Jordan doesn't walk around saying "Hey, back in my day, I used to shoot the ball really well. If you don't believe me, go watch some of my film." No, he doesn't have to.

It's like every high school football player was one injury from being a High Division I quarterback somehow, right? You all hear those stories.

No one who is great ever has to tell you how great they are. I wish some other famous person in our world would say this, but I'm not going to go into that because this is a sermon on encouragement. I'll just let you think about who boasts a lot that might have an insecure heart, but I think they are doing a lot of other great things for this country and I'll leave it at that.

Negative Mouth = Fearful Heart. If the glass is always half empty, what are you fearful of? What fear is driving your heart? Jesus said, "Do not fear." Jesus didn't only see the glass as half full; Jesus said, "The glass is overflowing, come to me you who are thirsty, you'll never thirst again." This thing just keeps bubbling, it just keeps overflowing. Jesus was always positive. Jesus was a realist and what I mean by that is he told the truth. Jesus said, "You are going to face some troubles." Well that's not very encouraging, Jesus. "But, take heart because I have overcome the world."

You're going to face some difficulties as a Christian but let me encourage you. I've read the end of the book and in Revelation 22, we are all going to win that are in Jesus Christ. So, there's no fear. There is no reason to allow Fox News to drive a fearful heart and a negative mouth. There's no reason for gloom and doom and starting to pack down below the earth and get those pods and everything else. Don't worry about that, you crazy hoarders, we're going to be okay. Jesus wins. If it does come to an end like that, guess what? You get to be with Jesus; that's great news. I'd rather be with Jesus than underneath the earth for two years, are you kidding me? That sounds awful.

Slandering Mouth = Angry Heart. When you slander and put down other people, it usually points back that you're angry. What are you angry about? Why are you angry? When we slander others... And sometimes it's not even the people, we're not even angry towards those people. We're angry towards something else, so we slander other people.

Judging Mouth = Guilty Heart. When you talk about a judging mouth, Jesus said, in Matthew 7: 1-5, "Do not judge other lest you be judged. For the same way you judge others, you too will be judged." Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye when all the time, there's a plank in your own eye?" Think about that illustration. When you think about a speck that you guys can't even see on my finger right now from this little piece of paper, versus a plank in your own eye... Think about that.

So, a judging mouth usually means that you have a guilty heart. You're judging others to ignore the things in your own life that you need to resolve. I don't sit on that throne. I'm never going to judge any of you, trust me. I have lived a paganistic lifestyle and by the grace of Jesus, I am standing up here before you today. I'll allow the one true and only judge. Now, I'll hold people accountable. There's a big difference between lovingly holding people accountable and judging people. Judging people makes you think you're better other people. No, we're all depraved; we all have sin inside of us that we need grace for, amen? A judging mouth usually means a guilty heart.

Controlled Mouth = Peaceful Heart. Here's the positive spin. Some of you in here have phenomenal controlled mouths. I see this with 60 and 70 and 80 year olds and I'm always amazed. Do you know why they have controlled mouths? They have lived life. They know that money doesn't satisfy. They know fame doesn't satisfy. They know that people-pleasing doesn't satisfy. They've lived life and they've realized that all of this stuff doesn't matter. I've been around some of the wisest, sweetest older people that have such a controlled mouth. In reality, they have such a peaceful heart. They're just ready to be with Jesus. They're so peaceful with their mouth. They're so slow to speak and it's crazy. It seems like the older we get, the slower we come to speak because we realize we need a peaceful heart.

Gentle Mouth = Loving Heart. My wife has a phenomenal gentle mouth. She is extremely gentle. She has a gentle mouth and it points back to her heart. She is one of the most loving women I know. She is loving towards our kids, loving towards others. A gentle mouth usually points back to a very loving heart.

Encouraging Mouth = Joyful Heart. This is what we are talking about today. An encouraging mouth means a joyful heart. Think about that. Where does joy come from? Where does the true source of joy come from? It doesn't come from people; it comes from Jesus. I've noticed that the people that are most passionately following Jesus and secure in Jesus are the greatest encouragers. They encourage people like crazy.

So, here's the good news for all those type A personalities that didn't get to write those down fast enough. When you guys leave today... I created little bookmarks. You're trying to take pictures, or you can't write fast enough. All of you that want one... And I keep this on my desk, true story. When I start seeing what's coming out of my mouth, I ask myself what's going on in my heart today. These are little bookmarks you can put in your Bible or on your dash; wherever you want them. They're going to hand these to you when you leave today. It has the little Love Like Confetti hashtag on the back.

So, let's look at this verse. I think words are very important to encourage. Our words are valuable, they're powerful, they have power. I told you God created the world with powerful words. Words are very powerful. They can give life and they can give death, as James talked about.

Not only are words powerful, but I think sometimes our actions could be even more encouraging than our words. Sometimes our actions can only amplify the words that we're speaking because it's consistent with the encouragement we're speaking. We see here in the Book of Acts an amazing power of encouragement. We call Barnabas the son of encouragement, but what's weird is if you look throughout scripture, you never see him speaking words of encouragement. We just know that in scripture he is called the son of encouragement, so I'm sure he spoke a lot of encouragement, but I think this act that we are about to look at, that he does in the Book of Acts, is one of the most powerful forms of encouragement we see.

Acts 15: 36-40 - **36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas...** Paul and Barnabas had been on these missionary journeys together. They had been sharing the gospel. Jesus had already ascended and now they are out spreading the gospel like wildfire. During that time, a guy named John, also referred to as Mark, was worn out. He was done with the mission field. He jumps ship to chill for a little while because he's worn out on this stuff, so he leaves.

"Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." **37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark** (This is the guy who was worn out in their earlier missionary journeys). **38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.** **39 And there arose a sharp disagreement...** They are both brothers in the Lord, both passionate about Jesus, both advancing the kingdom of God. Paul was like, "No, this guy didn't stick it through. I don't want him."

We do that with young people a lot. I think if we would stop discouraging Millennials and Generation Z about everything they are doing wrong and start pulling up to what they are doing great.

I'll never forget it in my life. I was 15 years old. I was playing a pickup game of basketball. This African American male, probably in his mid-40s, that I had never met in my life, grabs me behind the head. I think he's going to headbutt me. He looks me right in the eyes and says, "Don't ever lose your fire for life." I didn't know Jesus at the time, but those words made me feel like I was floating on cloud nine that day.

It's crazy that we were just serving down in the Bahamas and I didn't realize this, but someone snapped a picture of me grabbing a 15-year-old Bohemian kid by the back of the head and looking him square in his eyes and telling him, "Don't lose your fire for life. Even though you are from this poor little island and you think nobody knows about you, God knows about you. Don't lose your fire for life." That kid went back... I know this because I know his coach. He was fired up about school...

If we would begin speaking words of encouragement and following through with our actions with Millennials and Generation Z, watch what they could accomplish, rather than everything they're doing wrong and "they're living in my basement and they're playing video games..." Stop naysaying on that and see what...

This is what Barnabas does here. Paul is like, "No, I'm worn out with him I don't want to deal with him." I don't say Paul sinned here because encouragement still needs to be coupled with accountability. We don't need to enable. Don't confuse encouragement with enabling. If people are addicted, don't just be like, "Oh, you're okay; you're going to get over it." No, say, "Hey, I'm in your corner and I'm going to support you and I'm here for you no matter what, but we need to recognize you have a problem and you need help. You need to go see a counselor or rehab or whatever the case may be. But, encourage them through the process. Still hold them accountable but encourage them through the process.

That's what Barnabas does here. John Mark had deserted them in ***Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work***. So, he messed up, but he recognizes it. If anybody recognizes they messed up and they come to you, encourage the socks off of them. Do you know how hard it is for us, for me, for you to recognize we blew it? When's the last time your husband walked up to you and said, "Hey, I blew it." When's the last time a wife walked up to her husband and said, "I blew it, I'm sorry." Any time, ever in your life, Christian/non-Christian, if anybody every comes up to you and says, "I blew it," encourage the socks off them. Do you know how much courage it takes to admit you blew it to other people? That's what Barnabas does.

Paul and Barnabas had such a strong disagreement. ***...so that they separated from each other***. They wanted nothing to do with each other, but they still advanced the gospel in their own ministries, so they were still used by God. ***Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus ...*** He said, "You blew it, but I'm going to do this with you. I believe in you and I believe in second chances."

Our God is a God of second chances. As followers of Jesus, we should be the people of second chances. We should be the ones that come alongside and, as Ted referred to, it's that number "second chance"

and “seventy-seven times seven.” No, no, our God is a God of third chances and fourth chances and fifth chances and it goes on and on and on.

40 ...but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

With that illustration from Acts... **Actions can often be far more encouraging than words.** So, yes, encourage, but let your actions follow through. And we can even be specific in the way we encourage people.

I have a great friend that I work with in the summer and he is probably the greatest encourager I know, but he encourages so consistently and so often and it's the same word that it almost feels generic. One day, I said to him, “Hey, I'm not searching for a compliment here because I know you're going to give it. I appreciate that you tell me I'm awesome every day and I know you tell a lot of people they are awesome, but watch what would happen today if you told them specifically why they are awesome.”

“Corey, you're awesome!” Well, Corey is awesome. Corey is the one who does all of our film and all of our media and all of our stuff for Woodland Hills. He is awesome, but do you know why he's awesome? He's awesome because that video you just saw before service didn't take five minutes to put together. The editing, the shooting, the jumping in the cars, the getting around, his gift, his skill that God has given him, his ability to use lighting and music and timing to make trailers and all the effort and time to put into that, Corey, that's awesome. That's specific, right?

“Katie, you're awesome!” Why is Katie awesome? All the details she puts into worship every week and making sure all the slides work for the speakers and the hospitality and the way you own all the little details at Woodland Hills, Katie, that's awesome. They way you bring life to everybody.

Do you see the difference? Watch what happens. Go to lunch after church today and just observe the server. After you've already intentionally encouraged your own family, just watch your server and then encourage them in something specific. It will change their entire day. Words have power.

We had a staff meeting this week. At the beginning of staff meeting, I brought up Proverbs 16: 24. I wrote all my staff names on the board and then I circled them. I said, “Let's bring health to the body, let's bring sweetness to the soul today before we get started with the ton of to-dos we have for this week.”

All my staff started drawing little lines out from those bubbles and they just began writing two to four words that they really see that that person is great at and God's gifted them with. What if you did this with your own family? What if you just took out a piece of paper and wrote the names of everyone in your family. Then, throughout the day, people could go up to the piece of paper, draw a line out and point out things that that person in your family does great, things that that person does well.

When we started that staff meeting, everybody was full of life because what did we do? We spoke life into each other. We didn't focus on the things that were done wrong or the things that needed to be fixed. We spoke life into each other and then moved forward.

Hebrew 3: 13 says this: ***But encourage one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*** It doesn't say monthly, it doesn't say weekly. Encourage one another daily. Did you encourage your spouse yesterday? Did you encourage your kids yesterday? What did the drive to church look like today? Was it encouraging? Was it exciting to come to church? "Hey, sweetie, you did an awesome job getting the kids ready to go to church today. I know it's a brutal thing to try to put shoes on a three-year-old, but you get it done every day. Thank you, you're awesome. I often forget how much work that takes."

Encourage one another daily. Here's why the author of Hebrews is saying this, Woodland Hills: they know that you are going to be discouraged by the world daily.

I got off Facebook a couple of months ago. It didn't encourage me whatsoever. Maybe it does you. I'm not telling anybody to boycott and walk out on Facebook. That's not what I'm saying. With all these walkouts that are going on right now, I don't think the answer is walking out. I heard a Christian football coach at San Diego, California say this yesterday. He said, "How about instead of walking out, all you high school students, why don't you start walking around and seeing these people that are hurting, that are quiet, the ones that are committing these acts of violence, and instead of walking out, why don't walk around your campus and see who you could go encourage and speak life into." I thought that was so good.

I got off of Facebook. It's funny, I don't know if you've ever deactivated your Facebook account, but once you do, they want to know why. They want to know why you are kicking them to the curb. There's a list of eight options, right? "Just temporary." "I'll be back." "Don't like it" "Too many ads." Then there's another option with a box that you can type in. Well, I'm a communicator. I clicked "other" and I went at it. "It's toxic. It's more like anti-social network than it is a social network. It's negativity and people are just full of hate." They didn't bug me, so I'm off Facebook and it's worked great.

If I'm wanting to encourage others, I need to be filling my soul with things that encourage me. If I'm going to do that daily, I need to stay away from things that are discouraging me daily and find ways that I can be encouraged daily. As long as it called "today," that none of you may be hardened. Think about that. Facebook was hardening me. Everybody is so critical and everybody is so toxic and everybody is so mad and everybody is so angry.

Watch what happens when you encourage somebody daily. Watch the trajectory of their life, their day, and how it will change. It's amazing; I've seen it happen time and time again. I've devoted my life to encouraging teens and believing in teens. Watching their trajectory change just by words of encouragement from God's word; it is amazing. All of you in here have that same ability. You all speak words every day. You have the ability to change the trajectory of somebody's life with your words and your actions.

I wanted to honor Billy Graham because we know he passed away this last week. What a great saint he was and what he did for this country. He said this and I thought it was so powerful for me as a parent because I know I've messed up as a parent already with a five-year-old and a three-year-old.

"No parent is perfect; we all can look back and think of things we could've done to help our children be better prepared for adulthood. And sometimes it's best to admit it to them and encourage them to learn from our mistakes."

Your child doesn't want to hear how you used to walk to school uphill both ways in the snow. And the weight we can put on them where they feel like nothing they do is good enough.

My wife and I had a young man from Paragould, Arkansas stay with us this last week. He was up for the practice at basketball AU practice in Nixa, so he stayed with us on Friday night and then went up and practiced Saturday and then went home. He got in pretty late Friday night. My wife and kids were already in bed. I met him at about 11:00 at night and he crashed. He got up for practice and we didn't see him again.

When he woke up, he came upstairs. He made sure he introduced himself to my boys and my wife. He looked her in the eye and shook her hand. Then he went to practice. He was really sweet. I gave him a bowl of cereal and he ate the cereal, went and rinsed the bowl out in the sink, and cleaned up after himself. When I got back from my day, I went down to the room he was staying in and his bed was immaculate. The pillows were exactly how he found them, the bed was made, the towel was put up; everything was immaculate. I thought, *That's awesome. I need to call his dad and let his dad know. His dad needs to encourage him that I noticed the small things and it's really neat to see a 17-year-old kid who cleans up after himself. He needs to be encouraged in that.*

Hold on. You might not clap. I called his dad and I said, "Hey, I just wanted to tell you that I'm really impressed by your son. You and your wife have raised him right. I just wanted to tell you he introduced himself to my wife, made his bed..."

He said, "Well, when is he going to start making his bed at home?"

I said, "Well, you're in control of that. All I can tell you is he was an exemplary young man. He needs to be encouraged, so when he gets home, will you do me a favor and tell him I noticed that really small thing and would you encourage him in that?"

You see, if we would encourage young people when they're doing the right thing, they're more apt to keep doing the right thing. Instead of all the things they're doing wrong or not doing... There are plenty; trust me. You can find a laundry list of things that I'm doing wrong. If you'll come alongside and encourage me in the things that I'm doing right, I'm going to keep doing everything to do that.

My wife was a phenomenal encourager to me in this last season. When I say season, I mean literally the last season of basketball. I coached five-year-old basketball. I was ready to quit every single week. My wife was phenomenal. She was just continually encouraging me. "Baby, you're so patient with them.

You're doing an awesome job." I mean there were times when I was coaching and there would be four kids on the court. I couldn't find the fifth one. I look out and he's off playing hide and seek in the bleachers. There would be other times when they would all decide to play at the same time and there's seven on five. It was the best defense ever. But, my wife was so encouraging with "You're doing such a good job being patient." And that was so awesome that it just encouraged me to do it another week.

It's great to also encourage people in the word of God. Look at this in Romans 15: ***4 For 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.***

There is no greater encouragement you can pour onto anybody besides this. The greatest encouragement you could pour into somebody's life is God's Word. So, when my wife was approving my patience, when she was encouraging me, she was speaking scripture over me. That's the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, against these things there's no law. So, when you encourage people, encourage them with God's Word. "Man, I just saw an unbelievable amount of patience in you and that's really attractive." That's the fruit of the Spirit. That's a sweet aroma. "Your kindness is known and seen by everybody."

I told one of my staff members this week, "You exude joy." That's encouraging when we point out things in the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5: 22, that you see in people's life. That's the scripture, that's God's Word, that's him living inside us, pulling these things out. Let people know that you see that in them and watch how much they will be encouraged to keep walking in them.

When we don't give people hope and we just act like they're a lost cause, that's what they're going to feel like. But, when we lift and encourage one another, scripture says... Look at this. ***11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as in fact you are doing.*** – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

I hope in fact Woodland Hills is doing this. If Paul were to write a letter to Ted right now on Woodland Hills, would it say, "Woodland Hills, keep encouraging one another, just as in fact you are doing." I'm telling you that if this body sitting in here this morning were to leave and, for the next month, be committed to encouraging your Walmart checkout person, your oil changer, your hair stylist, and your words were encouragement into people's lives, – Teds going to hate me for saying this – we'd go to five services. People want to be around people that are encouraging and lifting them up and speaking life. People don't want to be around death and things that are dying. Your words speak life. Your actions speak life. And when you encourage people, it is naturally attractive.

I want to be around people in my life that encourage me. The encouragers in my life, I have gravitated the most towards them and they have impacted my life the most. The people that have been discouraging towards me the most, I've gravitated away from and have had deep, painful hurt in my heart.

I've forgiven them, but I can still remember some of the most hurtful things my college coaches have said to me. I still remember some of the nicknames. Willow. Rudy. I was called it all. There are some painful words that were shouted that still stick deep.

I remember warming up at Louisiana Tech when I played for Boise State. The entire baseball team was on the court on their knees, yelling at me, "Thirteen, we're still taller than you." I'm okay. You don't have to feel bad for me. I know I'm vertically challenged, but I'm secure in who Christ made me to be. I fit on a plane, 6'5" and up, how do you like me now? I travel easy. I sleep easy too. There's not a couch I don't like. Encourage one another and build each other up.

It says it again in Ephesians 4. ***29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*** If your words this week aren't going to benefit the hearer, don't say them. That's just what Paul is saying to the saints in Ephesus. If your words this week aren't going to benefit those who hear it, don't say them.

Here's the reality: all of us are in desperate need of God's grace that's given through Jesus on the cross, his life, death, and resurrection. That's the greatest encouragement you and I can receive. That you and I don't get what we deserve. My sweet security guy, right before church, said, "How are you doing?" I said, "Better than I deserve." He said, "Aren't we all." And I said, "Amen." The greatest encouragement I can hear is that I'm not getting the life I deserve.

So, regardless if you think people are being treated how they do or don't deserve, encourage them because envy robs us of encouraging people. Instead of encouraging people that God's using or doing great things, we stop from encouraging because we want what they have. Whoa, don't do that. If God's using people, we should be the first to be excited and encouraging and lift them up and let God use them. Don't hoard it just because you want the spot light or you want the platform or you want the notoriety or you want the recognition. That's not biblical. We should be encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ when God is using them.

So, you're going to have an opportunity this week... When you leave here this Sunday, wherever you go or whatever you do, you are going to have an opportunity this week to build somebody up. To build your child up, to build your spouse up, to build your co-worker up, to build a stranger up, and so you get to go in and you get to encourage.

"You know what, Sweets, I know this was a really rough day, but I'm just telling you the way you manage this home and the way, even after a long day with two young kids that drive you crazy, you still get this house clean or you still get laundry done or you still get food on the table. You know what? I know we can't get everything done we want to get done, but let me tell you what you're doing is awesome, sweet wife, you're loving our kids well, you're leading them in the Lord, you're getting our laundry done, you're keeping our house in order. Thank you. You are an awesome mom and wife."

"Hey, Buddy, I know you didn't do as well on that test as you wanted to do this week. And I know studying for you is a lot harder than it is for your older siblings. I know it's frustrating that your siblings don't even have to study and they go get an A. It comes a lot harder for you and I know you got a C, but I want you to know your hard work and your willingness to study and put in extra work that your brother and sister didn't have to is admirable. I want you to know I notice how hard you're working. Even though you got a C, I still think you're doing awesome. Great job."

“Hey, I know work is really stressful and I know you’re having a really tough time and I know your boss is driving you crazy and you’re stressed out and there’s a lot going on. I just want you to know when you come home and you’re engaging with our kids, even after a stressful day at work, and you’re giving time for our family and you’re loving on us, that means the world to me. You’re being an awesome dad, and thanks for loving me.”

“Hey, I know, Mom and Dad, you feel like I don’t listen and I don’t ever pay attention to what you’re telling me and that I think I know what’s best and I think you’re technologically illiterate, but, Mom and Dad, I want you to know I’m watching the way you guys love each other and the way you fight for one another and the way you stick together. I want you to know, Mom and Dad, that’s having a profound impact on me. I watch you more than you know and when you kissed Mom on the cheek the other day and when you reached out and held her hand and when you gave love to her, that was awesome for me to see, Dad. Mom, the way you keep being patient with me, even though I’m a knucklehead, I can’t tell you how much I love you. Thank you so much.”

“Hey, I know you don’t know me and I know you might think this is weird, but the way you smile and carry yourself in this restaurant and when I check out at Lowes and the way you’re giving life and joy to people, I want you to know that’s contagious. The way you just glow, I just want you to know that brightens up my day. Don’t lose that sparkle you have in your eye. Don’t lose that smile you’ve given to customers. I’ve been around a lot of people in this town and I don’t always see that smile. I just want to encourage and build you up.”

Let me speak a quick blessing over rural communities. Ted and I talked on the phone this week. We talked about how sometimes, in rural communities, there’s this cycle that people think they can’t break. I love rural communities. I spent some of my life in ministry in a rural community. Sometimes in rural communities, which we are surrounded by, they think you just grow up, go to high school, get a job, and just stay in that rural community, which is okay if that’s what God has called you to.

But, I want to speak encouragement into your life that God uses people from rural communities. As a matter of fact, everyone God used in scripture was for the most part from a rural community. There weren’t many metropolitan areas at that time. There were like two: Rome and Jerusalem. Everything else was pretty rural.

If you’re from a rural community in this area and you come to our church, I want to tell you that God wants to use your life. I want to encourage you and tell you God wants to use you. It doesn’t matter where you’re from. That never was a part of the equation for God and how he used people. So, as he and Jack Herschend and different people have been looking at a little bit of the disparity in rural communities, let me lift you up today and say you get to have a profound impact not only in your community, but God might send you somewhere else to do something else. If you want to be here and that’s the passion that God’s given you, great, but I want you to know God can take anybody from anywhere.

He took a boy from San Diego, a southern bell from Tennessee, and smacked them into hillbilly Vegas. So, God can do whatever he wants with whoever he wants.

That's our job this week, Woodland Hills, that we would build each other up, that we would encourage one another because here's the reality and I'll close with this. Your one cutting, sharp word, your one, "Gosh, you never get the dishes done." "Gosh, you never get the laundry done." "Gosh, you never follow through with what you say." "Gosh, you're a liar." "Stop driving so fast." "Watch where you're going." and just the critical tone and the toxic tongue... And then you jump on social media and your like "Oh, your stupid."

Scripture calls us to build each other up. Sticks and stones may break my bones, and names will hurt, and they do affect people the rest of the day. If you walk into one person this week and decide to be negative or toxic or put them down, this is what it's the equivalent of doing. I want you to see this word picture (a tower of wooden blocks). If you walk into somebody and say, "Hey, you're not good enough. You're not doing things great enough." Here's a discouraging word (pulls one block out of the tower and it collapses). Scripture calls us to build one another up. Let's get rid of these words. Let's throw words of encouragement like confetti on everybody this week.

If you need words of encouragement, if you need prayers of encouragement today before you leave, our prayer team is up here every week and they would love to pray with you, to encourage you, to love on you, and just be with you.

Father God, we thank you so much for this church. We thank you so much for your Word and the encouragement it speaks into us. We thank you so much for the life-giving encouragement of your Word.

Help us all to be slow to speak and quick to encourage with our actions and quick to encourage with our words and quick to listen. Sometimes listening can be a great encouragement. Thank you for this church that I love so much and that you're using.

It's in Jesus name we pray, amen.