

ENCOURAGE

A How To Guide

Encouragement—it is a command, it is a gift, it is a joy, and it is something we can all learn to do better. In this series we will look at some great encouragers in the NT and get some powerful “how to” ideas, because we all need to pour courage into one another.

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Read 2 Timothy 1:15-18. “. . .for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.” These words of Paul were spoken as he sat on death row. They describe Onesiphorus and illustrate the most powerful encouragement there is. **Onesiphorus showed up!** He came into a context that was full of fear and shame and delivered a message that was impossible to misunderstand. Rick said, *“There is no kind of encouragement more powerful than caring presence.”* Share a time when you were in a hard place and someone showed up to encourage you. How did that encounter encourage/change you?

2 “ENCOURAGEMENT THAT REFRESHES REQUIRES AUTHENTIC PRESENCE”. Read **2 Timothy 4:16**. Paul’s feeling of “aloneness” stresses that **we need each other!** Following Christ is not a private experience. It is to be shared. Rick said, *“Paul knew he was not going to abandon his faith; what he did not know was that some of his friends were going to abandon him.”* Paul’s chains had prompted his closest friends to be ashamed of him, to pull back when they were needed the most. Discuss Satan’s strategy to keep us from “showing up.” What does that strategy look like?

3 “PRESENCE IS A GIFT EVERYONE NEEDS AND ANYONE CAN GIVE”. Being present for others is the “litmus test” Jesus uses as He divides

the sheep from the goats. Read **Matthew 25:31-46**. So, needing to encourage like Onesiphorus, makes this call all-inclusive. This just doesn’t apply to a few, but is where anyone can show up and everyone ought to. Make a list together of some intentional ways you can show up for others.

4 “THE MINISTRY OF REFRESHMENT IS FREE AND COSTLY”. We are not talking about needing training, a large budget, or a top-notch program. We are talking about being an unselfish servant, about being intentionally aware to see others, about having humility that allows you to go unnoticed and about the courage it takes to involve yourself in the pain of another’s mess. Reflect on Rick’s statement *“Living this way is so worth it because of what our presence brought.”* What does our presence bring as we show up for each other?

5 “GOD COMMUNICATES HIS PRESENCE THROUGH YOUR PRESENCE”. Read **Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 5:4; Matthew 25:40**. What is it about being in the presence of others that allows to experience an even greater awareness of the presence of God?

Be Present: Have your group members repeat the following to each other: “I commit . . . to partner with God . . . to show up in your life . . . when you need encouragement.”

