

# NOT A HALLMARK CARD

By Charles Roberds

## SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 3:13

*Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

## OBSERVATION

If you were to ask someone what my spiritual gifts are, encouragement would not be at the top of the list. To be honest, writing a devotion on encouragement is a tough task for me, because I'm not a natural encourager, but it spurred me to open my Bible and dig around to see what the Lord says to us about encouragement. As I read text after text, I was struck by how crucial this expression of love is for God's people. In 1 Thessalonians Paul writes a lot about encouragement, and in particular he urges the church to encourage others. Paul apparently knew that they were already doing that, so he encouraged them to continue to build one another up by encouragement but also "encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). In these dark days it is easy to focus on ourselves and our problems and withdraw to a point we no longer share the hope we have in Christ. We live in a broken world where everything calls us toward selfishness and despair. Sin steals joy, our bodies break down, our plans falter, our dreams die, our resolves weaken, our perspective dims. When encouragement is absent from life, people will feel unloved, unimportant, useless, and forgotten. God knows His people are in need of grace-filled reminders, so He calls us to encourage each other every day until His Son returns. Encouragement is shared with the hope that it will lift someone's heart toward the Lord. It points out evidences of grace in another's life to help them see that God is using them. It points a person to God's promises that assure them that all they face is under His control.

## OBEEDIENCE

In light of what the Bible teaches us about encouragement, what steps of obedience can we take as we draw closer to God and serve others?

- *Study Barnabas and ask God to make you like him.* Barnabas was nicknamed the "son of encouragement" by the early church (Acts 4:36). He was the kind of guy you wanted to have around as you were serving the Lord. Barnabas was a man of great conviction who wanted to see the church flourish and did all he could to make it happen. Ask God to give you and our church a heart like Barnabas.

- *Make encouragement a daily discipline.* For some, encouragement comes naturally; for others of us, not so much. Set a reminder in your phone each day to send someone an encouraging text, email or phone call, the goal being to intentionally try to spur someone on in Christ.
- *Pray for God to show you who to encourage.* Ask God to bring someone to mind to whom you should reach out. Who can you encourage right now? Who has blessed you recently whom you can thank? What verse can you share with them? How might God use it?

## **PRAYER**

God, we thank You for showing us the truth and power of what encouragement can do for believers. Lord, I pray that we will step out in faith to encourage those who need it and that we will become more like Barnabas, a son of encouragement. Father, I ask that You lead us to people who need encouragement and that as we do, Your grace and mercy will flow through us, and we will show people a God who loves, cares and wants a relationship with them. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.