

Clay's Corner

We spent time Wednesday evening in the adult class talking about encouragement. We all need encouragement. Have you ever considered why?

"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 3:13 tells us. First Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." Throughout the Bible we see instructions to encourage one another and verses that are meant to encourage us. Why is encouragement emphasized in the Bible? Primarily because encouragement is necessary to our walk of faith.

Jesus told His followers, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b). Jesus did not shy from telling His followers about the troubles they would face. In fact, He told them the world would hate them. But Jesus' grim forecast was tempered with cheer; He followed His prediction of trouble with a sparkling word of encouragement: He has overcome the world. Jesus is greater than any trouble we face.

Without encouragement, hardship becomes meaningless, and our will to go on wanes. The prophet Elijah struggled with discouragement, and so do we. It is important to remember that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). This truth makes encouragement all the more important. It is not just that we face the world's displeasure; we are caught in the crosshairs of a spiritual battle. When we are encouraged in Christ, we have strength to put on our spiritual armor and remain steadfast.

Even in places where Christians do not experience overt persecution or hatred, we all know that life can be difficult. Discouragement is not an uncommon human experience. At times, recognizing that there is meaning in the seemingly inconsequential things we do seems next to impossible. We may want to give up. Yet He who calls us is faithful, and He gives us the power to be faithful, too.

A man in the early church named Joseph was given the nickname "Barnabas," which means "Son of Encouragement". What a blessing Barnabas was to the believers of his day! Through the encouragement of Barnabas, the apostle Paul was first accepted by the church in Jerusalem. Through the encouragement of Barnabas, Mark was given a second chance after an abject failure.

Encouragement makes it easier to live in a fallen world in a holy way. Encouragement makes it easier to love as Jesus loved. Encouragement gives hope. Encouragement helps us through times of discipline and testing. Encouragement nurtures patience and kindness. Encouragement makes it easier to sacrifice our own desires for the advancement of God's kingdom. In short, encouragement makes it easier to live the Christian life.

Without encouragement, life would soon feel pointless and burdensome. Without encouragement, we can be overwhelmed by the very real pains of our lives. Without encouragement, we feel unloved. Without encouragement, we begin to think that God is a liar or is unconcerned with our welfare. So, the Bible tells us to encourage one another, to remind each other of the truth that God loves us, that God equips us, that we are treasured, that our struggles are worth it. Encouragement from the Bible gives us the will to carry on. It is a glimpse of the bigger picture. It can prevent burn-out. It can save us from believing lies ("sin's deceitfulness"). Encouragement helps us experience abundant life.

Proverbs 16:24 says, "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." God's Word is full of encouragement. Pleasant words, indeed. - Borrowed from Gotquestions.org

PRAYER LIST

- **Monty Allen** (Susan Barnick's friend's brother—cancer)
- **Pauline Alvarez** (recovering from knee surgery, 845 S Magnolia, Luling, TX 78648)
- **Lauren Babb** (health)
- **Brooke Bertling** (Haley Ratliff's friend—breast cancer)
- **Terry Boaz** (Haley Ratliff's step-mother—recovering from surgery, Hendrick League House, Abilene)
- **Sonny Bransom** (upcoming hip replacement on Wednesday)
- **Dawn Clarke** (Shirley Kuchynka's daughter)
- **Betty Cox** (Brent Barnick's sister—homebound, rheumatoid arthritis)
- **Eric Davis and Rose**
- **George Ezell** (Victoria Johnson's uncle—health, stroke)
- **Joyce Faires** (recovering from knee surgery)
- **Lance Fougerat**
- **Chestly Gobar, Jordyn and Lucy**
- **Herb Hahn** (health, Methodist Hospital, San Antonio)
- **Sandra Jetton** (health)
- **John Jobe** (Clay and Mary Mason's friend—health, stroke)
- **Victoria Johnson** (health)
- **Debbie Julufka** (Clay and Mary Mason's friend—health)
- **Katy and Family** (Kelly Mason's friends—Katy's sister injured in motorcycle accident)
- **Jason, Lizzie and Luke Klinger** (Sarah Weaver's cousins—Luke, 4 mos old, cancer)
- **Evlynn Lawrence** (Sweeneys' granddaughter)
- **Justen Lawrence, and Stacia and Phil, and family**
- **Guy Lowe** (Clay Mason's friend—health)
- **Sanford Mason** (Ralph's brother—heart health)
- **Emory Meier** (Cheryl Pitts's father—health)
- **Claudia Morris** (Perry Winegeart's sister—health)
- **Mason Ratliff** (recovering from surgery)
- **Sid Roberts** (Faireses' friend—health)
- **Paris, Lexus & Maelyn Robertson** (Johnsons' friends—Maelyn born 10 weeks premature)
- **Alex and Tiffany Rodriguez** (Chestly Gobar's friends—Alex suffered stroke)
- **Ruth** (Joyce Faires's sister-in-law)
- **Sharon Saint** (Zach Babb's mother—recovering from surgeries)
- **Maria Vasquez** (Joyce Faires's neighbor—health)
- **Lorin Watson** (Victoria Johnson's father—health)

If you have any announcements or prayer requests you wish to have included in the bulletin or to sign up for weekly e-mail updates, please contact Victoria Johnson: 325-518-9205, victoria@gonzaleschurchofchrist.org.

PRAYER UPDATES

Sonny Bransom is scheduled for a hip replacement this **Wednesday, Jan. 20**.

Terry Boaz, Haley Ratliff's step-mother, was able to move back to the Hendrick League House (Abilene) while she continues her rehabilitation from surgery.

The doctors were able to pinpoint the source of **Herb Hahn's** infection to his damaged heart valve. He was able to return home on Thursday and will receive in-home IV treatments for six weeks.

Luke Klinger, the four-month old son of **Lizzie and Jason**, was diagnosed with cancer in his eyes. He began chemotherapy on Thursday, but fortunately the cancer has not spread to his brain. Lizzie is Sarah Weaver's cousin.

Please continue to keep **Justen Lawrence**, and **Stacia and Phil** in your prayers.

Mason Ratliff is recovering from surgery to remove his tonsils and adenoids.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday Evening Meal & Bible Study

Please join us for dinner at **5:15 p.m.** in the annex on Wednesday. This week's entrée is spaghetti with meat sauce. Anyone who is able is asked to bring sides or desserts to share, but everyone is invited! If you cannot bring a dish, please do not let that be a deterrent to joining us for dinner. Classes for all ages follow at 6 p.m.

Volunteers Needed

Each week, we have a meal together on Wednesday evening at 5:15 p.m. Volunteers are needed to help prepare the main entrée for those meals. Please sign up in the foyer if you are able to help.

Service Sunday: Youth & Family Valentine's Project

Next Sunday, January 24 is our Service Sunday. Please join us in the annex at **2 p.m.** We will be making Valentine's-themed arts & crafts for the residents at The Heights.

Service Sunday: Singing at The Heights

Next Sunday, January 24 is our monthly singing at The Heights nursing home at 3:30 p.m. We hope everyone will join us for this time of praise and fellowship.

Tuesday Morning Men's Meeting

All men are invited to the annex each Tuesday morning at 6:20 a.m. for a time of breakfast, prayer and fellowship.

New Directories Available

Hard copies of the new directory are now available. Be sure to pick up your copy from the table in the foyer.

5th Sunday Fellowship

Mark your calendars for our 5th Sunday Fellowship at the Linds on **January 31 at 5 p.m.** More details to follow.

Monthly Men's Meeting

Please note, the correct date for the men's meeting is **Sunday, January 31, at 1 p.m.**, not next Sunday as originally placed on the calendar. Apologies for the confusion.

Youth & Family Super Bowl Party

Mark your calendars for our youth & family Super Bowl Party on **Sunday, Feb. 7** at the Chrismons. More details to follow.

Youth Sunday: Valentine's Luncheon

Mark your calendars! The youth will serve Valentine's lunch on **Sunday, Feb. 14**. More details to follow.

YOUTH ZONE

TUESDAY, JAN. 19
BOYS BASKETBALL
GONZALES VARSITY V. WIMBERLEY, 7:30 P.M.

THURSDAY, JAN. 21
BOYS BASKETBALL
GONZALES 8TH "B" V. YOAKUM, 5 P.M.
GIRLS BASKETBALL

GONZALES 7TH "B" @ YOAKUM, 4:30 P.M.
GONZALES 7TH "A" @ YOAKUM, 5:30 P.M.
SHINER JR HIGH V. GANADO, 5:30 P.M.



FRIDAY, JAN. 22
BOYS BASKETBALL
GONZALES VARSITY @ LAVERNIA, 7:30 P.M.
SATURDAY, JAN. 23
GIRLS BASKETBALL
GONZALES JR HIGH HOME TOURNAMENT, 9 A.M.

Jacy Chrismon—Shiner Jr High Girls Basketball
Fernando Garcia—Gonzales 8th Boys Basketball

Tyler Hendershot—Gonzales Varsity Boys Basketball
Coach Kevin Johnson—Gonzales 7th Girls Basketball