

October 15, 2017
SOMA: Encourage One Another
Hebrews: 10:19-25

Pastor: All right, we're on the SOMA series, which is simply learning to become the authentic community of faith that God desires for us, so we can reflect Jesus in such a way that he is attractive to people, because he is attractive. If we live out what He tells us how we can treat each other, we live that out, we will be an extremely attractive community, and we will attract people to the Lord. I heard a great story about something Tony Campolo did, if you don't know who Tony Campolo is, he's an evangelical sociologist. Great guy. Runs a wonderful ministry. There's a story about him that I just heard.

This one time he had gone someplace he was speaking at, little conference. He had finished late at night. He he's hungry, so he went to this diner, and sat down. It was kind of a seedy diner. The area he was in was in, inner city. A little bit seedy. He didn't anticipate it. He overheard this conversation of these two women. The one girl said, "Hannah, what are you going to do for your birthday? Your birthday is tomorrow." And she said, "You know what? I'm not really going to do anything. I've never really had a birthday party ever in my entire life."

He heard that, and after they left, he went up to the owner of the restaurant and said, "Do you know these women?" He said, "Yes, yes, they're regular, they come in every night." "What do you think about us throwing her a birthday party?" The guy thought, "Hey, that's a great idea." "If you know all of her friends, would you invite her friends, and then I'll pick up the decorations and cake, and some presents, and we'll just throw her a party tomorrow." Party to surprise her.

The next day, they did that. About 2:15 in the morning, they roll in to decorate the place for the birthday party. About 2:45, 3 o'clock, her friends start coming in, and he didn't

realize that all of her friends were prostitutes, and that they were prostitutes. So here's a pastor, you're speaking at a big Evangelical conference, surrounded by prostitutes at 3:00 in the morning. But they're all ready, and she enters in with her friends, and they just -- Loud roar, and "Happy Birthday." It was utterly impactful. She just broke down in complete tears, unable to speak, unable to respond.

As they go to cut the cake, she asks them to stop. "Don't cut it. Let me take it home. Can I take it home?" He said, "Well, sure you can take it home." She picks up the cake right then and there, and leaves, and goes to take it home because she's never seen a birthday cake in her entire life. As she's gone, they don't really know what to do. They're kind of milling around, and he's thinking, "What do I do? What do I do?" He does the pastor thing, and he says, "Let's pray for her. Let's take some time while she's gone, let's just lift her up in prayer."

He led a prayer, and the room was kind of silent during that time. A little uncomfortability. And afterward, the owner of the restaurant said, "I didn't know you were a pastor." He said, "Yes." He asked him, "What kind of church do you belong

to, and what church you lead?" He said, "I lead a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes." The owner of the restaurant said, "There is no such a church, because if there were, I would belong to it." I think it's a good illustration for the kind of church God desires us to be in, that we reflect Jesus so accurately, so utterly, that it convinces the Henry's of this world that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

That's the kind of community we're trying to be, a community that reflects Jesus so powerfully, it utterly attracts people to him, and fall in love with him. One of those characteristics of an authentic community of faith, we look at them at the body of Christ imagery, and that we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We make the word flesh, so people can see his glory both to one another, and to our community. We are called to be a loving community, that loved one another as Jesus loves us, and is defined by the cross.

The cross defines love as sacrificial service for the good of others at personal cost. We are a community called to accept one another, which means we accept people as they are, and at the same time, patiently journey with them through faith as we grow to become more like Jesus. It's a balance between truth and grace. Accepting people just as they are, and at the same time helping them to grow in their life, and in their faith.

Last week, we talked about being united, and that is God desires to bring a diverse group of people together through the power of the Gospel, and enable them to get along together. It is the remedy for what ails the world. The human race cannot get along. They do not know how to get along. It's the church's responsibility to model how God can bring diverse people together to be one united in him.

The image for being united, is that phrase in First Corinthians, "Contending as one person for the faith." Which is the Gospel, that's a great picture of unity. I often heard, I've been around learning a lot, and just get in conversation. I've actually talked to a lot of people, and I've joined different groups and stuff. A lot of people who are just unchurched. If I hear this common phrase, and when I ask about as they discover what I do, or just in conversation, something comes up of a spiritual nature and I might ask, "We need to go to church." Or, "Do you believe in God?"

I hear this phrase constantly in California, and that is, "I'm spiritual but not religious." Have you heard that one? "I'm spiritual but not religious." It's interesting, because what they're saying is, they haven't given up on Jesus, but they have given up on the church, which is sad, because if they really understood today's passage, and the kind of church that we're called to be, I don't think they'd give up on us. I don't think they'd give up on the church.

Here's what the kind of community we are called to be. It's in Hebrews 10:19-25. The writers writes this, "Therefore brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain that is his body. Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart, and with full assurance of faith that faith brings, having a heart sprinkle to cleanse us from a guilt, a guilty conscience, and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let's hold unswervingly for the hope, to the hope we profess, for He who was promised is faithful, and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together at some, or in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more if you see the day approaching." Let's pray. Lord, open our hearts and minds now to what you have to say to us through this powerful passage in Hebrews. How we are called to consider and to spur, and to encourage, and what that looks like in our community. Now, we ask this in Jesus' name. And all God's people prayed.

All right, what does this look like? First thing, what kind of community are we called to be? Well, one is we are an irreplaceable community of faith. We are irreplaceable. What do I mean by that? Actually, this really comes up in the passage. I know there's a tendency to see the church as optional. "If I can fit it into my life, good. If not, all right. If I can make it, great. If I can't, it's no big deal. It's not really that necessary. It's not really that vital to my life."

Actually, if you look in this passage and in several places we've already covered, being part of a local church is vital to our faith. I'll show you, and vital to your life, and I'll show you why. Look at verse 25. In verse 25, it says, "Not giving up the meeting together." The word meeting together, is the word **[unintelligible 00:09:55]**, hello. **[unintelligible 00:09:58]** Okay, sounds like something you can buy at a store **[unintelligible 00:10:04]**, can we go get some **[unintelligible 00:10:05]** today? It's where you get the word synagogue and it means congregation.

It doesn't mean aggregation, but congregation. This is important. An aggregate or an aggregation is a collection of individuals who come together to listen to a speaker or to see a movie or to hear a concert. It's event driven, it's something you go for yourself. You go, you enjoy, you listen and have a good time and then you leave. A congregation is very different though. A congregation is a collection of individuals who are organically related. That is really captured not only by this word but also the second word in the passage and that's the word brothers or it means, brothers and sisters. It reminds us, we are relatives.

Everyone who believes in Jesus we're relatives and we're relatives because of what Jesus did on the cross for us. It's the blood of Jesus that brings us together as brothers and sisters. We are blood relatives but as we talked about last week, we're more than blood relatives because when you put faith in Jesus, he gives you the Holy Spirit. And say, "You have the Holy Spirit." And we all have the Holy Spirit. Which means we're not only blood relatives, but we're also joined together spirit to spirit. Because you know you have family members who you are blood relatives but you're not really connected.

Sometimes you don't even like each other or you're estranged. But all those who have trusted in Jesus not only are blood relatives, but we're also connected spirit to spirit. That's the depth of our connection. **[unintelligible 00:11:45]** commented here on this passage and said this, "Those who discover this new approach to God that we're made bright through Jesus Christ. We have access to the Father through Christ, together also discover a new relationship with one another."

If you want an image for the difference between aggregation and congregation. An aggregation is more like a bag of marbles. A bag of marbles, the marbles roll over each other. A congregation is more like a cluster of grapes. With a cluster of grapes, every aspect of our lives touch. Like grapes touch each other, every aspect of our lives touch each other. We don't come together to hear pastor Richard preach a fantastic sermon as great as that may be.

Or have a wonderful worship experience led by Brent or the praise team leaders as great as that is, all right. When we come together, we're called to teach one another, counsel one another, admonish one another, pray for one another, love one another, accept one another, all these that we've been talking about. Work to carry out the ministry of Jesus with one another. Everyone is called to be in ministry. If you're a member of journey, you're also called to serve in some way within the ministry of the church.

Because part of being a congregation is we do things together. It's with one another. The one another phrase really is a key to understanding what a congregation is. One another means it's mutual ministry, or considering one another. We spur one another, we encourage one another. It is ministry we do to each other. We both give and we receive. I know a lot of people will read verse 25, the phrase, "Not giving up." Meaning they're together as some are in the habit of doing as telling them, "You really need to go to church."

That's true but not really, not in the way we think of it because when we think of, you need to go to church. We think in more of the term of aggregation rather than congregation. Where it's something I go for myself and I do this event **[unintelligible 00:14:01]** I leave. But being in a congregation is very different. It's where I go both anticipating, encouraging others, praying for others, worshiping with others, working together with others and also receiving the same ministry back together as well.

We're called both to encourage and also to receive encouragement. There's a connection in this passage. If you look to the passage really carefully, there's a connection between -- First Paul says, the writer says, hey, we have access to God the Father and then it immediately goes to, "And then let us do this." There's a connection between don't miss meeting in church. Immediately he says encouraging.

Encouraging explains why you should go to church. The reason for going to church, one is so you can be encouraged because we all need encouragement and at the same time to also go and encourage. You may get up one morning say, "You know what? I'm feeling pretty good, and so I don't really need to go to church because I'm feeling pretty good. I don't need any encouragement today."

Well, that's wrong, because it's one another, it's mutual ministry. You may not need encouragement, but there are someone who you are going to meet that Sunday who does need encouragement, who God wants to use you to encourage. We always need to go because we need to both be encouraged but also to encourage others. That's part of being a congregation.

Where does this occur though? Does it happen during a worship service? When you are worshiping are you spurring one another? Are you considering one another? Are you encouraging one another? Are you loving one another? Well no, because it doesn't happen inside worship, it happens in those times where you're just meeting together, hanging out together. It happens before worship, it happens after worship, it happens during luncheons and where we're eating and fellowshiping. It happens probably best in a small group setting.

Because in a small group you develop spiritual friendships where you allow people to get into your life, you get into the lives of others, and you open up about your hurts and your problems and your needs, and you hold each other accountable. In fact, if you look at verse 24 and 25 it actually says, "Hey, don't dare stop meeting with other believers because if you do, man you're going to miss out on the mutual encouragement of your brothers and sisters, of their bearing your burdens with you, the mutual love, the mutual care. If you stop meeting, you really are courting spiritual defeat." Sometimes even spiritual stagnation in your life.

Now, you may be sitting there and say you know what? Pastor, I have that merit badge, I got a pin saying, "I haven't missed church in 20 years." You can actually go to church every Sunday and still miss out on this, and still not do this. If you treat church as aggregation instead of being a congregation, is it worth it then? Is it really worth going to church regularly? Sound like work to me, I'm really a busy person.

Well, it's interesting look at verses 19 and 21. There's a movement in the passage, it begins at 19-21. It tells us, "Hey, because of the blood of Jesus we have access to the fathers. We can go into the holy of holies, if you're not familiar with that imagery. In the Old Testament worship, there was the temple and inside the temple was the holy of holies, and once a year the high priest would go in and offer sacrifices, and he would have access to God.

The only person to have access to God, it was just once a year. The old testament worshipers are different from us; whereas, because of Jesus all of us have access to the father. We have access to the holy of holies, we have access the very presence of God, as a result, we can draw near. Our Old Testament worshipers, that was never the case. They can never draw near only the high priest could draw near, and that was just once a year. Which is tragic because, what people need the most and what enables people to change the most, in our sustain the most is by being in the presence of God. It is by drawing near to God, that's what changes us. That's what sustains us.

That's what gives us strength that enables us to make sense of this world. By and large, all of us are selfish. But when we draw near to the presence of God, He gets us out of our selfishness. Most of us tend to be harsh, impatient with others. But when you draw near to God your heart melts into mercy. When we draw near to God, God changes us. But that never happened in the Old Testament worship. And that's explain it all, the whole of chapter 10 is all about, that never happened in Old Testament worship. Old Testament worship could never perfect the worshiper because they could never get back there.

They could never draw near. They could never get in the presence of God, but we can. That's the good news, we have access to God the father because of what Jesus did at the cross for us. The question is, how do you access, the access? We have access, but how do you access the access? How do you experience God? That's why immediately after versus 19-21 He immediately says, "Let us do this and let us do this, and let us do this, and always get together. Don't miss out on worship."

What He's saying is this, it's actually something we've said several times. It's captured in many different things. When we said that we are called the body of Christ. Again, we are we are called to be Jesus to each other. The original body of Jesus made the word flesh so people could see His glory. We are called to make the world flesh so people can see and experience God.

The same point is made when Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." This is a new commandment, also not a new commandment but it was an old commandment Leviticus 18:19 but when He says it's new He means this; that when we love each other, through our loving each other we experience a fresh love, experience of love of God.

So the passage when it goes on says let us consider, let us spur, let us encourage.

When we do that, when we consider, when we spur, when we encourage and express that to each other at the same time because it's coming to the people of God, it's an experience with God, do you get that? But He's saying is, God's transforming presence comes into our lives through the community of faith. C.S Lewis says this, "Christ works on us in all sorts of ways, but above all He works on us through one another." So how do I experience God's transforming presence in my life? By allowing others to get into your life. It's by allowing other people to get into your life and you getting into the lives of someone else, of others or a small group of people.

If you treat worship as a personal devotional experience, you will miss out on this. If you look at your private devotional life as the thing that God's going to change you, you are wrong about that. That's what I mean by the irreplaceable of the community of faith, it is through the community of faith that we have access through the access that we have in Christ. It is through the community of faith that the word becomes flesh and becomes real to us, so that we see God, we feel God, we experience God.

What kind of community we're called to be then? Through us people have an experience of God so that we reflect God, and they experience God through us. What we've been talking about this? We're called to be a loving community, an accepting community, people who just do life together and we hang out, who are involved in each other's lives, to have each others back, to be the hands and feet of Jesus and making a difference in each other's lives.

And the writer here adds three more **[unintelligible 00:22:21]** us to consider, three more. You could circle these because they're all imperatives, exhortations. Let us consider how we may spur in encouraging one another, actually all of those are three different "let us" statements, "let us consider, let us spur, let us encourage."

And they're all connected, they're all interrelated, they're part of this cluster what I call encouragement. You can't encourage someone unless you consider, first consider. And part of encouragement, there's like two sides of encouragement.

Encouragement means to help someone out according to their needs. There's a soft side of encouragement and there's a hard side of encouragement. Spur is the hard side of encouragement, and the word encouragement is the soft side. We'll take a look at that in a little bit. What is the word consider means? First, let us consider, what is that mean? When I do counselling, I always take notes, there's a reason why counselors takes notes, why do counselors takes notes? They want to remember, first of all, what we've been talking about. Ty want to ponder, they want to think about you, they want to consider how can I help this person the best?

And actually that's what the word mean, that's what we're called to do. We're to ask the question, "How can I help this person out the best?" Which means we need to get to know each other. This is the kind of community of faith that we are called to be. We're to kind of look at each other's lives and say "Hey, how can I help this person out the best?" So, do you have a set of friends, who surround you that you know or actively thinking about you and ask you how best they can care for you or encourage you, support you and help you grow?

And are you that intentional about helping others when you worship? Or when you study in your small group? Or are you listening to other people's hopes and aspirations? And are you sharing your own with others? Are you confessing your sins, sharing your weaknesses and struggles? As well as your gifts and abilities? Do you talk like that in your circle of friends? This is what it supposed to be is, this is what it means to consider. It's something we're all called to do.

Now, I've heard it said that in general, women do this better than men. I know that's true. I know there are some cultures where they're more comfortable in doing this, it looks more natural. The French and Italians are very expressive, and others are not. Here's what I'd say, there's no excuse though, there's no excuse for not doing this. We are all called -- Notice, the writer is talking to us all. We are all called to consider one another, how to spur, and how to encourage.

The Bible sets no conditions. The Bible doesn't say, "Okay, consider one another if you're of a certain age, or generation, or gender, or culture." It doesn't say that at all. It calls all of us to do this, despite our generation, the generation we grew up in. I know some are more expressive than others, or what gender you are, or what culture you belong to. It doesn't matter. It tells us all to do this, to consider. What's the next one? I look at you and say, "Man, how could I, Jared, how could I best encourage him today?" I do that with people all over the congregation. Every Sunday I come and do that. I come with that mentality.

What's the second thing we are called to do? We are called to spur. You might like this one. I notice, no, I'm not going to say it. It means "irritate". It's the same word for -- You would spur a horse, or you get a spur in your saddle. It's kind of that iron sharpens iron kind of thing. I'm sure you're saying this, "I know some people like that. I have some people like that in my life right now. I know some churches who are like that." I would say, probably not. Not in the sense of this passage. What this

passage says is not for us to be irritating, or to irritate each other. It means to sharply disagree or confront. It means to sharply disagree or confront.

What tell me is this, we need people in our lives who can challenge us, who can push us to grow, who have enough love for us, that they'll tell us when they think we are wrong, or push us in a certain direction may be that we don't want to go, or help us to see things we probably are blind to. If you don't have these kinds of people in your life, you're not going to grow. You're not going to be a person who's becoming more loving, and unable to express that love in tangible ways, because what the passage tells us is, when you have these people in your life, when you have people who are spurring you, the outcome will be, you'll become more loving, and you'll put that love into tangible action.

You'll be a person who does good things, which means you're expressing the love that you're experiencing. It's vital for us to have people in our lives who can speak life into us, and sometimes speak life by challenging us. If you're the kind of person who are a little touchy, or super private, and won't let anyone into your life to hold you accountable in the intimate areas of your life, then you are not going to grow. You are probably going to die spiritually. If not die spiritually, you are going to die in other areas of your life.

There's a story in the Iliad, Homer wrote it of course. Odysseus is approaching -- I forget the name of the area, but it's where the Sirens sing, and when the Sirens sing, all the sailors go mad. They go crazy. They crash the boat in the reefs, and he knows this, so he has all the sailors put wax in their ears, so they can't hear the Sirens. He has to guide the boat, so he had them tie him to the mast. He tells the sailors, "No matter what I say, I'm going to go crazy. I'm going to go mad. I'm going to say crazy things. I'm going to tell you to do this and do that. Don't listen to me. Ignore me. Just ignore me."

That's a good illustration of what it means to spur, it means for us to give to each other not what we say we need, but we actually need. Because we talk crazy sometimes. We don't know what we're talking about. It's to care enough to give the person what they really need, which is what Ephesians 4:15 tells us, to speak the truth in love. Speak the truth in love. Speaking the truth in love. Spurring is not being critical, however. I have this idea. I get an impression that a lot of people believe this is a commandment in the Bible. "Criticize ye, one another."

I don't see that in the Bible anywhere that says "Criticize ye, one another." It says spur one another, but not criticize one another. I don't see anywhere in scripture that says, "Be harsh to one another" or, "Judge so that you can judge." Or be hypocritical, because none of these things actually help you to become a more loving or more serving person. Give me some examples, help me see what does it mean to speak the truth in love? How can we spur, challenge one another?

I think two times -- Well, this is really remarkable I thought worked really well. One was, when I was a pastor of the first church, I started a singles ministry. I heard to be able to get some training, I heard this one guy who's led a singles ministry down at Pittsburgh talk about his faith in life and the journey he was on. He talked about a pivotal point in his life where he was living with his girlfriend and it had been a

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couple of years and he's now a leader in the church leading the singles ministry. The elder went up to him and said, "Where do you think this going in your life and do you think this is really God's best for you?"

He had this loving conversation and a guy challenges him, "Here's what scripture has to say about this. Think about it. Is this really what God's will is for you? Is this really God's best for you?" And he left it at that. No threaten to throw him out of the church or remove him from the leadership ministry. Gave him time and he finally realized it wasn't God's best for his life. He wound up separating and he never did marry her. He married someone else.

That was a really a cool gentle way of speaking the truth in love. Saint Augustine the great saint who wrote a lot of great books lived with his girlfriend for two years before he finally made it right. But it took two years, but he was still a saint in the church at the time writing books. Think about that. Another one is my psych professor who saw me driving myself crazy because I had this achievement mentality. Achievement orientation, I think my value was based upon my ability to achieve and basically get As.

It just drove me crazy and he finally called me aside and said, "You're just crazy. You're driven crazy." And I was. I was just 21 and a half credit hours just crazy, all right?hey said, "Hey," He talked to me and starts talking to me about why are you trying to achieve somethings that's already been given for you in Christ? And just explained to me what it means to be in Christ. How not only does grace save my soul, it also saves my life.

He helped me to reorient my life on the basis of grace. How to live by grace. Not only be saved by grace but also live by grace and it saved me. That's what I mean by speaking the truth in love. That gentle confrontation that speaks life into people, that moves them then to become more loving and of course who expresses that love through good deeds. What's the third word? Encourage.

What does the word encourage mean? Literally it means, come alongside to help. I think it's really interesting that Jesus describes the Holy Spirit in this way. He uses the same exact word. "I'll ask the Father and He will give you another counselor" Well, counselor because counselor takes notes. "To be with you forever." The word counselor is actually the word encourager. Meaning the Holy Spirit is given to us so that that it comes alongside to help us.

Last week we talked about how our faith in Jesus is an encouragement to us. There was a phrase in Philippians 2:1. Encouragement from being united with Christ. Meaning, by being united in Christ, God gives us the help that we need. We looked at two things that he does for us. That our faith does for us that helps us. One, union with Christ removes our tendency to fight by healing our inner emptiness which we try to fill with things that puff up our pride which never satisfies.

And results in conflicts because we have this tender egos that are easily hurt. Yet, union with Christ remedy is our biggest need and our biggest need is a new heart and a new person. We need a spiritual birth. This is what we're called to do for each other as well. To come alongside the lives of each other and help. That's

[unintelligible 00:34:23] takes consideration because sometimes you may think something is helpful but it is not.

Sometimes one question I always ask when someones in crisis, or if I know people well enough, I know there are some people who are always in crisis. Whenever they call me, I know exactly what's going on because I know them well enough. Now, if I were to just jump in the car and drive off and rescue them every time it wouldn't be helpful to them. Now, I did the first time but after the tenth time I stopped doing it because it's not helpful to them. They actually have the resources to cope with their problems, they just need to realize it.

So I always ask the question, "Hey, how bad is it and can we talk tomorrow?" More often that not it's, "Yes, we can talk tomorrow." When they do that they discover they had the resources to deal with their crisis; but there are some people who I know they don't have the resources to go through the crisis, so I zip out of the house really quick in those times. So that's why it takes time to consider, you need to get to know people first so you know how to respond the way that is actually helpful to them.

Well, why is this important? I would think that this is obvious why this is important but I find that it's not. The reason why we are called to encourage is because the opposite can happen, we can become -- What's the opposite of encouraged? We can be discouraged, we can get sad or we get down, we can become depressed and I find there are some people who just are really uncomfortable with that. They are uncomfortable with their own emotions, they are uncomfortable with someone else's emotions. I know there are some people who are more expressive than others, I know there are some pastors who are more expressive than others, you know I'm kind of expressive, you know that about me by now.

Because of that we interpret other peoples emotions differently. However you interpret peoples emotions, you need to rule out something's because some things -- When someone's emotional does not mean these things. It does not mean they are weak, it does not mean they are unspiritual, doesn't mean they are unstable or unhealthy because some very famous people in the Bible were very depressed and become unglued emotionally. I'll give you some, Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet, that's his reputation, his the weeping prophet. He wrote the book on crying like a baby, and the name of the book is? Lamentations, how to cry, how to cry as a pastor, yes. I read that book.

[laughter]

I loved it, no. The apostle Paul said he was really low one time, he says this, "We think you are to know dear brothers and sisters--" Notice, he's sharing his feelings like you should, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia, we were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure. What? The apostle Paul was crushed beyond his ability, didn't God wouldn't allow it to happen? No, it will happen to us but now we need to tap into God resources. So we were overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure and we thought we would never live through it. It wasn't fear. The pressure was so great we thought it was going to kill us, men that's pressure.

Jesus, Himself, was overwhelmed. He experienced a dark time, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.' He tells the disciples, "Hey, stay here." To be overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death means Jesus was about to crawl up in a ball and just lying around, just crawl up in a ball, that's what that means. He asked His disciples, "Stay with me." In John 11 it says, "Jesus wept." Literally the phrase is, he had a melt down emotionally in a friend's funeral. The norm for Jesus was this, often it says, "He moved with compassion." That's the norm for Jesus. The word "moved with compassion" means He choked up the whole time. His entire ministry He's always choking up.

Elisha, is a great example as well. It says about him, he had a bad time in his life. Elisha was afraid and he fled for his life. He went to Bashiba, a town of Judah and he left his servants there, then he went on alone into the wilderness travelling all day, went all day out there, 12 hours walking. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough Lord." Men, have you ever been that low you're praying to die? So what this tells me really, you look at all these people and there's more than that in the Bible.

Is that the ability to express emotions freely and openly in front of other people without shame or without fear of what people might think is actually a sign of emotional health. And it is unhealthy for you to deny your emotions, to repress your emotions, to swallow them because that is part of your humanity. You have emotions because God has emotions, and if you let them build up you will explode, you will explode in your life, so I encourage you not to. So what do I do then? What do I do then when someone in my life is down? What do I do?

Well the pastor says, encourage. It means to support. You help out an area that need. It's the opposite of the word spur. Spur means challenge. Sometimes we do need to be challenged and that's an incredible thing to do, but most often we really just need some support. We need empathy. We need people to help us out in ways that we need help. I'll give you some examples from the Bible. In 1 Kings 19, you can read it yourself, God responds to Elijah this way, he wants to die, he's deeply depressed.

God does not say to him, "Man, you're really unhealthy, you really lost it, you're no longer my prophet, get it together or I'm not bringing you back" or "You are what a wimp" or "I thought you were a man of faith" or -- He didn't chastise him, didn't give a sermon, he wasn't embarrassed or uncomfortable with Elijah's emotions, what does God do? He does this, Elijah, talking about Elijah, "He lay down and slept under a broom tree but as he was sleeping, an angel touched him." You know how gentle that is?

He touched him. "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there beside his head was a bread, a baked bread on the hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. The angel then came again and touched him and said, "Get up, eat some more for the journey ahead is too much for you." He got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength. Notice, to travel 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. What Elijah needed was just some food and rest. Just needed a personal retreat.

Jesus responded to Mary and Martha did this. That both of them said the same exact thing to Jesus, they're in crisis. Elijah has died. Both of them said this exact phrase. You can read it in 21 in three two of John 11. "If you have been here my brother would not have died." Now to Martha Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again." But to Mary Jesus didn't say a word. He said, "Jesus wept." That's all He did. To the one who is grieving Jesus brought truth, to the other Jesus brought tears.

Sometimes that's our responses about some people need truth, and some people need tears. There's other ways of encouraging. Once a word of hope, Martha received the word of hope, the entire biblical revelation is a book of hope. It's meant to give a persecuted church hope. Sometimes no words is what's helpful. That's what was true with Mary. Mary didn't need any words, she just needed someone to weep with her. Jesus needed companionship. He's asked the disciples, "Just stay here with me."

Sometimes all we need is someone to be there with us. Another encouraging thing is discipleship. Disciping each other means building each other up in our faith, encouraging each other in our faith. You're bringing out some truth to each other. The apostle, Paul, in fact all the epistles, the book of Hebrews that we're preaching on right now, the whole purpose was for encouragement. The apostle Paul **[unintelligible 00:43:28]** some of the people who encouraged him. "May the Lord show mercy to the house of Onesiphorus because he often refreshed me. He was not ashamed of my chains."

Paul was refreshed by this man and then later on says, "How many ways he helped me in Ephesus". He not only discipled him but he also helped him in other ways. Another place Erastus, it says Erastus stayed in Corinth. I love this passage. Erastus stayed in Corinth -- Paul's talking to Timothy, "And I left Trophimus, sick in Miletus, do your best to come here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so does Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters." There's the great apostle Paul, surrounding himself with a small group of people who encourage him.

And he asked Timothy, "Do your best to come before winter." Because Timothy was that close of a friend for him, that Timothy nourishes him in ways that no one else could. Sometimes another thing that could be helpful could be a timely gift. Apostle Paul brings this up that the Macedonians offered a timely gift, that really blessed him. "In the midst of very severe trials, their overwhelming joy and their extreme poverty riled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people."

Talk to him, what is encouraging is a timely gift for someone in financial stress, or a timely word like "Apples of gold and cities of silver" is a word spoken in light circumstances. I love that. What is a timely word? Actually a great definition for that is Ephesians 4:29. It says this, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth--" and let's listen to verse 31, you can read that later I don't want to focus on that. "but only what is helpful for the building up of others according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen." That's a timely word.

A timely word has three elements. One, "But only what is helpful." So whatever you say, is it helpful to the person? Number two, "For the building up of others according to their need." So does it build them up according to their needs? Now imagine, we've had all these tyres lately out in Kenya. "I want Kenyan people, if you're a Kenyan person quit starting fires, we're tired of it. You really shouldn't have been out there, it's a tinder bucket out there. You're causing your own problems, you shouldn't be." Is that helpful to someone who just experienced a fire and their place is burned to the ground?

You're telling them, "You shouldn't have been out there anyway, it's a tinder box." No. Is that what they need? No it's not what they need. They need some compassion, they need some help with some food and getting their house back together again. What were doing is we're blaming the victims for the fire, the damage it caused, and we're saying, "Hey, it's your fault." Rather than it's the fault of the fire and the dummy who started it. We're blaming the victim when we do that.

Third element, "It may benefit those who listen." Not only should it build up, but it should build up those who listen. They hear it as building up. You may say something that you think is encouraging, but it may not be encouraging to them. I'll give you an example, bear with me, a horrible time. It was right when we first moved out here. We were living in different households, huge expenditure pressure, I'm paying double mortgages. Things are really tight. The house wasn't selling, it looks like it's possible we could go flip and be under and lose it. Of all times, Kara wrecks the car, and she hits someone.

Now, no one was hurt. Thank God. All it was was two cars were damaged. She calls me and tells me what happened, and I just unloaded on her. How could she put us in this situation, did she realize what she did, how irresponsible it was, you took the car, didn't ask permission, and we weren't insured for her." I just laid into her. Was that what she needed from her love? No. What she needed in her love was, how grateful I was she was okay, and it's just stuff that you can fix. That's what she needed, and I did not give it to her. That's what it means to encourage someone in a way that they can hear it.

Jesus has done this for us. Look at the beginning of the passage, this is the reservoir for our encouraging others. God gave us what we needed the most. He gave us access to the father. "Therefore brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain that is His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us-- We can do these things because God gave us what we needed. We have access to the father.

So he asks us simply, do what he's already has done for us. He has encouraged us by helping us in the area that we needed the most, and encourages us to do the same for each other. And then maybe a word of challenge but often not it's just an encouragement. Helping each other out in a way that is helpful to us and that takes considering thinking about each other enough to say, "What can I do that will be both helpful to that person?" That's encouraging. Let's pray.

Lord, develop us Lord now into this kind of people. We are so human, our default is to be very critical and overly harsh, maybe say things they get them off our chest but it's helpful to us but not helpful to the person who's listening. What we need to do, is to stop and listen and ask, how can I help? How can I best help this person? And what is your needs and how do I respond to it? or to help us as a church every Sunday they come with that question on our mind. Not coming as an aggregate but as a congregant, who both ministers and receives ministry.

That every time they come to Sunday, we look for a handful of people that we can encourage and then also be encouraged by growth in that kind of church we pray in Jesus name. Amen.