

Title: The 3 E's in encouragement - Joshua 1v6-18

Purpose: To discover in practical terms how it is that God preps Joshua to face the biggest challenge of his life - to consider the composite power of: Encouragement, exhortation and enlightenment - which are essentially 3 faces of the same thing which come out strongly in Verses 6 thru 8.

INTRODUCTION

If I were to ask you:

Q. What was the **greatest challenge** OR PERHAPS **opportunity** in your life?

Q. I wonder what you would say?

The greatest challenge of Joshua's life

Well, as we turn back to the Book of Joshua that we started last week, Joshua is now facing:

- BOTH the **GREATEST OPPORTUNITY** in his life
- AND ALSO, at the same time, the **VERY GREATEST CHALLENGE** that he is going to have to face

So if it was you coming to Joshua - the night before zero hour, the day before everything is going to begin:

Q. What would you do for him?

Q. What would you think would be of the most help, the most use to him at this time?

Well I guess the answer that probably most of us would give would be to say:

- "Well, I suppose I would **do my best to ENCOURAGE HIM.**"

And I think that that would be a pretty reasonable answer.

Andy Murray winning Wimbledon 2013

Thinking back just a couple of years to **Andy Murray** versus his giant opponent **Novac Djokovic** at **Wimbledon 2013** where, you will recall, that he finally wins out much to everyone's relief and probably to some people's disbelief.

Now, taking nothing away from the brilliance of his tennis that he produced on that occasion HOWEVER, we should still never underestimate the value of **THE SHEER ENCOURAGEMENT** that was being continually pumped into him from the enthusiastic & supportive home crowd.

This is what he had to say following the match, he said:

*"I didn't know what to do with myself. The **noise levels** during the whole match were **just incredible.**"*

Wroughton AOG - A word of encouragement

16 years ago, Bola and I had a four and a half year spell in a church where they would very regularly use the phrase:

"A word of encouragement" - they would say at some point in the service:

"Does anyone have a word of encouragement?".

And this practice was generally useful and they were seeking that people would bring contributions that would benefit everyone - and of course that is thoroughly in line with the Scriptures that when we come to church that we each are ready to contribute something.

What I did observe alongside this, and it was something that made me wonder about this word ENCOURAGEMENT - was that it seemed to be an assumption that ENCOURAGEMENT had to always be POSITIVE, NICE - it had to be essentially a word of COMFORT.

And, quite possibly, this maybe exactly what you have in mind when you hear that word ENCOURAGEMENT.

The English Dictionaries

If you were to dig a little into the English Dictionaries you would read entries like these:

ENCOURAGE (Verb) - "To inspire someone with courage, spirit, or confidence"

OR "To stimulate someone by assistance, approval, etc."

The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary says:

"To cause another to be confident."

And when you read these you start to realise that there is actually quite a WIDTH or BREADTH to what it means to ENCOURAGE someone.

Speaking literally

Speaking literally EN-COURAGE is a composite word made up of **EN** and **COURAGE** and so it means:

"putting OR imparting courage into someone."

So a very important question that we should ask ourselves is:

Q. How exactly, in what practical ways, do we, can we, implement this activity of ENCOURAGING someone?

Q. What form or forms does it take?

Q. What does it really look like in practice?

Speaking biblically

Now to be best able to answer these questions - we really need to take our lead from what the Bible itself, in both OT and NT has to say - because, as you might imagine, **the Bible is not silent on this matter of ENCOURAGEMENT.**

The OT Hebrew words translated "encourage" simply mean "to strengthen".

In the NT Greek the main word for "encourage" has a bit more width of meaning:

PARAKALEO ("to encourage") is **the VERB** and **PARAKLESIS** ("encouragement") is **the NOUN**

And this basic root word comes up 110 times in the NT (so you can see it is well-used).

And It has 3 basic areas of meaning:

1. **THE FIRST** is that of giving COMFORT
2. **THE SECOND** is that of giving ENCOURAGEMENT - that is putting strength into someone
3. **& then THIRDLY** we have that of EXHORTATION (and this would come in the following varieties: **IMPLORING, URGING, APPEALING, BEGGING** someone etc.)

And so you can see that we have something of a spectrum here - on the one side we have a nice soft word like COMFORT and then on the other end we have a tougher, maybe rougher word group under the heading of EXHORT and somewhere in the middle we have ENCOURAGE which is perhaps a bit more neutral (where someone is getting emboldened, built-up perhaps).

Two important observations

Now there are **two important observations** that we should make here:

- THE FIRST observation is what one would call an empirical observation (so that is one which you observe played out in real, everyday life) - and that is that:
 - when people pick up and run with this ENCOURAGE word they tend to have in their minds the left hand end of the scale.
 - they tend to think mostly in the category of COMFORT, of HELPING and of GIVING A BIT OF A HAND UP - you know CHEERING SOMEONE ALONG - PUTTING A BIT MORE WIND IN SOMEONE'S SAILS!!
- THE SECOND observation is one that is deduced directly from Scripture and that is when you count up the word occurrences, when you tot up how many times each area of meaning is intended you get an interesting, and maybe surprising picture:

The left-hand end COMFORT use turns up about 20 times

The middle of the spectrum ENCOURAGE use around 15 times

and then lastly the right-hand end EXHORT, URGE, PLEAD, APPEAL use - a whacking 75 times

And so you suddenly realise that the whole concept of what we term ENCOURAGEMENT is something that is - from a Biblical standpoint - SOMETHING MUCH STURDIER & MUCH MORE SOLID, SOMETHING EVEN MORE INVASIVE than we tend to think.

But here now as we come to the bulk of this opening chapter of the book of Joshua - we have ENCOURAGEMENT turning up as something of a THEME and so it provides for us something of a worked example of seeing the contents of this word.

Our structure

I have 3 headings that will help us cover the sections through from Verse 6 to the end:

- FIRST - God encourages Joshua
- THEN - Joshua encourages the leaders
- AND LAST UP - The leaders encourage Joshua

So then #1:

1] God encourages Joshua - Verses 6-9

If there are any really well-known verses (kind of like memory verses, although people might not be able to quote them word for word - they might just have the general gist of them) if there are any really top verses here in this book of Joshua (and I'm not actually thinking of memorable stories - such as the walls of Jericho falling down) - then I guess there might be a couple of good contenders:

- One set of verses is right in **the opening chapter** starting at Verse 6 thru to 9 where God says to Joshua:

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. **Be strong and very courageous.** Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged,** for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
- The other verse is at **the final chapter** and is Joshua 24 verse 15 where we read:

"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

So these memorable verses, memorable phrases, do seem to do quite a good job of summing up the book really - they are like matching & enveloping bookends which frame rather nicely the Book of Joshua and what a lot of it is essentially about:

Serving well, living victoriously by being one who walks forward being strong and very courageous and not giving into fear or discouragement and thus knowing a certain prospering and success that comes fully from the hand of the LORD.

Verses 6-9 - Four verses

So a really important question that we need to ask here - early on in this first chapter is:

Q. How does God Himself set out to prepare Joshua for all that he has ahead of him?

Put that another way:

Q. As God "ENCOURAGES" Joshua - **what exactly is the form, what exactly is the make up** of that ENCOURAGEMENT?

Heart, mind & will

Now I won't be telling you anything that you don't already know by saying that we are all made up of:

the HEART and MIND and WILL (although other words might be used interchangeably such as SOUL or perhaps SPIRIT):

- Now the HEART is that innermost sanctuary where our affections and loves reside
- the MIND is where we have the seat of our reasoning, our thinking faculty
- and the WILL is the place where decisions get forged and taken

And it does seem that God as He comes to "ENCOURAGE" Joshua - he does not merely come and beat on Joshua's WILL again and again but He takes a rather more "**multi-directional**" **APPROACH**.

A strand of rope

As I thought about this I couldn't help but have **the image of piece of rope** in my mind.

Do you remember that Scripture there in Ecclesiastes 4 (Verse 12) which reads:

(Ecclesiastes 4 verse 12) "Though **one** may be overpowered, **two** can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Three strands

So let me unstring this rope of God's ENCOURAGEMENT for Joshua and for this I'm just going to isolate **THREE STRANDS** as follows:

- **FIRSTLY** - the bit that you really can't miss, the thread that runs all the way through - Verse 6, Verse 7 and Verse 9 is the theme tune: "Be strong (or 'Be very strong') and courageous" and it is God literally "Seeding" his HEART.

He wants to, as it were, INFUSE this message deep down into his HEART.

To put that in catering terms - God is practically MARINADING his SOUL.

If you want to put this ASPECT under a single banner heading - then this would map onto the central heading of **ENCOURAGEMENT** - instilling courage in another.

- **THE SECOND** thing that he does is there in Verses 7 & 8 - let me read those verses:

"Be strong and very courageous.

Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night,

so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Notice that there are 4 things getting communicated here - 4 strands of counsel that God is passing on:

- The FIRST is that Joshua needs to KNOW God's word.

Now although this isn't stated in as many words, it is everywhere implied. And when you think about it - as Moses' assistant - he would have seen him writing the early books of the Bible and it would have been very much a word saturated environment that would have prepared him well as a student of that word.

- The SECOND is that Joshua was to VERBALISE that word.

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth..."

Q. Now why is this important? Perhaps you have heard the illustration of the 2 seas in Israel?

You have the sea of Galilee in the North and that sea is a very abundant sea full of life. Then you have the Dead Sea and as its name suggests, it does not support life.

Q. So what is the essential difference?

Well with the sea full of life you have a source of water flowing in at the top and one flowing out at the

bottom.

Yet with the other there is only an input and there is no output.

So perhaps you can see how important it is for life to exist that we don't just take spiritual stuff into ourselves - we also make sure that what we hear and understand is finding a way of verbal expression as well.

Yes that could be expressing the truths of God by way of song - but more likely and more powerfully this is done when we simply talk about and tell out the truths that we are receiving and understanding.

There is a verse in the NT which seems to lend support to this:

Philemon Verse 6 "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

But I think the verses that would have been jogged in Joshua's mind would have been those great verses in

Deuteronomy 6 (Verses 6&7) "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Impress them on your children. **Talk about them** when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

- The THIRD is that Joshua is to MEDITATE on the word.

So clearly it is good that we KNOW the word AND that we TALK about it - that it is a matter of our conversation (and at this point you can/and should be asking yourself - Q. How often does the word of God come up in my own conversation? Q. Do I ever initiate it? Q. Is it only in a religious, a church context that I permit myself to talk about it?)

But for our conversation to be more than just spontaneous opinion sharing - if it is to have some real depth to it then it requires that we will have spent time pondering the word - turning it this way and that.

In Christ's church today - there is a lot of superficiality, a lot of people that are just getting spoon-fed their Christianity.

So what's the way around that? Well we need to be people who are intuitively accustomed to being what you might call APPLICATION PEOPLE. All the time we are asking ourselves the deep and penetrating questions - we are saying to ourselves - Q. So how exactly does this idea, this teaching of Scripture, intersect with my daily life? Q. What is the implication, what is the implementation of this verse?

- The LAST ASPECT is that Joshua is to OBEY the word

"Be careful to obey all the law ...; do not turn from it to the right or to the left ... be careful to do everything written in it..."

This clearly is where the "rubber hits the road" and is often where we can fail - even if we are KNOWING, TALKING & PONDERING on Scripture. Perhaps this was why God stapled to this essential requirement the fact of the reward and prosperity that would follow.

If you want to put this WHOLE ASPECT under a single banner heading - then this would map onto the central heading not of ENCOURAGEMENT but of **ENLIGHTENMENT** - God is working currently on Joshua's MIND - that is **the second strand**.

- The THIRD THING which He does is there early on in **Verse 6** we read:
"Be strong and courageous, **BECAUSE you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.** Be strong and very courageous.

In the other two strands, the LORD God has been filling HIS HEART (giving him ENCOURAGEMENT) - He has been filling HIS HEAD (giving him ENLIGHTENMENT) and now He must put something into HIS HANDS - and this is the element of EXHORTATION - this is where He works on Joshua's WILL.

However BOLD Joshua feels, however INSTRUCTED he is - what use if he does not get up and take steps. So here we have this word of COMMAND - "lead these people to inherit the land..."

We see these three powerful combined elements OR stands that in their totality make up Biblical Encouragement - the three E's as I consider them:

E #1 is easy to remember - it is: **ENCOURAGEMENT** - it is what we need deep down in our **hearts**
E #2 is then: **ENLIGHTENMENT** - this is what undergirds things in our **thinking**, in our **minds**
E #3 is last of all: **EXHORTATION** - this is the **will, there is certainly a place to be directive**

Well that is God's strategy with Joshua so let's see (a lot more briefly now) where this goes from here:

#1 God encourages Joshua - #2:

2] Joshua encourages the leaders - Verses 10-15

Joshua's tone is certainly very commanding and certain - [Verse 11](#) reads in the NASB:

[\(Verse 11\)](#) NASB : "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.' "

Now before we put this all down to the way in which the LORD has just encouraged him - we should bear in mind what Joshua sounded like 38 years previously:

[Numbers 14 verses 6-9](#)" The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, **he will lead us into that land**, a land flowing with milk and honey, and **will give it to us**. Only **do not rebel** against the LORD. And **do not be afraid** of the people of the land, because **we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone**, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

Here Joshua is directive and certain - he speaks as one inspiring confidence. Maybe he had in his mind how his words had not received traction the last time - but now history has vindicated the position that him and Caleb took and so his message is simple - a threefold message of vision:

- we are to cross the Jordan
- we are to go in and possess
- He, the LORD, is giving it to us

It is a reality that ENTHUSIASM that arises from DEEP ENCOURAGEMENT is pretty CONTAGIOUS!

Well that was the tone to the leaders of the 9 and a half tribes - to the other 2 and half (Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh) they need a similarly strong tone to animate and activate them to do what they had promised Moses they would.

(If you don't know the history here - these particular tribes had made a special request to live outside of the promised

OR Q. Is it the case that ours is that rather soft & overly sentimental version which merely stresses the COMFORT element at the expense of the others?

Q. I wonder whether you see the remarkable benefit of this "3D" ENCOURAGEMENT?

It passes around from God to Joshua from Joshua to the leaders and then back again from the leaders to Joshua.

It actually becomes more than just good ENCOURGEMENT - it becomes a whole ECO-SYSTEM, it becomes a whole and wholesome ENVIRONMENT in which we can exist comfortable and healthily.

Well let us pray that this type of experience should become ours and that of our church - for the glory of God and for the good of us all.

LET US PRAY AMEN