

# MAGNOLIA MINDS: Are you an encourager?

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You may not feel you can pull that off. Are you so far in the pits that you don't have anything to offer? You may be the one who needs to be encouraged. I get that. I'd suggest, though, that you will be encouraged by being encouraging.

What stirred this up was a quote I ran across by Johann

Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749-1832), a German poet and intellectual: "Correction does much, but encouragement does more."

I can attest to that. If you want to bring out the best in me, if you want me to be productive and happy, encourage me. I don't respond well to inappropriate corrections (also known as being devalued). I know when I've blown it without someone having to point it out and beat me up over it.

I'd imagine that you too respond better to encouragement than unmerited criticism. (However, I want to leave some wiggle room for the times that you *do* need to be appropriately criticized.)

What, then, can you do to encourage other folks?

– **Remember that God created you.** God is the ultimate encourager. You can encourage others because it's grafted into you.

We tend to forget that since we're created in His image we can display His attributes to the world. The call, then, is to not bottle up that gift of encouragement but to pour it out. That's worth pondering. What keeps you from doing that? If you're designed to encourage others, is there something holding you back?

– **You being an encourager might just be the best thing that happens to someone today.** We don't know the full details of what the people we meet might be facing. I suppose if they choose to share their struggles and hurts, it gives us some concrete steps to take to encourage them. It's safe to assume, though, that everyone is facing *something*. To us, it might be a matter of degree and no big deal but to them, it's crippling.

I think about Job of the Bible book of the same name. Here he sits. He's lost property. He's lost family. His health is

gone. "Curse God and die," Mrs. Job says. Think he could've used some encouragement?

We might never reach the level of Jobian grief. Our hurts, though, are uniquely ours and just as real. Think there may be someone in your circle who could use some encouragement? It's safe to assume there is.

– **There is always hope, and you can give that away.** I made the mistake a few minutes ago of doing a quick scan of the news. Of course I know it's appropriate to be informed but as I've written several times, don't dwell on the things you can't do anything about (which is pretty much everything). Instead, ask yourself: *Is what I am subjecting myself to making me more Christlike or is it poisoning my soul?* Act accordingly.

Being an encourager in this horrifically fallen world can be tough, especially if we evaluate everything we see and hear through worldly, temporal eyes. Everything, and I mean *everything*, that is happening around us is part of The Plan.

We can grieve for the fallen state of man – and we should – but remember that it's God's role to fix what is broken. We cooperate with Him and get our marching orders from Him, but to continually fret and bemoan the state of things is useless and if we aren't careful, can render us spiritually impotent.

Because of that, we know there is always everlasting hope and we should be duty bound to share it. That is supernatural encouragement.

Living like Jesus might feel like a fantasy to you. "It's just too hard," you say. Well, pilgrim, it *is* hard... if you think you have to figure out everything. Still, God encourages us if we take the time to graciously receive His encouragement.

Once we acknowledge that, yes, everything will one day be redeemed and set right, we can encourage others with the same encouragement we've received.

The key, I believe, is to evaluate all we experience and see in the light of eternity. We are assured of life everlasting. We're just living in the "not yet." Always be mindful that the best is yet to come. The end is in sight.

In light of all this, find someone today that you can encourage. It matters.

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