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What Would They Call You or Me?

By Teresa Hampton

There are probably people who come instantly to mind when you hear the word *encourage*. They're continually about the business of exhortation, encouragement, edification, consolation, and comfort. I think of Elsie, Francis, and Mary. I think of Allen who, in the midst of a battle with cancer, is a constant source of encouragement to me and many others.

Encouragement involves serving our brothers and sisters in Christ. During the early days of the new church, a man named Joses saw Christians in need. He sold land he owned, and laid the money at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:36). This man was so given to encouragement that they changed his name to Barnabas, translated Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36).

Encouragement comes through comforting words and correct Biblical teaching. First century Christians were confused about Jesus' second coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18). They mistakenly believed that those who had died in the Lord would not be received by Christ when He returned to earth. Paul assured them that when Jesus comes again, *the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who remain will be caught up with them and meet the Lord in the air. Therefore comfort [encourage] one another with these words.*

Exhortation may include instruction, admonition, or warning. Paul said, *you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory* (1 Thess. 2:10-12). He cautioned them to be sober or alert, reminding them that it is the duty of Christians to *encourage one another and build one another up* (1 Thess. 5:11). Paul told them, *admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all* (1 Thess. 5:14).

The example Barnabas provided, as well as the commands of the epistles, should bring self-evaluation. Are we a source of encouragement to the brethren? Do we exhort and build them up with good words and humble serving? If brothers and sisters in the church changed our names, what would they call you or me?

Today's Verse: *Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin* (Hebrews 12:8).

Challenge: Let 2012 be the year of encouragement!

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