



THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

KEY VERSES

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24,25

BIBLICAL BASIS

Matthew 19:14; John 1:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24,25

THE BIG IDEA

An important part of God's work on earth is to affirm, uplift and encourage others.

AIMS OF THIS SESSION

During this session you will guide students to:

- Examine how affirmation and encouragement is an important part of everyone's leadership ministry;

- Discover the power of affirmation through study and actual affirmation exercises;
- Implement a ministry of affirmation.

WARM UP

WHERE DO YOU RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT?—

Students share their experiences of encouragement.

TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL

AFFIRMATION BOMBARDMENT—

Students give and receive affirmation.

TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL

AFFIRMATION YARN—

Students build up the group by affirming each other.

IN THE WORD

BE AN ENCOURAGER—

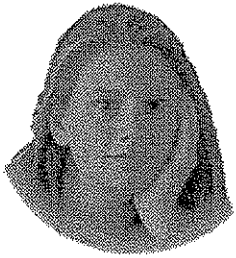
A Bible study on the impact of affirming and encouraging others.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

Questions to get students thinking and talking about a ministry of affirmation.

PARENT PAGE

A tool to get the session into the home and allow parents and young people to discuss affirming each other.



LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:16,17).

When my best friend, Dana, died of cancer a few years ago, it was the most devastating loss I had ever faced. Dana had been actively involved in our youth ministry and he was loved by tons of kids. His battle with cancer and subsequent death was the most difficult struggle I ever experienced. A few weeks after his death, I received a letter in the mail from a girl in our high school named Chiara. In the letter, she encouraged me with this poem:

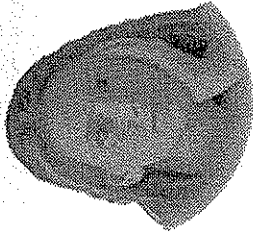
There is nothing—no circumstance, no testing—that can ever touch me until first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose or blessing to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret. For I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is! That is the rest of victory!

It's incredible how God uses young people to minister to youth ministers! More than anything else that others tried to say or do for me, Chiara's poem was the most encouraging thing that helped me the most in my grief over Dana's death. It gave me a whole new perspective of God's presence in the midst of my circumstances. Her encouragement to me was a powerful affirmation I've never forgotten.

In Jesus Christ, you can offer eternal encouragement to the young people with whom you work. The power of affirmation and encouragement can and will change their lives. To say an encouraging word or affirm the qualities you see in a teenager doesn't take long, but it sure goes a long way in the life of a student dying for attention. Every student wants someone to believe in him or her. Your positive words of encouragement and affirmation can be the very things to lead young people from death to life. (Written by Joey O'Connor.)

**Many a time a word of
praise or thanks or appre-
ciation or cheer has kept
a man on his feet.
Blessed is the man who
speaks such a word.—
William Barclay**





THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

KEY VERSES

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24,25

BIBLICAL BASIS

Matthew 19:14; John 1:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24,25

THE BIG IDEA

An important part of God's work on earth is to affirm, uplift and encourage others.

WARM UP (5-10 MINUTES)

WHERE DO YOU RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT?

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Have students sit in a circle while they take turns completing the following statements:
The most encouraging person I know is...
One of the most encouraging experiences of my life was...
I hope I can be more encouraging to others by...

TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH / MIDDLE SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

AFFIRMATION BOMBARDMENT

- Divide students into groups of six or seven.
- Give each student a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil.
- Students write an affirming word about each person in their groups. Then take one person at a time and have all the other students bombard him or her with a word of affirmation.

Fold

3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
- Who can you give praise to and what will you do?

SO WHAT?

Be Available.
"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:14).
Why do you think Jesus was available even to younger brothers and sisters?

How can you help people by being more available?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

- Use the questions on page 159 after or as a part of "In the Word."

1. Why do you think Jesus made affirmation such an important part of His ministry?

2. How can affirmation be a positive way to share your faith with another person?

3. What is it like to be around a person who never has anything good to say about others?

PARENT PAGE

- Distribute page to parents.

7 TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

AFFIRMATION YARN

- Divide students into groups of six or seven.
- Give a ball of yarn, string or rope to one person. Whoever is holding the yarn affirms someone else in the group and then tosses the yarn to that person. That person affirms someone else and tosses the yarn to that person. Make sure everyone gets affirmed.

1 IN THE WORD (25-30 MINUTES)

BE AN ENCOURAGER

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
- Give each student a copy of "Be an Encourager" on pages 153-157 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy using an overhead projector.
- Students complete the Bible study.

1. The Word on Encouragement

The Bible challenges us to share our faith through encouragement and affirmation.

Read each verse and write out how you can apply the principle of encouragement given in it.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Hebrews 3:13

Hebrews 10:24,25

You can be an encourager! In fact you are called by God to be an encourager to whomever He places in your life. To get a better perspective of how you can do this, answer the questions below.

- How have you been encouraged by someone this past month?
- Why is it sometimes so difficult to give and receive encouragement from our families?

c. List several ways God has encouraged humankind.

- On a scale from 1 to 10 rate how often you encourage others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Always	

2. Smile, God Loves You!

- God affirms you. Webster's Dictionary says that to affirm means to say positively, declare firmly; assert to be true. What are a few ways God has affirmed you?

b. God loves you. What are specific ways you know God loves you?

c. God believes in you. What do you think it means to have God believe in you?

d. God draws out the best in you. What positive personality trait is God helping you to develop? (Examples: patience, caring, becoming a more affirming person.)

One of the most important qualities a Christian can have is the ministry of affirmation. When we give people the gift of affirmation, we are giving them something far greater than material gifts. American psychologist William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."

3. The Ministry of Affirmation

As you read about Jesus you'll see over and over again in the gospels that He had the power to draw out the best in people. Remember when He met a clumsy, big-mouthed fisherman named Simon? He looked straight into Simon's eyes and said, "So you are Simon the son of John." Simon nodded. Then Jesus said, "You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter)" (John 1:42). Jesus nicknamed him Cephas or Peter, which means "The Rock."

Peter's friends or family probably laughed at the new name Jesus gave him. Apparently he had anything but a "rock" of a personality. They would have never believed that this uneducated fisherman would someday be a leader of the Christian Church.

Jesus saw beyond Peter's problems, beyond his personality quirks and beyond his sin. Jesus turned Peter's weaknesses into strengths. He believed in Peter, and He had the power to draw out the best in Peter. Peter changed. It took years, but in the New Testament we see a man who was transformed by the power of God because Jesus affirmed him.

a. Believe in people.

You have the power to affect lives by the way you believe in people. Because God believes in you, as a Christian you can believe in others. Here's a quote about one of the world's great religious leaders: "He refused to see the bad in people. He often changed human beings by regarding them not as what they were but as though they were what they wished to be." It is very important to praise those around you. They will appreciate it and respond to praise. Be generous with your praise!

List three people who need your belief in them. In other words, who are your Simon Peters?

-
-
-

b. Be liberal with praise.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing"

(1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Mark Twain once said, "I can live two months on one good compliment."

People respond to praise. Make a list of different ways you can give the gift of affirmation. (For example: Write a note to a friend, tell someone in your family about your love for him or her, send flowers.)

-
-

I IN THE WORD

BE AN ENCOURAGER

1. The Word on Encouragement

The Bible challenges us to share our faith through encouragement and affirmation.

Read each verse and write out how you can apply the principle of encouragement given in it.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

.....

Hebrews 3:13

.....

Hebrews 10:24,25

.....

You can be an encourager! In fact you are called by God to be an encourager to whomever He places in your life. To get a better perspective of how you can do this, answer the questions below.

a. How have you been encouraged by someone this past month?

.....

b. Why is it sometimes so difficult to give and receive encouragement from our families?

.....

c. List several ways God has encouraged humankind.

.....

d. On a scale from 1 to 10 rate how often you encourage others.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Always	

IN THE WORD

2. Smile, God Loves You!

- a. God affirms you. Webster's Dictionary says that to affirm means to say positively; declare firmly; assert to be true. What are a few ways God has affirmed you?

.....

.....

- b. God loves you. What are specific ways you know God loves you?

.....

.....

- c. God believes in you. What do you think it means to have God believe in you?

.....

.....

- d. God draws out the best in you. What positive personality trait is God helping you to develop? (Examples: patience, caring, becoming a more affirming person.)

.....

.....

One of the most important qualities a Christian can have is the ministry of affirmation. When we give people the gift of affirmation, we are giving them something far greater than material gifts. American psychologist William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."

3. The Ministry of Affirmation

As you read about Jesus you'll see over and over again in the gospels that He had the power to draw out the best in people. Remember when He met a clumsy, big-mouthed fisherman named Simon? He looked straight into Simon's eyes and said, "So you are Simon the son of John." Simon nodded. Then Jesus said, "You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter)" (John 1:42). Jesus nicknamed him Cephas or Peter, which means "The Rock."

Peter's friends or family probably laughed at the new name Jesus gave him. Apparently he had anything but a "rock" of a personality. They would have never believed that this uneducated fisherman would someday be a leader of the Christian church.

Jesus saw beyond Peter's problems, beyond his personality quirks and beyond his sin. Jesus turned Peter's weaknesses into strengths. He believed in Peter, and He had the power to draw out the best in Peter. Peter changed. It took years, but in the New Testament we see a man who was transformed by the power of God because Jesus affirmed him.

a. Believe in people.

You have the power to affect lives by the way you believe in people. Because God believes in you, as a Christian you can believe in others. Here's a quote about one of the world's great religious leaders: "He refused to see the bad in people. He often changed human beings by regarding them

1 IN THE WORD

not as what they were but as though they were what they wished to be." It is very important to praise those around you. They will appreciate it and respond to praise. Be generous with your praise!

List three people who need your belief in them. In other words, who are your Simon Peters?

1.
2.
3.

b. Be liberal with praise.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Mark Twain once said, "I can live two months on one good compliment."

People respond to praise. Make a list of different ways you can give the gift of affirmation. (For example: Write a note to a friend, tell someone in your family about your love for him or her, send flowers.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Who can you give praise to and what will you do?

.....

.....

So What?

Be Available.

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'" (Matthew 19:14).

Why do you think Jesus was available even to younger brothers and sisters?

.....

.....

.....

How can you help people by being more available?

.....

.....

.....

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why do you think Jesus made affirmation such an important part of his ministry?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How can affirmation be a positive way to share your faith with another person?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What is it like to be around a person who never has anything good to say about others?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

PARENT PAGE



THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24,25).

How can we as a family encourage one another?

.....
.....
.....
.....

What kind of encouragement could you use from your family at this time?

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Family Affirmation List

Each family member can use this list to communicate encouragement. You can also make up more of your own areas of affirmation.

1. What I especially appreciate about you is...
2. One of my favorite memories of you and I is...
3. You made my day when...
4. If I could give you a gift of affirmation it would be...

Action step: Positive time together is one of the greatest sources of affirmation and encouragement. Take a moment to plan a special outing together in the next month.



Session 10 "The Power of Affirmation and Encouragement" Date