

## **BEING A BETTER CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGER – PART 1**

### **Getting started**

What was the last experience you had that showed you still have a lot to learn – whether at home, at work, in church, or in any other area of life.

### **We all need to GROW as disciples of Christ**

*In Philippians 3:8-11 Paul declares the greatness of knowing Jesus, and his glad loss of all worldly achievements. But has he become perfectly mature? Read **Phil. 3:12-21**, and discuss the following questions.*

1. What does Paul say that he is not, and that he has not yet done (vv12-13)?
2. If this is how the apostle Paul viewed himself, what does that say about what our own attitudes to ourselves should be?
3. What reason does Paul give for why he presses on to obtain a deeper knowledge of Christ (v12)?
4. What does this teach us about the basis and motivation for our growth as Christians?
5. What is the one thing that Paul does do (vv13-14)?
6. What kind of imagery does Paul use in verses 13 and 14? What does it remind you of? What does this teach us about the kind of effort we should spend on growing as Christians?
7. Whom does Paul instruct us to imitate in verse 17? What does this teach about how we are to grow as Christians?
8. What's the threat Paul mentions to our faithfully following his and others' godly example (vv18-19)? Why is it so important to follow godly examples?
9. List everything Paul says is true of us as Christians in verses 20-21. How does each of things encourage us to persevere as disciples?

## **IMITATION is necessary for growth: being and seeking godly examples**

*The Bible tells us that we need both teaching/instruction AND examples. Some things need to be "caught" as well as "taught".*

1. What are some of the pitfalls of learning by instruction only and not having Christian relationships with godly role models?
2. Read these verses from the writings of the Apostle Paul:
  - 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"
  - 2 Timothy 3:10, "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings..."
3. Does it seem strange to say "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ"? Explain how one can do this out of humility (rather than pride).
4. Think about seeking and imitating godly examples. Can you list one or two people who you have found worthy of imitation? What Christlike qualities have you seen in them? How did you actually learn from them?
5. Think about being a godly example. Is your life one which a younger Christian should imitate?
6. What's one area of your life in which you struggle to follow Jesus? Do you know a Christian who sets a godly example in that area? (Get together and discuss...! Ask around at church until you find someone!)
7. Have you considered that a normal part of being a follower of Jesus is helping others grow as disciples? What hinders you in this? What are some of the ways this truth should impact:
  - Your daily schedule?
  - How you approach going to church on Sunday? Or fellowship group?
  - Casual conversations with friends?
  - Other areas of life?

## BEING A BETTER CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGER – PART 2

### Getting started

1. Think about the week just gone...
  - Have you had any opportunities this week to encourage another Christian – either by word or example?
  - Have there been times this week when you have been encouraged by another Christian – either by their words or example?
2. Share a Bible truth or verse that has encouraged you lately.
3. Think about some of the Christians who have taught you the most. What makes them good teachers?

### TEACHING ONE ANOTHER is necessary to grow: being a Bible sharer

*The Bible tells us that we need both examples AND teaching/instruction...*

1. Read Romans 15:14, and discuss:
  - Would Paul write v14 about our church? (Why? why not?).
  - What do you think Paul expects them to do in response?
  - Do you think of yourself as able to instruct others? And other church members as able to instruct you? (Why? Why not?)
2. Read Ephesians 4:15-16, and discuss:
  - According to v15, by what means are we to grow up into Christ?
  - Who is to be “speaking the truth in love”?
3. Sum up your role and responsibilities as a church member in the light of these passages.
4. What are some of the different *settings* in which we could be sharing the Bible with one other person? What different *sorts of people* could we be looking to encourage? Make a long list...!

5. Imagine you're sitting down with another church member to have a chat. Here are three essential ingredients if you're going to be a blessing to each other. Discuss why each is necessary... and what the problem is if one is missing.
  - Mutual love and honest sharing
  - Bible truth
  - Prayer
  
6. What things help us pursue these kinds of intentional Christian relationships? What things hinder us? (Attitudes, skills, practicalities)

## BEING A BETTER CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGER – PART 3

### Recap Christian growth: we're in it together!

- We need to grow Christianly – and help one another to grow.
- Examples to imitate: being an example... finding examples.
- Teaching one another: being an intentional Bible sharer in daily life.

### Recap When & where might we be a Bible sharer?

- Different settings in which we can share the Bible with another church member:

#### Existing opportunities

Before/after church on Sunday... fellowship group... prayer meeting  
In conversation with a church member  
In your family/home

#### Seeking out opportunities

“Coffee & a chat”  
A prayer triplet  
Regular 1-2-1 Biblereading partnership

- Different “types” of Christian you might look to encourage:

A fellow brother in Christ  
A younger Christian man  
Someone who's in crisis

### Recap Essential ingredients... and hindrances

- We need: (i) mutual love and honest sharing; (ii) Bible truth; (iii) prayer
- Obstacles?
  - (i) time / diary / too busy;
  - (ii) fear: of honesty... getting the Bible wrong... of people
  - (iii) selfishness: we don't want to sacrifice... risk committing ourselves to other people...

## Different ways to share Bible truth

1. **Share something from the sermon** listen like a river, not a reservoir
  - i. what's the "big thing" in God's word today?
  - ii. what's most heartened or challenged me?
  - iii. with whom can I talk/pray about it?
  
2. **Meet to read and/or discuss a (good) Christian book**
  
3. **Meet to do a Biblestudy together** you don't need to be an expert

← "easier"...	... "harder" →
<p><b>Use a book that does <i>lots</i> of the hard work for you!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Partnership: Philippians", William Taylor</li> <li>- "The way of the righteous in the muck of life: Psalms 1-12", Dale Ralph Davis</li> <li>- "Judges for you", Tim Keller</li> <li>- "Ephesians for you", Richard Coekin</li> </ul>	<p><b>Use a booklet that does <i>some</i> of the hard work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Good Book Guides", from the Good Book Company</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Just study the Bible!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- see below...</li> </ul>

### **Three big questions to ask any Bible passage:**

- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply?

### **A few more questions...**

1. Purpose: Can you work out why the author first wrote this Bible book? Any clues?
2. Divisions: Does the passage split up into bits?
3. What does each bit say? Look out for...
  - i. What it actually says!
  - ii. Repeated words / themes
  - iii. Linking words
  - iv. The "flow" or the "story"
4. Context: can you work out how your passage relates to the bit before and the bit after?
5. Summarise: the big point here is "X".
6. Response (head / heart / hands): for them back then... for us now?

**Use these questions & try a speedy Biblestudy on 3 John...**

“The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. <sup>2</sup>  
Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may  
be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. <sup>3</sup> For I rejoiced  
greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as  
indeed you are walking in the truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy  
than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. <sup>5</sup>  
Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these  
brothers, strangers as they are, <sup>6</sup> who testified to your love  
before the church. You will do well to send them on their  
journey in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup> For they have gone out  
for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.  
<sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we  
may be fellow workers for the truth. <sup>9</sup> I have written  
something to the church, but Diotrefes, who likes to put  
himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. <sup>10</sup> So if I  
come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense  
against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome  
the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them  
out of the church. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate  
good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has  
not seen God. <sup>12</sup> Demetrius has received a good testimony  
from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our  
testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. <sup>13</sup> I had  
much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen  
and ink. <sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.  
<sup>15</sup> Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends,  
each by name.”