**Be Encouraging**

Encourager - Encourage - Be Encouraged - BE ENCOURAGING

Different personality types... I understand what I am sharing today is easier for some than others.

D – Ok, lets do it. Why are we talking about it.

I – like me, this is great, this will make everybody happy

S – I can see where this would be good as long as I don’t have to change what I do

C – This might work, could we build a spreadsheet on it and analyze what we need to do?

We have all heard lessons and teachings where the foundation was to encourage us... Be Encouraged! And thats great... we all need to be encouraged on a regular basis. Grant talked about this on Sunday when he was going through the gifts... Exhort the saints... but what about exhorting the exhorter? Romans 12:6-8

Following Jesus, being a Christian is a faith of action.

* Not works... its not a I have to go to church, I have to help the homeless, I have to be nice to everybody
* It is about action, taking the steps that produce works. There is no part of following Jesus that says, just sit around and you are good.
* The very first step in following Christ is action... confess who Jesus is, repent for sins, ask and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, be baptized. You can’t go forward until you take those actions.
* From there:
	+ SEEK you first the Kingdom of God... Matt 6:33
	+ ASK and it shall be given, SEEK and you shall find, KNOCK and the door will be open Matt 7:7
	+ GO out and MAKE disciples Matt 28:19
* Everything is an action and yes from those actions you will produce works, James 2:14 – 20 you demonstrate your faith through action and your works come from that.

So Why am I talking about action... I thought we were going to be talking about encouraging... this isn't very encouraging yet. For a large number of people, being encouraged and certainly being encouraging does not come naturally and even for those that it does, it still requires action to succeed at it so I want you to be engaged and understand as we go along that you will have to make a choice on this.

I feel like I have a bit of a smorgasbord that the Lord has given me to share today, I hope I can tie it all together into something that benefits each of you.

**My testimony**

It seems that is fairly standard practice for us that when someone gets their first opportunity to bring a message, they work a lot of their testimony into it... so I want to keep that trend rolling.

I have always had a positive outlook and been optimistic for the most part although I never realized it until much later in life. There are people I have close contact with to this day who believe I live in a world of unicorns and rainbows... and for the most part that is true. It is my personality type as I mentioned above.

Looking back I see examples now of that even when I was young:

* 2nd grade after open heart surgery, I ran a mile and went up to my PE teacher all excited that I could do that now. I found out later he did not share my enthusiasm when he found out a 7 year old kid was a couple of months removed from a major surgery and he is running in the Texas heat. But that never dawned on me that it could be negative. For the record, I am pretty sure that was the last time in my life that I was excited about running!!
* I found out a few years later because of that surgery I couldn’t play football in Jr. High and High School.... that’s kind of a big deal in small town Texas. But somehow I found out about being a manager so I could still be part of the team and I was good with that.
* 7th grade - Coach Conley our football coach, used a phrase often... PMA, Positive Mental Attitude. I remember that really having an impact on me... I didn’t know why, but man I liked that! Obviously, here I am several years later and I still remember it like yesterday.

Now I want to share a part of my testimony that the Lord has given me great revelation on:

**Adoption**

* 4 days old when they took me home, they knew before I was born that they were going to take me
* Was treated and have always been treating the same as my brothers (inherit the same amount of debt). in fact, my brothers might point to another story in the bible about a guy named Joseph if you were to ask them how I was treated by my parents. There tend to be natural perks that come with being the youngest, really had nothing to do with adoption. Fortunately they never threw me in a pit or sold me off.
* I was told early on that I was adopted and it was openly discussed in our family. Though I didn’t realize it at the time, I considered it a blessing to be a part of my family.
* As a kid and even into adulthood, if my mom said I was born at 9 in the morning I would think about whether or not I kept her up the night before in labor. Filling out medical information I would answer based off my parents and brothers. There was no question that I was their child in every sense of the word. Elisa enlightened me.
* My parents think the same way... to this day my mom will talk about a trait that one of our boys has and say “well your uncle so and so had blonde hair so it could have come from there”. They think of me the exact same way they think of their biological sons.
* Has I got older, my mom would tell me that if I ever wanted to know about my birth mom she would tell me what she knew. It was my choice… I Never desired to seek my birth mom/parents because i already had my mom/parents. Share humor of what mom told me when I asked.
* I mentioned before that I had surgery when I was 7... I had a hole in a valve in my heart, I was blue baby meaning my blood did not circulate well because of the hole. They knew there was something wrong when I was born so because of this, they never officially adopted me. As long as I was a ward of the state, the medical expenses were covered BUT in their eyes and mine, I was theirs, they were my parents, I was their son. In fact I knew nothing about all this until we went to court to get it finalized. I spent 2 weeks in a hospital in Dallas after my surgery, but as soon as I was able to get out, we went straight to a court in Dallas and finalized the adoption. We didn’t get in a car and drive back to Big Spring, we did it as quickly as we could. They wanted that official paper. That action made what I already believed real.
* To this day, my mom says I am more like my dad than either of my brothers, not always in a complimentary way by the way. Genetically speaking, my oldest brother looks just like my dad, my middle brother is a banker like my dad was and they both have a strange fascination with accounting and number crunching, but in terms of how I act, how I think and just my general outlook on life, I am more like him than either of them. Why? I am the youngest, both my brothers were out of the house and in college by the time I was a freshman in high school. At that point it was just dad and I that were raising steers and pigs, farming and working together... I had one on one time with him for 4 years…. I developed his demeanor because it’s what i saw every day. It’s what I wanted to be even though I may not have fully realized that at the time.

Ephesians 1: 3-5 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Romans 8: 14-17 - For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

1 John 3: 1 - See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Adoption into the family of God**

* We are born into the world but adopted into Gods family.
* He chose us, not only before we were born but before the foundation of the world. He wanted and still wants us in a big way.
* This one maybe the hardest one to grasp, He views and treats us the same as His “biological” son, Jesus AND Jesus accepts us as his brothers and sisters, no exceptions. That’s big! Not only that but we have a perfect role model to look up to in Jesus. I love my two brothers and they have always been great big brothers, but they are NOT perfect!! Whats cool though is we are in a giant family so not only do we have one perfect role model to look to, but we get to see all those traits demonstrated to us through the brothers and sisters we have in our adopted family. One of the big draws to me with the Garden was the men I get to associate with and learn from. They are my adopted brothers and carry anointings and gifts that show the love of the Christ in everything they do.
* heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ – we are fellow heirs, we have access to all God has just like Jesus. That includes the Holy Spirit, the very same Holy Spirit that was in Christ while he was on earth and living a perfect life. So when we question our ability to get through something, we must remember, we have a gift in adoption that has been proven capable of overcoming anything.
* God considers us His from the beginning but its not until there is an action taken that he can rightfully claim us as His. Just like my court date, at any point before that, I could have been taken away. Until we take action to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and all that goes with that, God cannot legally say we are His. The world can still take us away.
* Why didn’t I want to know about my birth parents…. I was loved completely, I was the same as their natural kids, I was worthy of being in that family… I was chosen, I was wanted. Sound familiar? If we truly accept the love that God gives us then we won’t have that desire to know the world…. It’s 100% our choice.
* More like my dad than my brothers… I mentioned my dad and I spent a lot of time together during my high school years, one on one, working together, talking through a problem with something, making plans for farming or going to a stock show but one on one time communicating. How do we get to be more like Jesus? One on one time, talking through problems together, making plans together, communicating. Talking to Him, listening to Him, the more we do that, the more we become like Him. I love my dad dearly and I consider it a compliment to be told I am like him, but it is nothing compared to being told your like Jesus.
* Now just because you read the bible and pray, does that make you like Jesus? No, you have to take action and put what you learn in place. To this day my mom is not like my dad… even after 60+ years. Again going back to personality, my mom is just as awesome as my dad she could take a comb and a can of aqua net and make a perfect ball of hair on the end of a steers tail that would hold even while the steer was swatting flys, she could herd and work livestock in the snow and rain with the best of them, she did more laundry then she ever should have had to because of 4 guys who didn’t know you could use a towel twice, she fed and cleaned up after every meal while we all went back outside and worked on whatever we were doing (I have apologized many times now for both of those by the way) and she was the only one who could make a perfect red velvet cake until I met my mother in law.. Imagine that, I am blessed with 2 people who can make a perfect red velvet cake! As an OB nurse, she helped bring 100’s if not 1000’s of babies into this world. As I look back, I see where I picked up many things from her regarding taking care of my family, but it is much easier for me to embrace my dads approach because of my personality. My mom has a much different view of the world around us than my dad does, but she still encourages, she still loves big and she still gives and gives. She shows the love of Christ as well!

So where am I going with all of this? This all great for you Mr. Unicorn and Rainbows, but my life has looked just a little different than yours has!!

Well while I have been very blessed, there have been challenges in my life as well. I am reminded of when we got Cadens diagnosis... Im not sure who spoke it first, but for some reason I remember my mother in law saying “we are not going to mourn what he cant do, we will celebrate what he can do”. We have all repeated that over the years, and I think it has helped us and helped Caden.

Again, it was a choice... are we bummed by what he cant do or joyful in what he can do? I know for me, 19 years later, I still consciously have to make the choice from time to time. So my point is, do you mourn in the challenges you have had or be joyful in the blessings you have received.... its your choice everyday.

The Lord calls us to encourage, to do all we can to help others through this life and make a journey easier.

**Scriptures on encouragement**

* **Hebrews 3:13** - but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
* **Hebrews 10:23-25** ESV - Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
* **1 Thessalonians 5:11** ESV - Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
* **Colossians 3:16** ESV - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
* **Ephesians 4:29** ESV - Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
* **2 Timothy 4:2** ESV - Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.
* **Romans 14:19** ESV - So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.
* **Ephesians 4:16** ESV - From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

I am a cheerleader, I encourage – I hope that I am spreading joy, that when someone spends time with me, they are glad they did. I want someones day to be a least little better because they were around me. I want people to know there is hope for them, they will overcome.

Kevin is a coach, he truly exhorts – every time he shares something with me about me or I hear him tell someone else about me, I think to myself... I want to be that man that Kevin says I am. I want to do better! Encouragement is a part of exhortation but exhortation will also inspire and motivate.

I get it... encouragement is hard for a lot of people. Personality test. If someone tells me I need to confront someone or some situation, I will try every other option first. I have to make a choice to do that…. A very hard choice!! But it can be done, and it becomes a little easier each time I chose to do it. You may not be an encourager, but you can chose to do it and each time it will become a little easier.

While encouragement may come more naturally for me, I can testify that learning and trying to embrace what I have shared with you today about a true understanding of being adopted into Gods family, makes it even easier for me. Those scriptures on adoption were in my bible for probably 40 years before I knew it. And its only been in the last 6-7 years that I have been able to fully grasp what they mean as I shared today. Everyday that I embrace what it means to be a child of God, a true heir to all He has... it becomes easier for encouragement and joy to come out of me in all I do. Just like everything in our lives, if we try to do it under our human power, we will fail at some point and it will be hard. When you let Holy Spirit guide you, when you seek to be like Jesus, it can be done and great works will come from it.

For all of us…. Our hope and trust should be in the Lord and if that’s where its at then we will have the joy of the Lord as our strength. If you are filled with the joy of the Lord, then what should naturally come out of you? If you know who you are, if you understand and embrace what it means to be adopted by God then the challenges of this world are going to look a lot different. Much better and easier.

I talked about my mom giving me the choice to know my birth mom, it was completely up to me. The world is our biological parent, God gives us the choice to have a relationship with them or with Him. Most of us choose to have a relationship with both but at some point, one or the other is going to mold who we are and they are very different. In the end you cant have both.

**Conclusion**

You are the only one who get to decide how your day is going to go and. Yes you will encounter hard stuff but you are the only one who gets to decide how that affects you. And you know what, it is a lot easier if you have chosen Jesus and have Holy Spirit as your guide! If you approach each day with the joy of the Lord, then the challenges you overcome, the way in which you handle and deal with others will encourage those around you.

If you want to be encouraging, start with yourself... embrace who you are, the gifts the Lord has given you and use those in your day-to-day life. Chose to approach each day with a good attitude, it will grow from there. Going back to one of our first verses... Seek you first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be added. What is your priority for the day? What is your attitude about the day? What are you seeking that day?

1 Corinthians 13 tells us to do all things in Love. How can we be like Christ? Do all things in love. Where do we start? Do all things in love.

Christ is our example… do everything in love. Its an action, it’s a choice! LOVE

 **Testimony of the Greece team**…. Y’all real, not trying to be fancy. All they really did was show those people they really loved them even though they just met them. They saw Love like they had never seen it before and hit them hard! Can you imagine how encouraged, how exhorted that group of believers was because 10 people from the US made a choice to go see them and love them!

I am going to end with

**1 Corinthians 13**

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

You want to BE ENCOURAGED... BE ENCOURAGING!