



## Season 1, Episode 5 “Encouragement: What It Is and Why We Need It”

### **Punky Tolson:**

Hey, friends, come on in. Today we're going to talk about encouragement. We all need it, we all want it, we're all supposed to get it and we're all supposed to give it away. And in the body of Christ, it's not optional. *God's command is that his children encourage one another.* But what is encouragement really? That's what we're going to discuss today.

In this season of the podcast, we're talking about doing womanhood well to the glory of God. For you and for me to become the women God created us to be and equipped to do what God created us to do, we've got to do it together because we're better together. One of the things that glorifies God and that shows God off the most is when his children do life together.

In fact, when Jesus prayed in John 17 that prayer the night before he went to the cross, he prayed for his disciples then and he prayed for us – that we would be one, that we would be one together, and that by modeling out, living out life together, the non-believing world would look at us and say that *God is who he says he is and that Jesus is the son of God* because they would be able to see this demonstrated “oneness” in the life of his children and life of his followers. **So doing life together is the way that God designed us and the way he designed his kingdom plan to be lived out on this planet, in relationship, in community, as just a bunch of Jesus-loving, Jesus-following, one another's, running together, building the faith of one another and encouraging one another.**

Hey, Michelle, what does encouragement mean to you? When you think of encouragement, what does it mean to you? What are the ways that you best receive encouragement and what are the ways you give encouragement?

### **Michelle Schroeder:**

I would say encouragement is more exhortation to me. I know it's got a lot of meanings, but if I have to pick one, that's probably the one... the build each other up, the spur each other on version of encouragement. How I receive it? That's a really good question. I think it kind

of depends on where I need it as far as what that looks like to me. So it could be as simple as a friend giving me a word in due season, something that isn't just a platitude, but that speaks directly to the area that I am feeling discouraged in, or it could be... for example, my sweet husband recently got me a night at a hotel room just to have one night to myself.

**Punky Tolson:**

Wow.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

It was on a particular day where I had gotten sick, I couldn't go on a women's retreat. He knew how much I was looking forward to that, so he just put me in a hotel room where I'd have private room, private bathroom.

**Punky Tolson:**

That's amazing.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

It was. I was giddy with excitement.

**Punky Tolson:**

Wow.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

It was glorious. So even that was an encouragement because he saw how much I needed that in that moment. As far as how I give it, I don't know, I don't think I'm very good at this right now. Coming through a season of finding David, finding the love of my life, and there's so much attention and excitement and focus around a wedding and then you're in that honeymoon phase, and then right about when that was falling off, I learned I was pregnant and then that began this whole new exciting phase. What happened in that season was – I realize now – I enjoyed the attention and I became self-focused. Just like we talked about last week, or you talked about last week, I am realizing I need to think of self, less. So as far as how I give encouragement, I'm trying to be more present and aware of when encouragement is needed, to listen to the Holy Spirit, to hear his promptings, to act on it.

I think largely with... at least with my friends right now, it's just being available. It's when they call, when they text, just willing to set down what I'm doing and be present with them.

**Punky Tolson:**

Yeah. But that's so great because you've given this really kind of full circle of what encouragement means. Sometimes it's our words, sometimes, like you said, it's a strong

exhortation or something that could be received as a critique or correction or just a rerouting of us in some way with the truth. Then sometimes it's an action and sometimes it's just somebody's presence being with us. It is all of those things. In fact, biblically speaking, encourage means to aid, to help, comfort, encourage, exhort, desire, call for. It means to call upon someone to do something and it means to comfort together.

Way back in Genesis 2, in the very beginning, God said that it is not good for a man to be alone and he created a helper, a companion for him, an Eve. In Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon says that two are better than one, and he lists all the benefits of true, encouraging companionship. Jesus himself modeled this for us. All through the four gospel accounts of his life, he is with people, but he chose a band of brothers to be with him, to do life together. He taught them the gospel with his words and with his life. Y'all, if Jesus did it, we are to do it because God says so. It's a command.

Let's talk about commands for just a minute. A command is the words God speaks to us that are of utmost critical importance in walking out our life of faith and love in Christ. They're not options. They are his absolute will for us. So when God's word says so, let's pray so. That's your life hack for this week.



### **SPIRITUAL LIFE HACK**

*When God's word says so, let's pray so. Every time I read what God's word says to do, I'm going to pray to do it because obedience to God's commands is not something that comes natural for me or for you, for any of us, because the Christian life is not natural. It's supernatural. The Holy Spirit living inside of us, willing us, teaching us, and empowering us to live God's best for us is what it's all about. When I see that there is something God wants for me to do, I'm going to pray for it, I'm going to ask him. Your life hack then is, when God's word says so, let's pray so. When God's word says, "Encourage one another," when God's word says, "Pray for one another," when God's word says, "Don't neglect meeting together and stir one another up to love and God's works," I'm going to pray for that. I'm going to pray to be an encouraging voice, an encouraging word, an encouraging friend to someone who needs it most today.*



If Jesus did it, we're to do it because God says so, because the Christian life is not to be lived alone in isolation. ***We will not function or thrive or flourish in our faith apart from what God intended for it to be.*** We need the spiritual nourishment that comes from the body of Christ in encouraging life on life relationships. Hey, Michelle, will you read for us our focus verse, which is Hebrews 10:24-25, but read it in context and start with verse 19:

**Michelle Schroeder:**

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 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.”

**Punky Tolson:**

I wanted to read that in context because I want you to see how the writer of Hebrews sets this up for us, showing us, reminding us of everything that we have in Christ Jesus, everything that's been done for us, this full assurance of our faith. Then he continues that thought by saying, "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."

There's three points that he makes there. Based on all of those things that we have, *this full assurance of our faith*, we are to:

1. Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works
2. Not neglect meeting together
3. Encourage one another

Okay, let's look at the first one, ***consider***. Let's get our hearts and minds stirring. Let's get *imaginative* and *creative* about how we can encourage one another, not just with suggestions or off-the-cuff ideas, but giving really *serious heartfelt thought* to how you can intentionally encourage others toward love with help and hope and toward good, just like your husband did for you, Michelle, just like David came up with that creative idea to send you away for the evening to a hotel by yourself. I mean, it had so many benefits for you, but so many benefits for him too, just coming away from that refreshed and you're able to recalibrate and just feel like a new woman.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

Absolutely.

**Punky Tolson:**

I mean, it's great. He's so creative, so imaginative. It's a concept that suggests a state of mind and a commitment to action in order to achieve a desired result, which we see here is love and good works. And that stems from the previous reminders of what we have in Christ, that full assurance of our faith, in verses 19 – 23.

So let me ask you this question: What's the most important thing in your life? Since then, you have all of those things that the writer of Hebrews lays out for us as the full assurance of our faith and what Christ has done for us, ***what's the most important thing in your life and what's the most important thing that you can do with your life?***

Let me give you an example of some women that I met recently from St. Phillip's Church in Frisco, Texas. I've recently spoke at a women's conference that they put on for the women in a community called Nocona, which is just Northwest of the Dallas area.

Nocona is a very small town. There's not a lot going on there. It's basically underprivileged in many ways. There's not any name brand, grocery stores, gas stations or drive-through, anything like that. And these women are in need of encouragement. So the women of St. Phillip's for the last nine years have put on the Nocona Women's Conference, absolutely free to the women of Nocona. And let me tell you, they go out of their way to bless these women. There's no charge for them to come. They just sign up, they come, and they receive.

Over the years, they've built this up to about 159 women that actually attended this year. And as I said, I had the privilege of being there to share and to teach and to encourage them that weekend, but I'm the one that walked away more encouraged by seeing what the women of St. Phillip's actually did for the women of Nocona and how they went all out to bless them, to build them up, to say, "We see you and we know you and you matter to us. You make a difference to us." And boy, the encouragement that they received was tremendous as we heard in the "Say So."

There's no greater consideration in stirring up one another than to stir them up in faith in Jesus, to know him and to love him and to follow him. All right. The second thing that we read in this passage is that *we're not to neglect meeting together*. We'll talk more about this next week. But suffice to say that the ***Christian life cannot exist in isolation***. And there's two groups mentioned here, those who meet together to encourage one another and those who neglect meeting together. Then thirdly, we see that we're to encourage one another. *Encouraging one another happens together in relationship*.

Let's look at that term, together. It doesn't merely mean assembling together for like corporate worship or church as just this one singular act, but it really is a customary conduct or a lifestyle. This is the way Christians conduct themselves.

You can see that in Acts 2, when it says that the believers gathered together and they broke bread together. They fellowshiped with one another. They listened to the apostles teaching together. This is the way Jesus people do life. They do it together, they gather together, they meet together with one another.

In talking about this word, meeting together, The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament says it must refer to Christ himself as the one to whom this assembly was attached. Thus, it would have the meaning of not betraying one's attachment to Jesus Christ and other believers, not avoiding one's own personal responsibility as part of the body of Christ.

I'm going to say that again. It's so good. *Not avoiding one's own personal responsibility as part of the body of Christ.* I've got a responsibility and you've got a responsibility to the body of Christ. **Encouragement is the responsibility of every one of us in the family of God.** The definition goes on to say, "More than regular attendance at church meetings, meaning together, means a willingness to help struggling faith whenever Christians meet."

Look with me at this passage of scripture I love so much in Matthew 9. It's at the end of that chapter, verses 36 through 38, and Jesus says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest field."

I love what he says in the beginning, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them." That word *compassion* is one of the definitions of the word *encouragement*. Jesus's heart is always compassionate and wanting to encourage, but then he puts the responsibility into the hands of his disciples, because when he saw the people, the crowds coming for him, he said, "They were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd."

Another translation says, "They had so many problems they didn't know what to do or where to go for help." *Y'all, women are looking for help and encouragement!* And how do we know this? By the amount of money spent on self-help books, by the number of hits on YouTube videos. Women are harassed and helpless and in need of some shepherding, some

real encouragement that builds up, that exhorts, that aids, that helps, that comes alongside, that admonishes, and comforts.

But how do we truly encourage one another? Well, we don't do it with positive affirmations and homeopathic remedies, and, "You got this, girl. You got this." ***We encourage with truth, true truth.*** *The only thing that's stable and holds up in the storms of life is the truth that comes from the word of God.*

That's what it says in Matthew 7, when we see the parable of the two builders who built their houses, one on rock and one on sand. Both of them incurred the same storm, the same wind, and the same floods, but only one of those houses stood. Only one was stable enough because it was built on the rock of the word of God. That's how we encourage.

Let's look at the two extremes of this word, encouragement. On the one hand we have **comfort**. It's the same word that we see used in 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. It says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**." That's the same word as *encouragement*. "Who **comforts** us..." Same word, "in all our affliction, so that way we may be able to **comfort**..." Same word, "those who are in any affliction with the **comfort**..." Again, the same word, "with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God." The same word, it's used several times in that passage and it means *encouragement*.

So on the one hand, we see **comfort**. On the other hand, the other extreme, we see **exhortation** or **exhort**, which means to *emphatically urge someone to do something*.

We see that in the beginning of Hebrews in chapter 3:12–13 that says, "Take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God, but **exhort** one another every day as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Again, that word **exhort** is the word *encourage*. We need people to lovingly be honest with us and shoot straight. To whom have you given permission to speak into your life with complete and total honesty, to say the things that are hard to hear but so needed? Proverbs 27:6 says this, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive." We need friends that we can trust to speak words of encouragement that exhort us, that get us to change direction, to shift the way we think, the way we act, and to stay on track following hard after Jesus.

We all need affirmation and giving people affirmation of their value to God is biblical. It brings healing and strength and we have a God given responsibility to do that, to encourage and to affirm, to exhort and to comfort and to help with our words and our lives. Isaiah 50:4–5 in the New English Translation says this, "The sovereign Lord has given me the

capacity to be his spokesman so that I may know how to help the weary. He wakes me up every morning. He makes me alert so that I can listen attentively as disciples do. The sovereign Lord has spoken to me clearly. I have not rebelled. I have not turned back." *We are all called to be God's spokesperson.*

So who needs encouragement from you this week? How can you do it? Take some time to really think it through. Think about one or two people you know they're going through something right now and just pray for them, and ask the Lord to help you, to inspire you, to encourage them in some way. I try to do that almost every morning and ask the Lord, "How can I encourage my husband today in some way and who needs encouragement from you?" And as I read my Bible and I start to take notes and write down things, the Lord's telling me in his word, people will come to mind. Sometimes I'll text them a scripture. Sometimes I'll drop a note to them in the mail or give them a call. How will you do it this week? Ask the Lord to help you think with his mind, creatively, about how you can be an encouragement because somebody needs encouragement from you this week. Stop worrying about what other people might think. Just do what God puts on your heart to do and you're going to be the biggest blessing and bring a blessing to somebody who's not even expecting it this week.

All right, let's pray.

*Father, thank you so much that you have created us with the mind of Christ in us to think creatively, to think with our hearts and to be imaginative about how we can encourage other people. Lord, as we are other focused, as we set our sights on how we can encourage and build up and exhort and comfort others, Father, we know that you're leading us and that you'll be blessed and that they'll be blessed. So put somebody on our hearts right now, Lord, that needs that kind of encouragement. Sometimes, Father, I find that when I go out of my way to encourage someone else because you've tapped me to do so, that I'm the one that ends up receiving encouragement.*

*So I ask you right now for my sisters, God use them all this week to be beautiful stir sticks, to stir up love and good works in one another and to be an encouragement to someone this week. Father, we thank you that we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength, and you certainly give us a strength to be an encouragement. We love you so much Lord, and we ask all of these things in Jesus name.*

All right you guys, that's that for that. We'll see you next week and don't you forget that you're greatly and dearly loved by the King.

xo -P