

A Call to Encouragement

CGGC eNews—Vol. 9, No. 41

October 9, 2015

When was the last time you went out of your way to encourage someone? Can you remember the last time someone made the effort to speak an encouraging word to you and how that made you feel? I'm going to guess that it made an impression on you. A few weeks ago I shared a little about the importance of hearing difficult feedback, but this week I want to take a little different angle on things and talk about the importance of speaking words of encouragement and affirmation to those around us.



I first began sensing a call to some type of vocational ministry during the summer between my junior and senior years in high school. While I never experienced the wrestling match with God that some do in situations like this, I do remember questioning my call and testing whether or not this was something from God or just a result of a summer camp spiritual high or late night pizza. I have a vivid memory of a prayer that went along the lines of “If this is what you want me to do God, I’m good with that, but I need you to show me that this is coming from you and not just something I’ve conjured up in my own mind.”

The first answer to this prayer came in the form of a person that some of you know: Pastor Fred Quade. That fall my home congregation, East Harrison Street Church of God, participated in a “Celebration of Life” weekend where we sent a team of folks from our congregation to spend a weekend ministering at the Leadwood Church of God in Leadwood, MO. Pastor Fred worked for the General Conference office in those days and was leading/facilitating the weekend experience. At breakfast on Sunday morning, Pastor Fred asked me what my plans were for the future. I related that I planned to attend a local college and study accounting, but that recently I had begun to sense some type of call to ministry and was exploring what that would require after my college experience. Fred simply responded, “I’ve seen that in you this weekend and I just want to affirm that direction for your life.” It was such a simple and subtle comment that I nearly missed it, but several days later I came to realize that this comment was an answer to my earlier prayer and would be the first of many such confirmations over the years. I’m so grateful that Fred took that opportunity to encourage me and affirm what God was doing in my life at that time.

In my own journey, I often feel a little like Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 3. There are times when God speaks in my life and I’m unaware or unable to understand it on my own and I need others to help me understand what God is doing and how I’m to respond. It took Eli to help Samuel realize what was going on and how to respond to God’s call. I wonder how many folks around us may have the same experience of having the Lord speak to them and call them to some specific work, but there is no one there to help them make sense of it or to help affirm and confirm God’s call?

I’m trying to become a person who does better job of paying attention to God’s work in the lives of others so that I can be a person who speaks encouragement, affirmation and confirmation in the lives of others as the Lord calls them to serve. In Matthew 9:37-38 Jesus tells us that “the harvest is plentiful

but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” We need to pray to God to raise up workers for the harvest is ready. As we pray and as God raises up men and women, we also need to pay attention to how God is speaking and prompting others, so that we can be those folks like Eli or like Pastor Fred who help others make sense of what God is saying to them.

Is there someone in your circle with whom you need to have a conversation with today? Is God speaking to someone you know and sending you to be that encouraging and affirming presence to help give them the courage to say yes to whatever God is asking of them? Maybe, just maybe, there is a 17-year-old in your sphere of influence who needs to hear that the voice that he or she is hearing really is the voice of God and that they can trust that voice with their whole life. Maybe you’re the person that God is sending to speak encouragement and affirmation to him or her during this time of searching? Let’s be people who speak words of encouragement and affirmation to the people around us who are hearing God speak and trying to make sense of what it means to be obedient to his call.

Lance