



An Encouraging Word

By Rev. Jan Wilton, Homeschool and Public School Representative

An encouraging word! All of us like to hear and treasure words of encouragement. Recently, I have been meditating on encouraging words from the Bible that tell us to encourage one another. A quick search on Facebook brings up many pages with memes, with and without scripture, focused on encouraging people. These memes are quickly shared with others with the hope that a discouraged friend will be encouraged.

What does it mean to encourage and be an encourager?

Webster's Dictionary defines encourage as "to inspire, with courage, spirit, or hope." Often, we see a child shutting down over a math problem, the sounding out of a word, or a project that becomes overwhelming. How and when do we encourage the child? How should we approach a child who struggles with reading and faces a test at grade level when he or she is three levels behind? Homeschool educators, how and when should we intervene with help meant to encourage our homeschool students? Do we let the children "figure it out" on their own?

We have taught the students and given instructions. Surely that is enough! As a teacher, classroom or homeschool, it is not easy in the stress of the day to remember how to communicate timely words of encouragement. In those times, we may feel like we have failed; I know how it feels to think I have failed my students. I might have jumped in too quickly or too late, and a frustrated student reacted. What should I do? Is it too late to change? Does it have to be the same?

Now we face the end of the school year. Is it too late to do more, do better, or change? It is never too late. With end-of-the-year evaluations, state testing, and exams approaching, it is the best time to ask God for a refresher. The pressure is great, and everyone feels the need to ensure that both classroom and homeschool students are ready for the next grade.

In Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV), we read that we are to “consider how we may spur (urge) one another on....” We are to encourage each other to live out our lives in love. Our love shines through as we encourage our coworkers and students with encouraging words.

Keep a list of encouraging statements as a daily reminder:

- You are loved. I care about you.
- Being a teacher/parent is my favorite job.
- I miss you when I don’t see you.
- I think about you often.
- I will always try to keep you safe.
- You make me smile.
- I believe you.
- I am so glad you are in my class/family.
- I am so proud of you.
- I am proud of the person you are becoming.

It is so rewarding when students change their attitudes and work habits and they realize they do not have to be the same as they were yesterday. It is great to see them feel better about themselves when they do their best. Find a way to celebrate!

I love to use songs to encourage my students. My personal favorite is a section from “Spin” by Uncle Charlie. I often sing this with students in grades K-6 as we learn to encourage each other to keep going and not give up:

“I’ve been changed.
I’m not the same.
Now I’m moving in a new direction,
And I feel good about myself!”

Sing and celebrate in anticipation of what will change in our students as we share encouraging words from a heart full of God’s love spilling over into your classrooms/homeschools! You will be changed forever! And so will the students!

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Resource: <https://unclecharliestore.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Uncle-Charlie-Store-Songs-with-Motions.pdf>