

Spirit Driven

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
2 Timothy 1:7

Power to encourage

After the Friday game was over, coach called me aside, "You are pitching next Monday."

Those five words ruined my whole weekend. I was a third baseman, not a pitcher. All weekend I practiced the windup, the delivery, the sound of the umpire calling out, "Strike three."

My brothers got tired of playing catcher. My friends got tired of playing catch. Dad tried for awhile. I started throwing balls into the fence. I was going to be prepared on Monday.

The sky was clear on Monday, the day warm. I arrived at the ballpark early to get in some last minute practice. Mom and Dad sat in the stands just as I ran to the mound.

"Strike one," my first pitch was a strike; it was going to be a good day. The good feeling lasted until the third inning and I walked the bases full. The fourth batter hit a slow grounder to me. I still remember that moment – I fielded the ball to my right and spun around. In my mind I thought – throw to first, one out – throw home and keep them from scoring. In a fraction of a second I visualized my perfect throw home.

I wheeled around and fired – completely over the back stop, the parking lot and down the street. My pitching career ended as I sat on the bench for the rest of the game. I was devastated – literally throwing the game away in front of Mom and Dad, my friends and my neighbors.

I walked to my bike to ride home only to see Dad standing next to it. "Let's walk home," he smiled. The walk home combined with the ice cream cone lifted my spirits. I may never be a pitcher, but I was a really good third baseman.

That was encouragement.

- There was a man all alone;
he had neither son nor brother.
There was no end to his toil,
yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.
"For whom am I toiling," he asked,
"and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"
This too is meaningless—
a miserable business!
- Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
- ¹⁰ If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!
- ¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
- ¹² Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. - Ecclesiastes 4: 8-12

A good friend is a blessing. Someone to share the load is a blessing. Someone to encourage is a blessing.

How have you been encouraged by a good friend?

How have you encouraged someone?

¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. – John 11: 17-20

When Lazarus died, many friends came to comfort Martha and Mary.

How do the traditions of bringing meals, sending sympathy cards, and visitation encourage the grieving?

How can these same traditions be used for those facing other trials other than death?

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked.
"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵Jesus wept. – John 11:33-35

How can just being there and weeping with someone be an encouragement?

²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

When we join a congregation, we are surrounded by those who need encouragement and those who encourage us.

Can you share how you have been encouraged by attending a church service?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

You surround us with encouragers. Help us to be an encourager to others. Give us the words You would have us speak, the deeds You would have do – to support, build-up, be Your presence.

In Your name we pray – Amen.