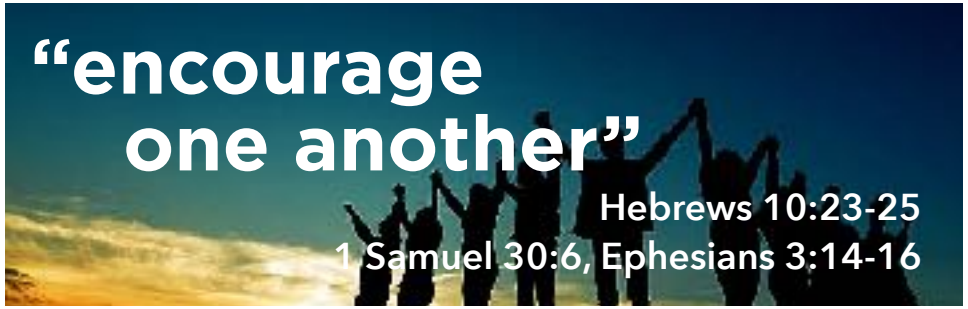

OPEN

In Hebrews 10:25, we are told to “encourage one another,” because encouragement is something we all need. At one time or another, all of us get discouraged and are in need of being encouraged. The biblical concept of encouragement literally means ‘to come alongside to build up.’ Proverbs 25:28 says, “A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.” Encouragement is about building back up the walls of a person’s heart through faith in the hope of Christ. We can’t control what happens to us in life or sometimes what goes on around us, but we can take control of what we allow into our heart. When we don’t attend to the walls of our heart, discouragement can find a way in. There were many in Scripture who at one time or another became discouraged, such as David or Elijah, to name just two, who God strengthened in their time of need. Like David, we need to encourage ourselves by strengthening ourselves in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6). As Hebrews tell us, we also need to encourage one another. And, like we see in the words of Paul (Ephesians 3:14-16), we need to look for ways to encourage the Body of Christ. That is what this week’s focus is all about.

REFLECT

- In Hebrews 25:23-25, what things are listed regarding the call to encourage one another?
- In 1 Samuel 30:6, what specific things were getting David down, that he needed to strengthen himself in the Lord? What did David do with his ‘distress’?
- In Paul’s prayer in Eph. 3:14-16, what does he pray for the Body of Christ in the city of Ephesus?

DISCUSS

- Discouragement isn’t something most of us want to admit. But in a spirit of honesty, share together some of the things that get you down…but don’t go on for too long! :)
- Brainstorm together some of the practical ways we can keep discouragement or discouraging things from getting into our heart. In other words, what boundaries can help guard our heart from discouragement?
- In your own words, what is the difference between self-help and strengthening yourself in the Lord?
- In the book of Acts 4:36, Barnabas is said to have the nickname ‘Son of Encouragement,’ because of his heart to encourage and come alongside other believers. What traits make someone an encouraging person to be around?
- In your own words, what makes ‘Christian’ encouragement different from ‘worldly’ or secular notions of encouragement?
- One of the things that encourages our heart is remembering the goodness of God. If you have time, read together Psalm 34 and list some of the encouragements we find there.

APPLY

There are 3 spheres of life we need to intentionally encourage: ourselves, others, and the Body of Christ.

1) Identify one thing you need to encourage yourself in.
2) Identify one person you could encourage this week.
3) Identify one ministry or ministry leader at Wellspring you could intentionally bring a word of encouragement or appreciation to this week.

PRAY

- Base your prayer time this week on Paul’s encouraging prayer in Ephesians 3:14-16.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be alert to the needs of others that you could encourage this week.
- Ask Jesus to renew your perspective to be one of hope.