

## OPERATION ENCOURAGEMENT - EPHESIANS 6:19-24

1. Can any one give an example of a person whose encouragement led them to take on a whole new area of activity which has brought them a great deal of satisfaction?
2. How do we encourage people when things are likely to get worse? For example a friend hears that he has a terminal illness
3. Discuss the following poem  
Flatter me, and I may not believe you.  
Criticize me, and I may not like you.  
Ignore me, and I may not forgive you.  
Encourage me, and I will not forget you.  
- William Arthur Ward
4. In spite of the coming trials and difficulties the Ephesians could have knew heart breathed into them because they would be able to experience God's peace and love and grace. No one could take these things away. Do you think we often take these things for granted and that it is during trials and difficulties that they become more real to us?
5. According to research the average person's anxiety is focused on :  
40% -- things that will never happen  
30% -- things about the past that can't be changed  
12% -- things about mostly invalid criticism by others,  
10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress  
8% -- about real problems that will be faced  
It follows that 92% of our stresses or anxieties can be relieved by just a word of encouragement... Discuss
6. Paul probably didn't find encouragement came easily. He was naturally gifted – that often makes it difficult for people to understand the struggles others go through. He was incredibly self disciplined – loved to recount his many hardships. He had neither wife nor children to rub some of his rough edges off. In many ways it would have been difficult for him to identify with ordinary people. Do you agree?
7. Paul's friend Tychicus is mentioned only five times in scripture. He is described as being "a dear brother", a "faithful servant in the Lord." "a trustworthy messenger" an encouraging example. He was humble and dependable - Come beating, shipwreck, prison or lynch mob, Paul could always depend upon Tychicus. He was always there. Do you know anyone like this?
8. Are you an encouraging person? In what ways can you be more encouraging?