



# Malvern Mashal Makon 74

## Participatory Ministry (iii)

### The Power of Encouragement (Part One)

*My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

*Col 2:2-3*

*The finest gift you can give anyone is encouragement. Almost no one gets the encouragement they need to grow to their full potential.*

*Sidney Madwed*

Encouragement makes all the difference between people being able to function powerfully for the Lord or withdrawing into themselves. Years ago I met an exceptionally anointed singer who was in great danger of losing her confidence and suppressing her gifting simply because nobody was vocalising their appreciation of her musical ministry. *That* is how important encouragement is.

The Greek word Paul uses for "encouraged" (*paraklesis* or *paraklesthosin*) literally means "to call to one's side." The context indicates whether the most suitable rendering is "encouragement," "exhortation" or "comfort." All are closely related. Bearing in mind Paul's teaching in 1 Thess. 5:1 to *encourage one another and build each other up*, we can see that Participatory Ministry (PM) should seek every bit as much to *comfort* as to *exhort* each other. In his concern for believers to be "encouraged in heart and united in love," Paul was always on the lookout to come alongside those who, for whatever reason, were feeling weak.

Paul is more than happy to acknowledge how well the church was already doing in this respect, but he believes they are capable of more. That is why it is right for us to give the matter some considerable thought. It is a major platform for making participatory ministry 'work.' Many won't step *forward*, let alone step *out*, without an encouraging prod. Many will be unable to find their

way through difficulties without the wisdom and encouragement of others. Many may not even be able to keep going at all without support.

The more secure we are in ourselves, and the more convinced that unity is not narrow minded uniformity, the easier we will find it to provide such encouragement.

## A Definition of Encouragement

**Please note, I am including this to pray through, rather than to sound like a dictionary!**

- i) To inspire (someone) with the courage or confidence (to do something)
- ii) To stimulate (something or someone to do something) by help or approval;
- iii) To promote, advance or foster good relationships, encourage spiritual fruitfulness.

The Greek word for encouragement, *paraklesis*, has a variety of meanings. Rather as King Harold 'comforted' his troops by prodding them with a sword, so the emphasis will move along the spectrum all the way from comfort to strong exhortation.

## Make room for God

*We gain nothing by being with people like ourselves. We encourage one another in mediocrity. I am always longing to be with men more excellent than myself.*

Charles Lamb

*You can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.*

1 Cor. 14:31

By encouraging PM, we are not looking to embrace a free for all in which anything goes. Neither are we 'dragooning' people into contributing in a contrived and artificial way. The more loving and anointed the compère, however, the more likely it is that people will feel secure, and inspired to offer wise and useful contributions.

More often than we perhaps realize, a flock derives its outlook on life from the outlook and example of its leaders. For better or worse we are models to others.

Many people's idea of stirring things up is little more than fleshly rabble rousing. Real stirring up is all about having first the *perspicacity* and then the *courage* to help people overcome their fear or lethargy. If this involves much legwork, well, we saw in the last edition that pastoral application is all important for helping people launch out into participatory ministry.



We ourselves are the product of countless people, 'speaking' into our lives and rubbing shoulders with us. Without even realizing it, we absorb something of their spirit, for better or worse, unless we make a conscious effort *not* to receive it. In the same way, every time we meet with others we have an opportunity to communicate something of the love of God. We never know how much He can achieve through seemingly unimportant encounters. The important thing is to be alert!

Without in any way being hypocritical or unduly neurotic concerning every last jot of the material that is shared in our meetings, it helps enormously if compères can act with outward confidence. All too many leaders are visibly on tenterhooks when people come forward. What are they afraid of? That their contributions will be too long, too challenging or misleading? If we are mature and confident in the Lord, we ought to be able to handle a few such contributions without the meeting crash diving – and continue to create a positive environment in which people feel eager to take part.

Sometimes we can impart encouragement better by example than with words. When we were in Pakistan, for example, it quickly became clear to us that many of the women loved the Lord dearly, whilst many of the men appeared to love their positions in the church! The roles open to women were strictly limited. I longed to teach on this subject, but felt the Lord say to me, 'You don't understand enough about the dynamics. Don't teach about it – model it!' As guest speakers we were in a unique position to do just that. Ros was able to take remarkable opportunities to do things that women would not normally do. We can only hope that our example will have inspired other women to have a go at extending their tent curtain and attempting new things.

### ***For Reflection***

Prophets see visions and stir up the troops, but pastors (along with other leaders) are ultimately the ones who have to implement the prophetic vision. Which category do you instinctively lean toward? If it is a mixture of the two, in what ways does this express itself?

### **Step out and encourage people!**

*Nine tenths of education is encouragement. (Anatole France)*

*Note how good you feel after you have encouraged someone else . . .  
Never miss the opportunity to give encouragement.  
(George Matthew Adams)*

*A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success. (Unknown)*

Have you ever stopped to ponder how many of the high spots in all of our lives come about as the result others encouraging us? Just as the low times are often the result of extreme discouragement. We have seen that people thrive with encouragement but shrivel without it.



One of Ros's great giftings is that she recognises and values qualities in people for which they are rarely, if ever, praised. She loves to bring encouragement to people who are doing important tasks but which people are taking for granted. Time and again, her words have brought tears to their eyes. This encouragement comes both from who she is as well as from any 'position' that she holds in relation to them.

It is worth giving considerable thought, therefore, to how we can develop this precious ministry. Do you go out of your way to encourage people? Have a go at thinking through the following questions. They may look simple but their outworking they may require some considerable thought. You might find it helpful to add a score mark of 1-5, with 5 being high.

a) I always make it my aim to be an encourager because . . .

*A low score for this question might indicate that you do not go out of your way to encourage people. You might justify this along the lines that such is not your style, or that it is not your place to offer encouragement. Are these sufficient reasons for holding back?*

b) Do you have a subconscious reluctance to encourage people too much in case it should make them big-headed?

*If you score highly on this question, how does such an attitude square with Anatole France's powerful reminder that 'nine tenths of education is encouragement?'*

c) Alternatively, do you hold back because you fear that you do not have the emotional vocabulary to do it, and are afraid that anything you try to say to encourage people won't make the least difference?

*A high score here may indicate buried issues with regard to the way you view yourself that really do need dealing with.*

d) Do you aim to encourage people purely so that they can function well for the Lord – or because you are hoping to get in their good books by praising and even flattering them?

*A high score here indicates that you are well on your way to being another Barnabas, whose name means Son of Encouragement!*

May the Lord help us to go out of our way to encourage people, and to give them the courage – as well as the platform if we are able to do so – to step out in new ways. If that means not just expressing appreciation but posing tough questions in order to help people think important issues through – then that too is surely part of real love: pointing people towards making changes that will encourage them to further their calling.



In His love,

Robert & Rosalind  
23 Upper Chase road,  
Malvern,  
Worcs.  
WR14 2BT

[www.ruachministries.org](http://www.ruachministries.org)

