

One of the greatest things another Christian can do for another Christian is to give that person a form of encouragement. I must say that many at the New Johnsonville are very good at doing just that. I have been down with the seasonal allergies that go along with time of the year. Of course my allergies were far worse than anyone else's, or so I thought. You see, we men (Some –Not All), as much as we don't like to admit it—are really big babies when it comes to being sick. I fall into the category of "Some". I was congested and couldn't breathe; my head ached from all the sinus congestion—I couldn't sleep well—I couldn't taste well—It was not a fun time for me or my good family. Not only am I built like a bear, the fact is, I sounded like one when I did finally fall asleep. I know, I know, you don't want to hear my sob story about a little sinus congestion and you may be asking the question, "What does this have to do with encouragement?"

I hope this gives you a little insight to my previous statement about how good this congregation is about encouragement. On a Wednesday night I had just finished our Youth Circle that takes place every Wednesday at 5:15. I had brought an egg to prove a point about how God wants our heart to be. It was an ordinary egg and I ask several of the kids to try and make it spin. Try as they might, it wouldn't spin properly, but if you take an egg that's been hard-boiled and spin it—well it spins like a top. The object of this exercise is to show that a soft heart is harder for satan to spin out of control but a hard heart (hard boiled egg) is basically no problem at all. The kids enjoyed the show, especially since I ate the hardboiled egg afterwards. I mentioned the egg in my invitation that night and three of our youth responded asking forgiveness of sins in their lives. As wonderful as that is, it's still not the entire reason for this article, but it is the background.

I continued on working that week. I was congested and coughing—maybe running a low grade fever—but mainly feeling pretty bad. That Sunday morning after the lesson one of my sister's in Christ handed me a folded piece of paper and said, "I thought about you when I read this." I folded the paper without looking at it, put in my pocket and thanked her and continued speaking with the others that were leaving the building that morning. I'm embarrassed to say it was not until Monday morning that I finally opened the piece of paper and read it. It was a great e-mail about a mother and daughter and three boiling pots. I hope I have the time to share that with you sometime in the future. What? Yes I know what you're thinking and yes there's more to the story. It was not what was in the e-mail but what was on the back. It was notes from a ladies day she had attended and was entitled, "Be of Good Cheer". I'm not sure if she realized the notes were on there, but I can tell you on that particular Monday morning at that particular hour of the day—I needed God's Word for encouragement. It didn't come in the form of a spectacular event or flashing lights and sirens. It came from the loving hand of an encouraging spirit of Christian woman.

I keep that folded piece of white paper in my office drawer and take it out and read it everyday. And guess what reader—I AM ENCOURAGED. I Thessalonians 5: 11, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." Paul's words to the church at Thessalonica ring out as never before as I think back to the encouragement given in a small gesture of Christian friendship and love. To encourage means to inspire with courage, spirit, and hope. It means to give heart and spur on. My thanks to the good sister in Christ who encouraged me, yet may have not known just how much. It's not always the big things we do for others. It can be the small moments of kindness and love that change someone lives forever. May we live our lives encouraging others through God's Word and maybe, just maybe the one we encourage will pay it forward. May we all be the person God desires each of to be.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes