

Encouragement... What is it Anyway?

Merriam-Webster says to encourage means, "to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope." So encouragement, the noun form is, "the act of encouraging; the state of being encouraged." (The same source also says it can mean "to stimulate toward something.")

As we apply the whole thought of Hebrews 10:24, 25 we see the English word, "consider." It is from the Greek word, Katanoomen, Strong's Concordance relies on Vine, Unger and White for their definition, " 2596, katá, "down along, exactly according to" and 3539, / noiéo, "to think") – properly, to think from up to down, to a conclusion; to consider exactly, attentively (decisively); to concentrate by fixing one's thinking," 'to perceive clearly' (kata, intensive), 'to understand fully, consider closely.' " So, as we "consider" how to do something it is a deep and careful consideration.

Then we see the English word, "provoke" which is from the Greek *parosusmon*. It means to incite, encourage, provoke or even push! So, as we see the words used together "consider and "encourage" we must see it as a strong, well-considered type of encouragement. (Some translations and commentators use the word "spur one another to love and good deeds".)

So basically, Hebrews 10:24 is telling us to think fully, clearly, examining well, exactly how we might *encourage, stimulate, provoke* or *spur* one another to love and good deeds, (or good works). We recognize that careful thought and examination is required from the very definition of the words.

As we see the various needs of individual members, their ages, their interests, their strengths and their weaknesses, God is trusting us to use our wits and wisdom to come to a conclusion as to consider how to encourage each individual member of our church family, particularly when tough times ravage the soul, the family or the nation. Remember the encouragement here is *not* simply to keep a stiff upper lip, but to actually get good deeds done in love. We all know from experience that few things are as encouraging as looking back at the day and seeing that we literally accomplished the doings of love and good deeds.

The more we know each other personally, the more we share our joys and our sorrows, the more we spend time together sharing life (fellowship) the more we will know just exactly how each person in God's family can be encouraged to live out the doings of love and good deeds.

Great connections are formed when we take turns actually helping each other accomplish these tasks. Few things in life create such deep bonds and reciprocal appreciation as much as helping others accomplish God's will!

Wow - encouragement is powerful! Let's use it well. As we consider the call to attend worship in verse 25, we can clearly see from verse 24, one of the reasons we meet together to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. In this time of social separation, let's be sure to keep up that process as much as possible.

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