



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH BONNIE SALA

Subject: Encouragement

Release date: November 30, 2016

### BE AN ENCOURAGER!

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

When people struggle and give up, it's often not so much the result of the pressures "out there" as it is because they receive little if any encouragement from those "in here." My dad likes to quote the unknown pundit who said, "Living with the saints above may be glory, but living with the saints below is quite another story."

When people stumble, they need help, not criticism from the 50-yard line. Maybe you've heard the quip: "Only Christians shoot their wounded."

In many Christian circles, we'd really much rather everyone keep right on pretending that they have it all together. Less than Godly? Given way to temptation? Whatever you do, don't admit it. Sinners are out *there*, not in here, in church.

In his book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Philip Yancey tells of a man who was working in the inner city who encountered a woman who had been a prostitute. She was, he wrote, in "wretched straits, homeless, her health failing, unable to buy food for her two-year-old daughter." The Christian worker asked her if she had thought about reaching out to a church to help. "Church!" she cried, "Why would I ever go there? They'd just make me feel even worse than I already do!"

Was she right, or was this simply her perception of the Body of Christ? Sadly enough, in some cases she is right. Largely we have forgotten the instruction of the Word which says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The phrase "let us consider" is an interesting one. It comes from a word which is translated, "consider, think of; notice, observe, see; look; see through, be aware of." It means that a person uses his head and ponders the possibilities, then acts. "Consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" says another translation.

For a few moments think of the possibilities of this. What might happen if every time you met someone—just for one day—you asked yourself, "What can I do to encourage this person? What can I do to help him understand his worth in God's eyes? What encouragement could I be to the person who has stumbled? Who is hurting? What can I do to punch a hole in the darkness of this individual's life?" How would *you* like to receive this kind of encouragement?

"Something along the lines of a 'random act of kindness'" you may be thinking. No, not random but purposeful. Another "consider verse" is Philippians 2:23: "In humility consider others as more important than yourselves" (Holman). Consider what those around you really need today. Family members, co-workers, friends, those that you do life with daily. What you say may be what it takes to give someone the strength to get up after he has fallen, to pick up the pieces and go on, to turn to the Lord—yes, and even to His people in the church, for the help they can give.

What does a person need? Paul wrote to the believers saying: "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (1 Thessalonians 5:14). If you are willing, God will supply the right words. The world is full of critics, the ones who are quick to point out your mistakes, but there are few real encouragers. Years ago a listener wrote to Guidelines: "Your programs are like a spoonful of good medicine every day." You can be good medicine to someone's soul with encouragement in God today. You just never know what the effect of that encouragement today will be. "Let us encourage one another," says this powerful word, "and all the more as you see the Day [of Christ's return] approaching." (Resource reading: Colossians 3.)