

Aaron and Hur – Aaron and Hur held up the Moses' arms during battle (Exodus 17:8-16). This story reminds us that an encourager needs to know when he or she cannot do the task, but that God has anointed someone else, and it is time to get behind the one God has anointed. Aaron and Hur could have thought **they** should hold up **their** own hands, but they recognized that God had anointed Moses as the leader, and they got behind him.

Peter – On the day of Pentecost, this apostle proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and 3,000 people believed. This is one of the most commonly recognized forms of encouragement or exhortation—preaching. While preaching is just one of the many ways people can be encouraged or exhorted, it is still extremely important.

Jesus – Read Luke 22:31-34 where Jesus encourages Peter, tells him he has prayed for him, and expresses confidence in the result.

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A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another. . . . If we can encourage others, we should encourage them.

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My friends, watch out! Don't let evil thoughts or doubts make any of you turn from the living God. You must encourage one another each day. Hebrews 3:12-13

What does it mean to have “the gift” of encouragement?

In the New Testament, encouragement and exhortation are part of the same thing, and often are used to translate the same Greek word.

A person who has the gift of encouragement will generally:

- ✓ Know when someone is in need, even when they are not present.
- ✓ Be able to respond to someone else's need in a caring and appropriate manner.
- ✓ Present both encouragement and rebuke as necessary, and do so with grace.
- ✓ Have a way of providing encouragement that is unique and fits their own personality and experience.

I don't like to rebuke, but I like to encourage. Does this mean I don't have the gift?

Generally, those with the gift of encouragement don't want to offer rebuke, but they will also be obedient to the Holy Spirit when they are called upon to do so.

Prophets very often rebuke, and sometimes do so harshly, often because a harsh rebuke is needed. But encouragers can provide the rebuke in a much gentler manner and do so with exceptional grace, precisely because they don't want to do it. Much heartache can be prevented by a grace-filled suggestion offered before the need comes for harder words.

As with all the gifts of the Spirit, listening to the Holy Spirit and acting when, and only when the Holy Spirit directs is important.

Be very careful, however, if you feel called to rebuke, that you are not simply being critical and following your own agenda.

How does someone with this “gift” function in the Church body?

Encouragement is a simple gift in the church. There is rarely any objection to speaking encouragement to people, to sending them cards or letters, or simply presenting a positive attitude.

The seemingly little things that encouragers do have a much more

serious impact than the individual church member is likely to recognize.

Encouragers quite often don't recognize their gift, because it is easy to exercise naturally, and others don't speak about it as often. But this gift is critical to the church. Your church will run much more smoothly if it is recognized and encouraged.

Who were some of the ‘encouragers’ in the Bible?

Joseph – This young man learned the need for encouragement by the way he grew up. He was not an encourager until God disciplined him into becoming one. We see examples of his encouragement in Genesis 49:19-21 when he not only forgave his brothers, but encouraged them. Then he provides encouragement to the whole people of Israel by telling them to take his body from Egypt back to Canaan when God leads them out. This unusual method of encouragement should remind us that God can use encouragers in unusual ways.