

# Toward Greater Refreshment: Complexity

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Preacher: Jeremy Sarber

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning. As I've thought about this subject of practicing affirmation, one verse in particular has been running through my mind, and that is Ephesians 4:29.
- The Apostle Paul writes, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it might give grace to those who hear.
- According to Paul, our speech can go one of two ways. It can be corrupting, that is, rotten, putrid, destructive, or it can be encouraging, edifying, and gracious.
- Our focus in this study, of course, is on the latter, but let's talk for a moment about corrupting speech, or what some translations call unwholesome speech. Now, I doubt kids use this line anymore, but when I was a kid and someone would insult me, I'd often respond by saying, It wasn't true, and I knew it wasn't true.
- Words do, in fact, hurt. They can hurt tremendously. In fact, they can be very powerful weapons, right? And for reasons I can't fully explain, critical words somehow are often more louder, more powerful than affirming words.
- [ 1 : 1 9 ] We hear them. Just ask one of our pastors. Ninety-nine people may come to them after a Sunday service and compliment on preaching the word well, but they'll spend the next week thinking about that one critical comment they heard.
- That's human nature, I think. My daughter gives me one of the greatest joys in this life. Every day when I get home from work and she hears that door open, she runs to the back door shouting, Daddy, Daddy, and she wraps her arms around my leg.
- And she's full of sweet words and gestures just like that. But there was that one time, that one time she was really upset with me. And while I was standing across the room, she says to her mom, I don't like Daddy.
- Now, I will confess to you that a big part of me wanted to cry in that moment. Now, if you had told me ahead of time that one day your daughter will probably say something like, she doesn't like you, I would have said, well, yes, of course, kids say what they don't mean.
- I'll be just fine. But when the moment came, I felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. That's the power of words. Specifically, that is the power of corrupting words.
- [ 2 : 3 5 ] James illustrates the matter this way in James chapter 3. If we put bits in the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.
- Look at the ships also. Though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also is the tongue, or so also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.
- How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.
- As children, we may say words can never hurt us, but according to scripture, and this is not an exaggeration really, words are more powerful than sticks and stones could ever be.

Sticks and stones have never been able to destroy the church, and they've been used against the church. Even the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church, but according to James, the wrong words can set the whole body on fire.

[ 3 : 51 ] So Paul says, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. Avoid insults, avoid criticism, avoid slander, avoid gossip, avoid profanity, avoid speaking lies, avoid any talk that is not good for building up.

Instead, we as followers of Christ should be very intentional about using our words to build up, to edify those around us for the glory of God.

Imagine you're trying to build a tower of blocks, and you'll find that a lot of my illustrations come from my children. So imagine you're trying to build a tower of blocks, and slowly and carefully, you place one block on the tower at a time, as it gets taller and it gets stronger.

Those are like affirming words, encouraging words. They're just one block at a time, carefully positioned. Corrupting talk, on the other hand, well, that's like one of my children, who can come along, and in just a second, knock that whole tower over.

One swipe. Let's keep that in the back of our minds when we think about what Paul refers to as talk that is good for building up. Affirmations.

[ 5 : 05 ] Now, in his book, Sam Crabtree provides a list of four characteristics of good affirmations, and I'd like to add one of my own, so if you're taking notes, I have five characteristics of good affirmations.

Characteristic number one, good affirmations require intentionality. Good affirmations require intentionality.

So, let me ask you a seemingly unrelated question. How many times a day do you look at your phone? How many times a day do you pull the phone out of your pocket and begin thumbing through apps without any explicit reason to do so?

No one called. No one texted. You're not waiting on an important email. You don't need to get in touch with anyone. You just start looking at your phone without any conscious thought or effort.

I think if we paused long enough to really examine ourselves, we would probably find countless things we do each day, like look at our phones, that are motivated more by whims and impulses than any kind of intentionality.

[ 6 : 20 ] And that is often true of our speech, which I think is why the Bible in James 1 reminds us that we are to be quick to hear and slow to speak.

Slow to speak. Again, according to James, the tongue is a world of unrighteousness. It gets us into a lot of trouble because it tends to move a lot faster than our brains.

We talk before we think. And maybe it's harmless that we let our hands reach into our pockets quite often and pull out our phone without any kind of conscious thought.

Then again, maybe it's not, but we certainly can't afford to let our tongues have the same amount of liberty. It's too dangerous. The whole of the Christian life requires a certain amount of intentionality, doesn't it?

Consider Paul's testimony in Romans 7. He confesses, this is the great apostle Paul, I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

[ 7 : 26 ] For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

See, Paul realizes that the Christian life is essentially a war against oneself, against his flesh. Though we are born again, we are the recreated workmanship of Christ, we still have to contend with the temptations of our sinful flesh.

Always present, always there. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, I discipline my body and keep it under control. We have to beat ourselves into submission at times because sin is the only natural course of sinful flesh.

We have to rein it in, pull it back, restrain it. So do you see how intentionality or a lack of intentionality, I should say, would become a problem for us?

Do you see the trouble we'd get into if we didn't put some kind of restraints on ourselves? If sin is the natural impulse of sinners, it's probably not a good idea to let ourselves run on autopilot in pretty much any area of life.

[ 8 : 46 ] And if the tongue is the most dangerous, the most volatile member of the body, to borrow from James' analogy, we better grab that steering wheel and move the rudder where it needs to go.

We need to be intentional about it. Again, the whole of Christian life requires intentionality, it requires intentional thought, it requires intentional effort. Jesus said if we're even thinking about following him, perhaps we should first sit down and count the cost, right?

Well, what if we apply that principle to our speech, to the things we say every day, to people all around us? What if, before we speak, we weigh the cost of our words?

What if we think about the impact they'll have, what they'll accomplish? will they tear others down? Or will they build them up?

Will they edify or will they destroy? I believe thoughtful intentionality is what James had in mind when he encourages us to be slow to speak.

[ 9 : 51 ] When we are slow to speak, he actually implies that we will also be slow to anger. Why? It's because the person who takes the time to think about the impact of his words before he says them will be far more likely to choose good words, right?

Words that build up, words that edify, affirming words, criticism, anger, maybe even profanity. These are the kinds of speech that come so naturally to us.

They just come out of our mouths. I mean, hit your thumb with a hammer, see what comes out. Probably not anything edifying by any means. So if we're going to practice a godly affirmation, we have to resolve in our hearts and in our minds.

We have to proactively seek opportunities to actually practice it. We have to want it. We have to strive for it.

We have to grab the wheel of the ship and steer it. I'll give you a practical tip. This is something that I have begun doing over the last few years.

[ 11 : 03 ] I find it very helpful to make notes throughout the week. So a lot of times when I'm doing something completely unrelated, I will think of people that I just, I really appreciate.

I'll think of something that someone did that deserves a word of affirmation and I'll make a note of it. So then when I have an opportunity, I'll write them, I'll call them, I'll see them in person and I can actually follow through and give them that encouraging word.

Now, I don't follow through as often as I should, I'll admit, but I follow through a lot more now that I write these things down when they first occur to me. So maybe that's something worth giving a try.

So characteristic number one is intentionality. characteristic number two, good affirmations should be steady. Good affirmations should be steady.

They should be continual and consistent. In other words, let's not treat them like New Year's resolutions. On January 1st, we are all so very zealous to start that new diet or that exercise program, but come February 1st, those resolutions are a distant memory.

[ 12 : 17 ] We've kind of forgotten about them. practicing affirmations is not a shallow New Year's resolution. We are talking about one of the things that truly characterizes a disciple of Christ.

We are defined in part by the way we speak. Not long ago, a colleague of mine thought it would be appropriate to tell me a dirty joke.

I'm not sure why, and I've thought a lot about it since then. He seemed a little unnerved, however, when he finally got to the punchline, and he kind of giggles a little bit, and I just stare back at him.

I don't say anything. I don't laugh. I didn't even crack a smile, and of course, this caused a moment of awkward silence, and then my colleague finally said, well, come on, man.

It's just a joke. I thought even the chaplain would find that funny. Maybe it was a bit harsh. I don't know, but in that moment, I just, I felt the need to be perfectly candid with him, and I said, by the grace of God, and only by the grace of God, I'm just not amused by what God hates, and three things troubled me about that moment when I consider it.

[ 13 : 45 ] First, this gentleman is a professing Christian. That's the first thing that bothered me. The second thing that bothered me is I was really searching my mind to understand what I could have done or said to make him think that I would ever enjoy a raunchy joke that makes light of sin.

And third, it was that statement. It's just a joke. Jesus said, for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Think about that. In other words, whatever fills the heart, that's what tends to spill through the mouth. Jesus also said, you will recognize them by their fruits.

And that includes words, I believe. Now, I know, even a believer gets angry. Even a believer can be negative and critical. God knows believers can gossip. But corrupting talk, that's not characteristic of a believer.

That's not something that should be the continual habit of a believer. believer. And I know that we've probably all been there. You know, you've had a few rough weeks at work and you kind of fall into this rut where it seems like every word you say is tinged by your frustration.

[ 15 : 12 ] It's not your family's fault, but you catch yourself frequently snapping at them. Why didn't you do the dishes? Why didn't you mow the lawn? Why didn't you put your toys away?

And then when maybe your spouse finally calls you out on it and addresses the issue, you get even more defensive, even more angry, even more frustration and you feel like your frustrations have been justified.

Your short fuse has been justified. And you think, what about my stress? Doesn't she understand? Doesn't he understand? You want to be really convicted?

This one gets me. Think about the first recorded words Jesus spoke after his enemies nailed him to the cross. He's humiliated, mocked, beaten, tortured, exhausted, and his first words are, Father, forgive them.

And in case you're tempted to argue, well, Christ was God, I'm a mere man, remember what Stephen also a mere man shouted during his execution, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

[ 16 : 30 ] Corrupting talk is never really justified despite the practice of many wonderful southern women I've known. Adding, bless his heart, to the end of an insult does not negate the insult.

As followers of Christ, we should be a source of compassion, right? A source of understanding and encouragement to those around us and that's believers and unbelievers alike.

To be clear, you know, as you're jotting your notes to affirm others throughout the week, we don't have to exclusively reserve them for our brothers and sisters in Christ and I believe you've already heard this in part from Jason and Roger, there are things to be commended in every image bearer of God.

The thing is, practicing affirmation has to become a steady habit. We are not called to give an encouraging word here or there. Instead, we should be known for our encouragements.

This should be characteristic of us. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. We should be a people that are so thankful in our hearts for the godly traits we see in others that we are consistently and continually affirming those traits.

[ 17 : 49 ] And by the way, that means more than just thinking how thankful you are. That means saying how thankful you are. That's the point, right? God willing, we'll become the kind of people that are so known for our edifying speech that our presence alone has the power to lift spirits and encourage people around us.

I've known people like that. Maybe you have too. They walk into the room and immediately you feel better. They haven't even said anything yet. But you know, history has proven that if there's an encouraging word to be found, they'll say it.

And so sometimes they don't even have to say it. I want to be that guy. Characteristic number three, good affirmations are not criticisms in disguise.

Again, criticism is the sinner's default. When we are in the practice of speaking without careful thoughtfulness, slow to speak, that is, we are more likely to criticize than to edify.

And by nature, or maybe we're prone to not say anything at all, but by nature, I know that we are critical, we're self-righteous, we're judgmental, and we are also quite clever about it.

[ 19 : 08 ] Let me explain what I mean. You see, even the secular world understands you can attract more flies with honey than with vinegar. This is a message that Dale Carnegie has been preaching since 1936 through his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

If you want people to be receptive to what you have to say, you need to sprinkle in a few compliments, a few kind words. Now, I say we are clever because sometimes we can be just as critical as ever, but we disguise our criticisms under a few affirmations, a few compliments.

The truth is, however, it doesn't work. Let's say a husband sits down to have dinner with his wife, and they begin eating, and he says to her, Honey, I really appreciate all of the effort you made to make this dinner.

I'm so thankful that you slave away over a hot stove every night. You look beautiful, by the way. What have you done with your hair? I just, I love it. But have you had any time to look at that cookbook I got you last Christmas?

You know, there's some great recipes in there. If, you know, if only you followed the directions closely, what did his wife hear? She heard, I would rather be eating dog food than what you just put on my plate.

[ 20 : 34 ] Now, maybe that's a stretch, but as I said before, an affirming word is just one block on the tower while criticism comes along and knocks the whole thing over, even if we have thick skin.

Criticism tends to be louder than encouragement. Again, you can speak 99 edifying words to me, and I will walk away dwelling on that one discouraging word of criticism. That's just human nature.

So affirmations should not be used like a Trojan horse to, you know, sneak in some criticism, some insults, or even corrections. Even corrections. As Sam Crabtree says, correction packaged with the affirmation will contaminate and weaken the affirmation.

Now, having said that, I do believe there is a place for both affirmations and corrections in the same context. we see that throughout Scripture. For example, when Jesus speaks through John to the church at Ephesus, this is in Revelation 2, he says, I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, and have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary, but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

[ 21 : 59 ] So to be clear, what I'm talking about is knowingly or perhaps unknowingly using affirmations maliciously or deceptively.

I don't believe Jesus commended the Ephesian church to make his rebuke more palatable. I believe his affirmations were sincere, 100% sincere.

But in other cases we see, like in the case of the Laodicean church, he offers no commendations at all. So we learn that affirmations were not part of some strategy to manipulate the churches.

He praised them when they were praiseworthy, he corrected them when they needed correction, and sometimes he did both. What we want to avoid is using affirmations merely to justify a critical judgmental spirit within us.

Think of what Jesus said of Israel, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. The words say one thing, but the motivations are different.

[ 23 : 05 ] If I praise my wife just so I can get away with criticizing her cooking, that is not godly affirmation. That is not good for building up.

That doesn't give grace to her or to anyone else. Despite many of the words coming out of my mouth, I'm obviously not motivated by a genuine desire to edify my wife.

I am, instead, my motives are really self-serving in that moment. I'm trying to get something for myself. I want a better meal without the hassle of starting to fight.

So in short, let's not use affirmations as a disguise for criticism. Characteristic number four, good affirmations are honest.

Good affirmations are honest. Proverbs 12, 19 says, truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Proverbs 26 says, whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart.

[ 24 : 13 ] When he speaks graciously, believe him not. I believe the lesson in both of these passages is be honest, be authentic.

Now we all understand what gossip is, right? That's when we say something behind someone's back that we would never say to his or her face. Well, there's another similar sin that we don't talk about quite as often, though maybe we should, and that is the sin of flattery.

What is flattery? Well, flattery is when you say something to someone's face that you would never say behind his or her back. I suspect we've all been there.

There was a brother at our church in North Carolina who would often compliment, he would compliment something in a sermon he heard that morning, or, you know, he was full of affirming words, but he would always follow them up with, and that's not flattery.

He wanted to make it perfectly clear that he was being sincere. He was not flattering. He was not complimenting the sermon, for instance, and then, you know, bad-talking it on his way home with his wife.

[ 25 : 33 ] As my mother used to tell me as a child, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all. As Sam Crabtree puts it, commend only the commendable.

Commend only the commendable. We are not trying to manipulate or deceive people. practicing affirmation is not an exercise in vanity, right?

We are proactively, intentionally, steadily, and consistently looking for and affirming legitimate godliness that we see in other people.

We are striving to honestly and sincerely commend the commendable. When a child paints a picture and we look at it and think, I have no earthly idea what this is, we may still glow and hang it on the refrigerator and tell the child what a wonderful job he or she did, and I believe that may be appropriate in certain contexts, But sound, biblical, truly profitable affirmation will be honest.

We are not affirming people for the sake of affirming people. we are affirming people because we see God at work in their lives. And we want to encourage their faith, we want to encourage their sanctification, which leads us to the fifth and final characteristic of good affirmations.

[ 27 : 01 ] Number five, good affirmations are God centered. Good affirmations are God centered. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus taught in Matthew five, you are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Now, I think our definition of good works is sometimes too narrow. We sometimes think of works as so-called religious activities, such as going to church, praying, reading the Bible, and while I believe those are good works, I also believe scripture places a particular emphasis on the good we do for others, which includes, of course, the words we speak to others.

When Jesus says, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works, he's not telling us to put on a good show of religion in front of other people. In fact, he warns against that notion later in the same sermon.

He says, beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. That's not what he's talking about. Again, the Bible often puts a particular emphasis on doing good for others.

[ 28 : 23 ] As we have opportunity, Paul tells the Galatians, let us do good to everyone, especially those who are of the household of faith. good to love.

And extending that concept, the book of Hebrews, Hebrews 10 24 says, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. So, as we do good for others, we are effectively demonstrating to them good works while simultaneously encouraging them to do good also.

Follow me as I follow Christ, Paul wrote. They see our good and they're inclined to follow suit. Our good works have a positive influence that spreads to and permeates through the people around us.

And what is the end result? Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Maybe if you don't remember anything else, I believe the biggest takeaway I have gotten from this is God's glory is the primary objective.

God's glory is the primary objective. We don't encourage or affirm people to merely build up their self esteem. Emphasis on self.

[ 29 : 49 ] That's not the idea. Good godly affirmations are God centered affirmations. We are affirming godliness. We are affirming righteousness. And furthermore, these affirmations are designed to glorify God, not man.

To glorify God. We don't commend people for just anything. And we don't commend them because we want them to feel proud of themselves. We commend their good works because we want to motivate them to continue to do what is right, moving them ever closer to conformity, to the image of Christ and ultimately glorifying our God in heaven.

So in short, we glorify God through our affirmations which leads those we affirm to also glorify God. So good affirmations, they're God centered from start to finish.

They're thoroughly God centered. Now in the time remaining, I want to consider some of the reasons why we practice affirmation and why this is so important and these reasons range from pragmatic to theological.

They come straight from the book. I'll give you a list of seven reasons to affirm others. Seven reasons to affirm others. Number one, affirmations gain us a hearing.

[ 31 : 14 ] Affirmations gain us a hearing. I can remember an occasion when a Jehovah's witness came to my door and as an opener, he read a verse from Revelation that describes the new heaven and new earth to come when Christ returns.

And he asked me, did you know the Bible does not teach that we're going to live in heaven forever, but that will actually come back to a new earth?

And I replied, that is an excellent observation. I believe that's precisely what the Bible teaches. This gentleman's reaction was somewhat amusing because I don't think he was accustomed to having people agree with him.

I imagine he's more accustomed to people shutting the door in his face. But he wasn't anticipating that I would commend his interpretation of Scripture on that point.

And then once the shock wore off, he was willing to actually have a conversation with me. Now, it wasn't a tremendously long conversation, but if you're familiar with Jehovah's Witnesses, you know the typical routine is to knock on the door, read a verse, make a theological statement, hand you a pamphlet of some kind, and then head out.

[ 32 : 34 ] They're gone again. So the fact that I was even able to talk with this gentleman for five minutes was quite an accomplishment as far as I was concerned. The point is, if you want people to listen, affirmations go a long way.

Affirmations go a long way. Reason number two, affirmations lift morale. Do I need to explain this one?

Life is hard enough, and discouragements come incredibly easy. So we need all the help we can get, right? Keep in mind that the Lord has called and assembled us together.

That's kind of the point of the church by definition. The church is an assembly of God's called out people. Christianity, in other words, is not an individual endeavor. You don't go it alone.

You're not supposed to go it alone. Furthermore, God brings us together for clearly articulated reasons, and one of them explicitly given in scripture is to encourage one another.

[ 33 : 43 ] together. That's one of the reasons we're together. Again, consider Hebrews 10. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another in all the more as you see the day.

That is the day of Christ drawing near. God calls us together as his church in part so we can lift up one another as we inevitably stumble.

He brings us together to encourage one another. Every last member of Christ's body has this responsibility to practice affirmation, which, of course, lifts the morale of others.

Reason number three, affirmations promote peace. Proverbs 21.9 says, it is better to live in a corner of the housetop than a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.



According to this proverb, it is better to live on a small part of the roof exposed to all the elements, the snow, the rain, the wind, the burning sun, than to be in an otherwise comfortable house with a contentious person.

- [ 34 : 55 ] Why? Sticks and stones may break my bones, but corrupting talk can be even worse. Several months ago, I was talking to a homeless man who came into the funeral home, and he lives in a tent out in the middle of the woods.

And I was curious, so I asked him, why do you live in a tent out in the middle of the woods? And he explained to me that he used to live with his sister, but his sister despises him, was always on his case, was always criticizing him, and he said, I couldn't take it anymore, so I thought it was better to go live in a tent in the middle of the woods.

He would rather live in a tent without electricity, running water, climate control, than to live in a comfortable house with a quarrelsome person. Now, I realize there was probably a lot more to that story than what he told me, but for the point of the illustration, let's pretend that was all there was.

Criticism and contention cause division, and I think we understand that very well. Affirmations and edifying words, on the other hand, they bring people together. Why wouldn't they?

we need affirmation. We need encouragement, and we're naturally drawn to it, and we're drawn to the people who give it. So let's be those people. Reason number four, affirmations prevent destruction.

- [ 36 : 19 ] Obviously, if affirmations create peace, they will also prevent division and destruction. One of my favorite lines from the book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, says, you cannot win an argument.

It's true. You cannot win an argument. Once the conversation becomes an argument, there will be no winners. The best thing we can do to win an argument is to stop it.

As Proverbs says, the beginning of strife is like letting out water. So quit before the quarrel breaks out. Plug the hole immediately.

How? Well, an affirming word works surprisingly well. Reason number five, affirmations change us for the better.

They change us for the better. When we have our minds set on identifying godly, praiseworthy traits in other people, it forces us to meditate on the goodness of God.

- [ 37 : 29 ] We're looking for God's goodness in other people. So our minds are meditating on it, which influences ourselves. It influences our own hearts and our own behaviors.

We increasingly become, in turn, the goodness of God. Reason number six goes hand in hand with that.

Affirmations change others for the better. So as we affirm the goodness of God in them, believers or unbelievers, they're incentivized to pursue it more.

And reason number seven, affirmations glorify God. I've already spent some time on this, so I'll be brief. Edifying speech is glorifying to God because it showcases his character.

It obeys his commands. It reflects his goodness and it, of course, spreads to others. Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and also give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

- [ 38 : 36 ] And I'll leave you with this thought. If nothing else, we need to remember the power of words. Proverbs 18:21 says, death and life are in the power of the tongue.

That's a strong statement. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. A joke is not just a joke. Words are not merely words. As one author aptly observed, quote, words alone can bring a government down or establish peace, destroy a marriage, or renew hope, crush a child's sense of worth, or lift him to confidence and joy, unify a church, or splinter it into angry factions, send a soul to hell or to heaven.

May we use our words intentionally, steadily, and honestly to give life and to ultimately glorify God.

Now, having said all of that, most of us probably won't say a word for the rest of the day. And I can't say I blame you. Can we pray briefly? Our Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that you have put this church together to impart, encourage us as we struggle through this life.

Lord, we want to be a people that encourage one another, not just recipients of it, but abundant givers of it. So, Lord, guide our thoughts, our hearts, as we converse with other people, both in the church and outside of the church, that we may be known as a people who are edifying, affirming, and building up of those around us.

[ 40 : 29 ] I pray that you will be with us in this regard. Bless us with your spirit in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.