Introduction: The difference “a word” makes

- “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”
  Proverbs 25: 11 (NIV)

- “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.”
  Proverbs 10: 11 (NIV)

- “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”
  Proverbs 15: 4 (NIV)
Four Ways to “Speak Life” to Those You Love:

1. **Bestow a blessing**…

2. **Express your appreciation**…
   - …for who they are
   - …for what they’ve done

3. **Verbalize your confidence** in their faith…

4. **Affirm the impact** their life has had…
   - …on you
   - …on others
Paul Models Encouraging Words:

1. Paul’s Blessing –

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

2. Paul’s Appreciation –

2 We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.
3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Paul’s Confidence in Their Faith –

4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,
5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.
6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

4. Paul’s Affirmation of Their Impact –

7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it,
9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,
10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.
Conclusion = Two Reminders:

- We grossly underestimate the **awesome power** of an “affirming word.”
- We grossly underestimate **how deeply** those around us are hurting.

**Application:**

**Who needs “An Affirming Word” from you today?**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Share a time when someone deeply encouraged you by what they said (or wrote).

2. Why is it so important to constantly encourage one another? (read Hebrews 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

3. At which of the four ways of “speaking life” to others are you best?

4. Is there anyone with whom you struggle to use positive words of life?

5. What specific steps could you take to allow God to further develop your ability to speak words of life to those around you?
Introduction: Sociology 101

He was different, warm, friendly… and attacked everything I believed in.

Observation:

It’s only a matter of time before something or someone attacks your faith – raising doubts in your heart, confusion in your soul, and a sense of inadequacy in your mind.

The Question:

How can we encourage those whose faith is being “knocked down?”

The Answer:

“Remember, Remember, Remember!”
Paul Models Encouraging Memories: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

- Paul Reminds them of Their Reception of the Message:

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,
2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak o you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

- Paul Reminds them of The Character of the Messengers:

3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;
4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts.
5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed, God is witness,
6 nor did we seek glory from en, either from you or from others, even through as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.

- Paul Reminds them of The Ministry They Received:

7 But we proved to gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.
8 Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.
9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;
11 Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,

- Paul Reminds them of The Results in Their Lives:

12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
How? We help them...

1. Remember The Day!

2. Remember The People!

3. Remember The Love!

4. Remember The Transformation!
Conclusion: When our faith is slandered…

Remembering “the work” of God in our past is what provides perspective to do “the will” of God in the present.

Application:

Who do you know who needs a guided tour down their spiritual “memory lane?”

Discussion:

1. Read Psalm 103:1-5 and discuss the importance of “remembering” in our spiritual lives.

2. Brainstorm as a group and come up with six to eight ways that would help you practice “remembering” on a regular/habitual basis.

3. Re-read 1 Thessalonians 2:3-11 and list five or six specific examples of how God wants us to minister to others from Paul’s model of ministry to the Thessalonians.

4. How did “remembering” encourage you today? Why?

5. Ask God to show each member in the group one person in their network who needs encouraging. Determine this week, with God’s power, to help them remember.
Introduction:

Spiritual entropy is a fact of life!

- The Symptoms:
  - Internal –
  - External –

- The Danger:

- The Question:

- The Problem:
Paul Models A “Rescue 911” Response:

1. Paul thanks God continually for the manner in which the Thessalonians received the Word of God.
   1 Thessalonians 2:13 – 16

2. Paul expresses his deep affection and longing for the Thessalonians.
   1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 20

3. Paul’s deep concern and genuine fears motivate him to send Timothy to encourage the Thessalonians.
   1 Thessalonians 3:1 – 5

4. Paul explodes with joy and breaks out into prayer over Timothy’s report of the Thessalonians positive spiritual progress.
   1 Thessalonians 3:6 - 13
The 4 Steps of “Rescue Intervention”

1. **Communicate** your gratitude for the authenticity of their faith in the midst of spiritual opposition.

2. **Express** your sincere concern for them as a person with words and ways that make sense to them.

3. **Pursue** a specific means of “relational connection” with them for the purpose of spiritual encouragement and protection.

4. **Rejoice** with them and “over them” at any and every step of positive spiritual progress.
Application / Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, what manner of “spiritual drifting” is occurring in your life right now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchored in Christ</td>
<td>Subtle Drifting</td>
<td>Out to Sea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Quickly list those who come to your mind whom you sense are spiritually drifting. Which one of these people do you care enough about to attempt a “rescue intervention?”

3. What specific obstacles or fears make you “less than eager” to take this step of “rescue intervention?”

4. What positive factors (obedience, consequences of failing to do so, support and help from others, etc.) “most motivate” you to step out in faith and help someone in spiritual danger?

5. When will you start “operation rescue?”
Introduction:

“Everyone needs someone at some time to give them something in order to become the someone they long to become.”

To “Inspire” - Webster’s Definition:

- Literally – to breathe, blow upon, infuse with life.

- To prompt, arouse, or produce a thought or feeling.

- To stimulate or impel to some creative or effective effort.

- To cause, guide, communicate or motivate as by divine or supernatural influence.
4 Keys To Inspiring Others:

1. Motivate Them!

2. Teach Them!

3. Affirm Them!

4. Correct Them!
Paul Models Inspirational Encouragement:

1. **Paul Motivates, “Your lives please God!”**

   1. Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.
   2. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

2. **Paul Teaches, “God demands sexual purity!”**

   3. It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;
   4. that each of you should learn to control his own body[a] in a way that is holy and honorable,
   5. not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;
   6. and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.
   7. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.
   8. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

3. **Paul Affirms, “Your brotherly love is awesome!”**

   9. Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.
   10. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

4. **Paul Corrects, “Be responsible, make an impact!”**

   11. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you,
   12. so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.
Summary:

- We must motivate before we instruct.
- We must instruct before we affirm.
- We must affirm before we redirect.
- We must correct with the motivation in view.

Application: You really can live a life that pleases God!

Discussion Questions:

1. Who in your relational network needs some inspirational encouragement?

2. Which of the 4 Keys to Inspiring would be most appropriate to use at this time in their life?

3. Discuss God’s view of sex: List three reasons (from the text) why God clearly prohibits sex apart from marriage. How do these prohibitions reflect God’s concern, protection, and love for us?

4. How did Christ speak to your life today? What would obedience to His Word look like?
Introduction:

When the subject of Christ’s return (the second coming) comes up in conversation, there are at least three predictable responses:

- Unhealthy Preoccupation
- Fearless Skepticism
- Fearful Confusion

Transition:

In some ways, times haven’t changed much. The Apostle Paul addresses these very three responses in his letter to the Thessalonians.
How to Give Hope to the Fearful:  1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- **Question:** What happens to a believer when he/she dies?
- **Answer:** The certainty of a believer's resurrection is based on the fact of Christ's resurrection.

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

- **Question:** What about our “loved ones” (believers) who die before us?
- **Answer:** The Christian dead will rise first and share in the Kingdom.

15 According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- **Question:** When and how will these “end times” events occur?
- **Answer:** At the rapture of the Church.

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.
5 Aspects of the Rapture:

- **Return** of Jesus for His Church  
  1 Thessalonians 4:16a

- **Resurrection** of the dead in Christ  
  1 Thessalonians 4:16b

- **Rapture** of the Church to heaven  
  1 Thessalonians 4:17a

- **Reunion** of believers with Christ and each other  
  1 Thessalonians 4:17b

- **Reassurance** of hope in the face of death  
  1 Thessalonians 4:18

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*Ryrie, page 14

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For more resources, go to LivingOnTheEdge.org
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How to Give Help to the Fearless:

- **We Must Warn Them** – by speaking the Truth in love.
  - Jesus’ return is certain
  - Jesus’ return will be unexpected
  - Jesus’ return will mean judgment

- **We Must Win Them** – by Living the Truth in Life

Application / Discussion Questions:

1. Would you characterize your response to Christ’s return as:
   a) Fearless and skeptical?   b) Fearfully confused?   c) Joyfully anticipating?

2. What information in this message was new to you?  Most helpful?  Still unclear?

3. Are you certain that you are ready for the Lord’s return?  Why?  Why not?

4. Is there someone you need to “warn” and “win” before Christ’s return?
   Who?                                When?

Resource: * Come Quickly Lord Jesus – What You Should Know About the Rapture
by Dr. Charles Ryrie
4 Things We Can’t Afford to Forget:

1. People are hurting far more than you know and far more than they show.

2. You have far more to offer than you know and far more than you show.

3. Encouragement is helping others take that “next step” they couldn’t take on their own and allows them to become more like Christ.

4. The key to encouragement = ATTITUDE!
Attitudes That Build Great Churches:

1. A Word To Leaders 1 Thessalonians 5:12
   - Work hard
   - Lead well
   - Admonish wisely

2. A Word About Leaders 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
   - Respect them
   - Esteem them
   - Be at peace with them

3. A Word To All of Us 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15
   - Warn the idle
   - Encourage the timid
   - Help the weak
   - Be patient with all men
Attitudes That Build Great Christians:

1. A Word About Your **Private** Worship  
   1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
   - Be joyful always
   - Pray continuously
   - Give thanks in all circumstances

2. A Word About Your **Public** Worship  
   1 Thessalonians 5:19-22
   - Be open to the Spirit
   - Be receptive to the Word
   - Be discerning and selective

3. A Word About Your **Spiritual Growth**  
   1 Thessalonians 5:23-28
   - Be dependent
   - Be responsible
Examine Yourself - Examine The Body

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

1 Corinthians 11:28-29

Application / Discussion Questions:

1. How has God used His Body (the Church) to love, support, and encourage you in recent weeks and/or months? Thank Him!

2. When you review the “Attitudes” That Build Great Churches, where do you need to ask for God’s forgiveness? Is there a specific person you need to make things right with or take time to help? Do it today!

3. What new insight did you get today that could help you become a great (healthy) Christian? Tell a friend and take a step of faith in that arena.

4. In what specific way(s) or relationship(s) does God want to make you an awesome encourager? What would trusting Him in that area or relationship look like this week?