

Affirmation Sermon

8/16/2020

What a great lead-in to my sermon this morning. We're going to look at "affirmation". And this song reminds us of how God affirms us, through truths in His Word, through impressions and through others.

Last week we looked at how to use our words to "encourage" each other.

- We discovered that encouragement is more than just a nice thing to do, it is actually **commanded by God**.
- And "encouragement" is a powerful tool, in our spiritual toolbox, to help **fight Satan's tool of discouragement** and enticement into sin in the lives of people we love and do life with.
- And I left you with an assignment to intentionally try to encourage **at least one person every day** this week. How'd you do? I've heard from several of you that you were at least trying to do that. And whether you achieved the goal of daily encouraging someone or not, the key is to begin to make it a daily habit. Because, without intentionally striving to encourage others, it often doesn't happen. And we, and the people around us tend to live lives of discouragement. So, keep on with striving to incorporate encouragement of others into your daily habits, through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Today I want to talk about another form of blessing others with our words and that's through a thing called "affirmation". And I want to give a lot of credit to my understanding of this concept to a little book by **Sam Crabtree** entitled, "**Practicing Affirmation**".

Encouragement is coming alongside someone and comforting them or breathing courage into them. Some have compared encouragement to **cheerleading**, telling someone you believe in them and that they can accomplish a particular task. Or it might involve complimenting them on some aspect of their life or thanking them for something they've done.

Affirmation, as defined by Sam Crabtree, involves *recognizing a God given quality or God's transformational work in someone*. And by affirming them in this way, they are given strength to continue on and God is glorified. Let me give you some examples.

Biblical Examples of Affirmation:

- The Lord affirmed **Noah as righteous** in his generation (Gen. 7:1)
- The Lord chose **David** as king, because he was **a man after His own heart**. **Acts 13:22**
- God affirmed his **Son** at the Transfiguration when he declared from heaven "*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.*" Mt. 17:5 (ESV)
- Jesus affirmed **great faith** in the **Roman centurion** (Lk 7:9) and the **Canaanite woman** (Mt. 15:28)
- Jesus recognized **greatness** in **John the Baptist** (Luke 7:28) "*I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John.*"
- When **Peter** uttered the great declaration of Jesus' identity, Jesus recognized that this statement wasn't thought up by Peter but was actually provided to him by God (Mt 16:17)

Good affirmations are **God-centered**, pointing to the image or transformational work of God in a person.

Psalms 150:1-2 (ESV) *Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

One of the ways we can praise God is by recognizing His greatness and mighty deeds in others.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* Affirmation is recognizing this ongoing transformation inside of each believer. And by doing that, it encourages and empowers them to continue on in this transformational process.

Another verse that reminds us that God is actively working in and through us is **Philippians 2:12-15** (ESV) *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is **God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* And we have the privilege to recognize this divine work in others.

Right after that passage, we see how important affirmation can be. Because next, we're cautioned not to live life grumbling. **14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

Affirmation focuses you on what **God's doing** in other people's lives, rather than on **what's wrong**. A way better way to live each day. And as you live practicing affirmation and encouragement, you will look differently from the rest of the world – you will *“shine as lights in this dark world”*. And people who experience your words of affirmation will be motivated to keep on letting the Holy Spirit transform them into Christlikeness.

And notice the **side effect** of affirmation in others.

Proverbs 11:25 (ESV) *Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.*

As we breathe affirmation into others, a side effect is that we're encouraged to do it more and more as well and be more receptive for God to do this same transformational work in us as well.

Catch this: Our affirmation of others speaks **horizontally to people** and **vertically through them to God**. God is ultimately honored for who He is and what He's doing in the lives of others.

Quote from Sam Crabtree's book: *“Affirmations are God-centered: the aim is to glorify God by refreshing people as we help them see God at work in their lives, moving them toward Christlikeness. We help people be shallow when we focus on compliments (like their new haircut or jewelry or clothes). Such things are merely external. Rather, let us pay attention to patterns of character that emerge from the work of God going on inside a person.”*

Recently I used this approach with my **granddaughter, Shaylee**. She's becoming quite a **painter**. And when she recently sent me a picture of her painting I texted back: *“Wow beautiful!! God has really gifted you as an artist. Keep thanking Him for that gift and ask Him to use your gift for His glory, so that through your work others might come to know God as well.”*

Why affirm others?

- **Affirmation energizes people**. Who doesn't like getting an affirmation?
- Striving to affirm others puts us in the practice of **looking at them positively** – evidence of God in them.
- Affirmation constructively uses time that could have been **wasted on complaining**.
- Affirmation **showcases the character of God**, giving him the honor, He deserves.
- Behaviors that are rewarded and celebrated are **more likely to be repeated**. **Sam Crabtree** illustration: *“Years ago when I was a college student, some of my friends and I were at a restaurant and decided to place a coin on the table as an added tip every time our server came to our table. After just a few trips, she caught on to what we were doing. By the end of the meal we had 40-50 coins stacked up – yes, she made that many return trips to our table. Rewards matter. They incentivize.”*

Affirmation is not about building self-esteem but rather it's about recognizing God's work in them.

You can even use affirmation with nonbelievers, by pointing out the character of God in them. You could say, *“You're really gifted in this area...and it reminds me of one of God's characteristics.”*

I've ran off a list of several character qualities of God as displayed in Jesus Christ to give you some ideas of what you can recognize in others. **(Show Sheet)**

Ways to give Affirmation:

1. Explain that what inspired you to do some good thing was the **other person's example**.
2. Think of something that is **normally not praised**, because it is simply expected and then affirm someone for doing it (like cleaning the church, mowing the yard, etc.)
3. Commend someone for the **Christlike way they treated a third party**. You notice, and so does God.
4. Say, "**I thank God for you**". Paul did that a lot at the beginning of his letters.
5. Tell someone **you were praying for them** and wanted them to know that **God placed them on your heart**.
6. Compare someone you know with a **Bible hero**. "*You remind me of...*"
 - a. (Last week it was **Barnabas** (encouragement).
 - b. But it could be **Daniel** (faithfulness),
 - c. **Esther** for her fierce commitment to her mother-in-law
 - d. **Peter** (his boldness and for recovering from sin),
 - e. **Paul** for his zealotry in telling others about Christ.

Jesus once told a parable which gives us a wonderful picture of God's affirmation of each of us one day when we come before His presence. In that moment God will look at us and say to us: **Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.**

I want to invite everyone, both here and online to join me in saying together this closing prayer which captures well the practice of affirmation and that Paul wrote 2,000 years ago.

"We keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ." (2

Thessalonians 1:11-12)

We're going to close our service by singing the chorus to the song we sang leading into my sermon. It's a great reminder of many of the ways **God affirms** each of us during low times in our lives.

Sing: "You Say" by Lauren Daigle

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Encouragement = come alongside and _____ or _____

Affirmation = recognizing a _____ or a _____

The result of affirmation is:

- a.
- b.

Biblical examples of affirmation:

Affirmation focuses you on what God's doing in people's lives rather than what's wrong.

What's the side effect of affirmation (Proverbs 11:25)

Affirmation speaks _____ to people and _____ to God.

Why affirm others?

- Affirmation _____ people.
- Affirming others causes us to look at them _____.
- Affirmation keeps us from _____.
- Affirmation showcases the _____ of God
- Behaviors that are rewarded and celebrated are more likely to be _____

Ways to give Affirmation:

1. Tell them you were inspired by their _____.
2. Praise people for works that are often _____
3. Commend someone for the Christlike way they treated _____.
4. Say, "I _____ God for you".
5. Tell someone you were _____ for them
6. Compare someone you know with a _____.

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