

Order of Worship

Announcements

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Lord's Supper

Contribution

Sermon

Closing Prayer



Sunday Morning

Bible Classes 9 a.m.

Worship 10 a.m.

Sunday Evening

Worship 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday Evening

Bible Classes 7 p.m.



*"Whoever claims to live in
him must live as Jesus did."*
~ **John 2:6 (NIV)**



New York Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST

June 21, 2026

Being Encouragers

In the closing verses of 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul instructs those brethren twice to encourage one another. In verse 11, he said, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (ESV) Then again in verse 14, "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." (ESV) In our English translations, "encourage" is used for two different Greek words. In verse 11, the Greek word is parakaleo. In verse 14, the Greek is paramytheomai. So, here's what the lexicon says:

Parakaleo – literally, to call to one's side, call for, summon; and then to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.

Paramytheomai - to speak to, address one, whether by way of admonition and incentive, or to calm and console.

You can see how closely the meanings overlap, and yet there are some subtle differences too. Parakaleo invokes the image of walking beside a brother with an arm around his shoulder and saying things which build him up. Whereas paramytheomai emphasizes motivational speaking. This is a case where the English word, 'encourage' will work because that is what we would say we were doing in either case.

At the risk of sounding cliché, we forget how powerful words can be. We know from the Bible that God's words especially can be powerful. When God created the material universe, He spoke and something came into existence. (Genesis 1) When God revealed His will to man, He used words to do it. (Yes, there were signs and wonders too, but they were given as confirmation of the authority of the words He spoke.) John calls Jesus "the Word" in John 1, and certainly throughout His ministry, Jesus spoke words. The preaching of the gospel is giving people the word of God to establish faith in them. (Romans 10:17)

Now, obviously, when Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he wrote words and then told them to use their words to encourage one another, and specifically those who were worried about brethren who preceded them in death (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, which includes that "encourage" word right at the end). And also, to use words to accomplish all of what 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says. You'll notice it's not just "encourage" but "admonish" as well and probably helping the weak included words too.

Words have the power to do a lot of good. Think about the times in your own life when someone, a parent, a good friend, or your spouse spoke something encouraging to you when you needed it and it helped lift a burden off your shoulders.

At the same time, words can do a lot of damage. James 3:1-12 begins with a warning to teachers but expands that warning to the negative power of the tongue (i.e., words). Just read through lists like Romans 1:29-32, 2 Corinthians 12:20, and 1 Timothy 5:13 for examples. So, Christians are told to not engage in those things.

It isn't always easy to control our words, is it? The reason is because our words aren't just affected by our intellect – the rational part of our minds. They are affected – sometimes strongly – by our emotions. But that's exactly why James reminds us, "For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body." (James 1:2 (ESV) We must work at it, consciously and intentionally catching ourselves, "biting our tongues" and reminding ourselves of what we should be saying. ~ Terry