

Leading Leaders Coaching Session #4



Leadership Competency: **Encourager (pt. 1)**

Key verse: 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Key question: Do other leaders look forward to spending time with me?

Description: An Encourager provides care, support, and resources for 2-5 LifeGroup leaders. Encouragers hold LifeGroup leaders accountable in empowering ways.

Connect:

1) What's new in your life?

Celebrate:

2) What has been something encouraging that someone has said or done for you lately? In your life? In your ministry?

Coach:

3) A great Leader of Leaders is a great encourager. As you look back at your life and ministry, who has been an encourager in your life? How has that person encouraged you?

4) A key question to help us evaluate how well we are doing as encouragers is this: Do other leaders look forward to spending time with me? What are some telltale signs that people do look forward to spending time with you? What are some telltale signs that they don't?

5) In the Leadership Greenhouse - Leading Leaders - Podcast 4, Chad Allen said that the need for encouragement is now greater than ever. How would you compare your own need for encouragement today with your need for encouragement 3 or 5 or 10 years ago?

6) In the podcast, Chad said that it is possible for anyone to become more encouraging, but that it requires intentionality. What are some intentional things any leader could do to be more encouraging?

Communicate:

[Together, read through the following article.]

THE ANATOMY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

by Mac Lake

Edited by Rick Duncan

"The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" ([Proverbs 10:11](#)).

We've all had that moment where we were impressed with someone's performance and felt the urge to give them a word of encouragement. Then, as we open our mouth the only thing that comes out is, "Hey you did a great job tonight" or "Thanks for your leadership, that was good today." While I'm sure they appreciate the praise, think of how much more powerful it could be if we simply put some thought and intention into our encouragement.

Encouragement is powerful and has the ability to lift a spirit, shape self-esteem, or galvanize an individual's resolve to continue in the face of difficulty. So think about it, do your encouraging words have power or are

they just ineffectual comments? Years ago, Larry Crabb wrote an entire book entitled, *“Encouragement: The Key to Caring.”* A whole book on encouragement!

There’s a lot we can learn about this simple yet influential leadership skill.

Perhaps the key to putting a punch to our praise is looking at the anatomy of effective encouragement. While there is much more to it, here are three simple ingredients to get you started. Encouragement must be 1) sincere, 2) specific, and 3) strength-based.

Sincere – Before speaking words of encouragement, check your motives and make sure you’re doing it to lift up the other individual, not to gain something for yourself. Solomon warns us in [Proverbs 26:28](#), “a flattering mouth works ruin.” The Hebrew word for ruin comes from a root word meaning, “to push, drive away, or cast down.”

If we’re not careful, insincere words can have an opposite effect than we desire, pushing people away rather than building them up. I was having lunch with a young man one day who continued to sing my praises throughout the whole hour. While I’m always up for a dose of encouragement, I found it strange because he had never met me. His words were pleasant yet I found myself pushed away from him rather than drawn to him. Encouragement is always best served with a spirit of sincerity.

Specific – If you want your words of praise to have more punch, then be specific with your encouragement. Notice the specifics of what people do well and consider how it impacted you personally. Performance is good for a reason and if we look close enough we can find little nuances that made it special.

Many evenings my wife Cindy and I watch The Food Network, and I’m always fascinated at how much detail the judges give in their feedback about the look, taste, and flavors of each dish. They’re able to praise or critique each chef with great detail because they’ve acquired a sensitive palate that enables them to taste flavors the average person doesn’t notice.

In the same way, we must look for and praise the specific detail of an individual’s work. That takes encouragement to a very deep and meaningful level. So instead of saying, “Hey, you did a good job.” You can say, “When you led the small group discussion tonight you really asked insightful questions that challenged my thinking in new ways. You have a real gift for making people think. I appreciate you using that gift to add value to my spiritual walk.” Specific encouragement is meaningful encouragement.

Strength-Focused – God has gifted each of us in very specific ways. Each day we use and develop those strengths. Over time as those strengths develop, they become obvious to others.

Paul had been around young Timothy so much that he had become very familiar with his strengths. And then in a very crucial time in Timothy’s ministry, Paul told him, “Fan into flame the gifts God has given you.”

By giving someone encouragement centered on their particular strength, we are in essence helping them fan the flame of their strengths. Giving someone sincere, specific encouragement that is focused on their unique strengths helps them learn something new about themselves and deepens their wisdom about using that particular strength.

I’ve always said that encouragement is one of the most overlooked leadership development tools available to us.

Encouragement is one of those small investments that we can make daily that will bring a huge return. Solomon observed, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" ([Prov. 25:11](#)).

The right word, spoken the right way, at the right time can impact lives in ways we may never know. So what are you waiting on...give an intentional word of encouragement today!

7) Why do you think God tells us repeatedly to encourage one another?

8) Which of the three aspects of encouragement do you need to grow in the most – sincere, specific, or strength-based?

9) What are some barriers that we sometimes face that keep us from giving this type of encouragement? Which is your biggest barrier to being consistent in encouragement?

10) Think back: Who have you encouraged lately? How did they respond? What did you do well? What did you wish you had done better?

11) Why do you think it sometimes feels awkward giving encouragement?

12) Why do some people not feel comfortable receiving encouragement?

13) Based on our conversation, let's brainstorm a few principles about the practice of giving encouragement.

Care:

14) What is one action step you need to take that will make you a leader who encourages others in a way that shapes their soul? (Note: Before we meet again, put this to practice by encouraging someone in a sincere, specific, or strength-based way. I'll ask you about it next time.)

15) How can we pray for each other?