



WORKTALK WEEKLY

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This is the forth piece in a mini series on daily disciplines (DD)

DD 4 - Finding Strength

One of my favourite authors, in his most successful book, started his first chapter with a three word paragraph.

Life is difficult.

The rest of the book describes how accepting this truth is the secret to overcoming it, and he then explains the four disciplines necessary.

I agree with Peck. Whatever world you inhabit - western - eastern -third - developing - developed -new or old - for most people making it through the day is a struggle. The poor assume the rich find it easier - and of course materially they do, but the rich have their pain and loss as well. Whoever you are, you are faced with the same questions about life, death, meaning and survival. No-one is immune to grief or illness and death is not impressed by a healthy bank balance.

You might be of the persuasion that anxiety is the luxury of the well-fed and stress the indulgence of those who have a roof over their heads, but I doubt that any of you believes that there is a group of humans immune to difficulty.

And certainly not in your circle. So global theorizing aside for a moment, may I suggest a daily discipline which will bring some relief to the reality of the daily difficult?

Sometime ago I read a piece of research which identified a 'friend at work' as the single biggest reducer of stress. The research didn't spell out how, but implicit in the word 'friend' is a type of behaviour which goes with the title. That behaviour is encouragement.

It is because life is difficult that you need encouragement. In fact you have an insatiable appetite for it. Receiving encouragement is like oil on a wound, water for a thirst or soup when your starving.

But receiving encouragement is not the discipline. You have already guessed that I'm calling you to give encouragement. There is a powerful catharsis in the giving of a word, a gift, some money, a token an embrace or a letter (digital or hand written). Giving encouragement to the person right next to you - on an unconditional, tailor made regular basis is great for them and for you.

The bible is full of information on all of this. Jesus gave encouragement to the dying thief right next to him at work. This truth forms the foundation of the second module of the WORKTALK course. The biblical teaching on giving, on serving, on losing one's life rather than gaining it, and on love itself all help us formulate the discipline of encouragement.

And there it is - another challenge for you to rise up and meet. Another withdrawal to be made from your energy bank for the benefit of others. Another thought capable of missing the point.

The truth of the matter is that encouragement at its best is unconditional but only becomes authentic when it is part of a reciprocal process. Encouragement was never meant to be a

one dimensional, one sided, one-way activity. "Encourage one another" is the dynamic that the writer to the Hebrews advocates. Unconditional but not isolated - it's a perfect paradox designed to invite you to learn to give and receive.

So there it is, a two way process for you to practise in a difficult world. No it isn't - that's not enough. The same writer (for what it's worth I think may have been Priscilla) spells it out more clearly.

This is to be a daily discipline as long as long as it is called Today. Now Today, in the New Testament, refers to the time between Jesus' death and the end of everything. Whatever your leanings, that means now. So everyday - give and receive encouragement.

There are good reasons for this according to our writer. It stops things happening. It stops people turning away from the living God and it stops people being hardened. In other words it stops life and work being so fiendishly difficult. People naturally turn away and become hard - that's life. Giving and receiving encouragement turns the tide and softens the heart.

Always look for the dynamic. Jesus encouraged the thief - and hours later the thief walked through the gates of heaven with Him side by side - an encouragement to Jesus Himself as to the success of His work.

Last thought is this. Sometimes it's hard to find the receiving dynamic when all about you are losing their heads and blaming it on you. David learned a deep skill in such circumstances - "he encouraged himself in the Lord" (1 Samuel 30:6). There is always a dynamic.

So may I encourage you to encourage someone right now, this second?

M. Scott Peck 'The Road Less Travelled'

Work Well
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BIBLE SECTION

Hebrews 3:12 & 13

12See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

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