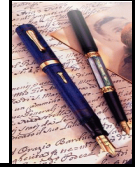


from the desk of
Danny D. Miller



Who Needs Encouragement?

Truett Cathy, the founder of Chic-fil-A restaurant chain once said, "How do you identify someone who needs encouragement? His answer - "that person is breathing." Everyone needs words of encouragement! I'm reminded of a story about Willie Mays, the famous baseball player, who at the start of his career definitely needed some words of encouragement. (One of my most exciting major league baseball games was when I got to see Willie Mays play when I was about 12 years old! The Giants won).

Mays began his major league baseball career with only one hit in his first 26 at-bats. Now that is classified as a "hitting slump" in the major leagues. However, even with that terrible start Mays went on to hit 660 home runs (third on the all-time list), and steal more than 300 bases. The turning point for Mays occurred when his manager, Leo Durocher, found him crying in the dugout after yet another miserable performance at the plate. The coach put his arm around Mays and said, "What's the matter, son?" Mays said, "I can't hit up here in the major league. I belong in the minor leagues."

Durocher said this to Willie Mays: "As long as I'm manager of the Giants, you'll be my center fielder!" After this vote of confidence and words of encouragement from Durocher, Mays got on a red hot hitting streak and was on his way to becoming a future Hall-of-Famer. What if Durocher had left Willie alone in the dugout that day and not said anything to him? His career might have ended before it started. Fortunately for him (and for baseball) someone believed in him even when he didn't believe in himself. Durocher's speech wasn't "You're a disappointment. Do you know how much you're costing the team? You're on the verge on blowing your big chance!" No, Durocher simply said, "I know that you can make it."

Is there someone in your life who needs your vote of confidence? Someone who's ready to give up? Someone who no longer believes in their ability to do what God has called them to do?

Brothers and sisters, we have the opportunity to lift them up. Your words can help get them back on track for the Lord! The Apostle Paul recognized the value of encouragement in the lives of believers. Have you ever noticed how often in the New Testament the word "strengthen" (or "build up") accompanies the word "encouragement"? When you offer encouragement to others, you quite literally renew their strength. Paul challenged us all: "*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are in fact doing.* (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Take a look around you today. There may be a future Hall-of-Famer who needs a good word from you. Give them some encouragement!

Blessings,
Danny