

Encourage Others This New Year

"You'll get through this. It won't be painless. It won't be quick. But God will use this mess for good. Don't be foolish or naive. But don't despair either. With God's help, you'll get through this." I love this creed found in Max Lucado's new book "You'll Get Through This: Hope and Help for Your Turbulent Times."

We will all go through things. It is just a matter of when and what. Often when we are experiencing devastation it is hard to have hope and it is easy to sink into despair. It can be difficult to make rational decisions during these times too. It is during these times that we must look to others for help. The wisdom of a trusted friend or family member is priceless during these times. Sometimes we simply need a listening ear and compassionate encouragement because there really are no right words, yet other times we need advice. We need to be able to openly share and know that what is said in confidence is protected.

Often the tragedy we are dealing with is so unthinkable that we have no framework from which to problem solve. We were trained as kids what to do in fire drills at school, but there was no training to deal with personal devastation. Often during these times we are simply numb and may only go through the motions of life. It is difficult to even think that life can go on in spite of the devastation we have experienced. Life was just not supposed to go like this.

In counseling someone through their crisis I often help them identify their support systems. With whom can they trust and openly share their pain? Who has previously been a source of wisdom? What community support groups are available? Those with a good support system are truly blessed. I have counseled those who really have nobody. They can't pick up the phone late at night and call a friend. They are left alone with only their own thoughts.

This can be quite dangerous. Sometimes our thoughts are not rational. Sometimes they are not filtered through scripture and our emotions get in the way. Our options seem few when in fact there may be options not yet even considered. It is hard to think of the future in the midst of great pain. We need to be encouraged that "with God's help we will get through this."

Encouragement is life giving and free! It is absorbed by our inner being. It is like a source of oxygen or CPR, but sometimes we lack the strength to encourage ourselves. Loss of hope truly can be detrimental to our recovery and our future. Sometimes simply knowing that others care is life-giving fuel.

Scripture reminds us to encourage one another. There is such power in encouragement. None of us know what the New Year holds but I know for certain that a resolution to be an "Encourager" won't be wasted. It is time to start practicing. We can all benefit from the daily gift of encouragement. It doesn't have to only come in the midst of dire circumstances. Come on! Somebody is counting on you!