

Encouragement

Encouragement means the act of instilling courage in another person. Courage means doing what's right even when we're afraid. To encourage someone, then, means to help them overcome their fear so they can achieve what is good and right. That's what we do for a living. We encourage.

In this next to last chapter, Dale is telling us that to encourage people we need to make their mistakes seem easy to correct, or their missing skills seem easy to attain. The way we do that is two-fold:

First, we convince them that they are fully capable of doing what they need to do. We praise them for every small success they have as they learn. Why? Because, if we emphasize their mistakes as they learn, then we take away their hope. Instead, we want to *minimize* their errors so that they learn the process of victory instead of the agony of defeat. If you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right. It all begins in your mind.

The second thing we do is show them how to take baby steps, how to break down the whole into manageable parts. If someone thinks they have to learn something new all at once, then they won't even begin the process of learning. They need to ease into it. Although we need to risk failure to succeed, we don't need to risk massive failure. We want manageable failure: we want to be able to make small adjustments to put us back on the path to success. A weight lifter works up to the big weight. He doesn't do it all at once. That's what we want to teach people to do. We want them to work on each thing they need in a small way until they are ready to commit to more - more reps, more weight, more reps, more weight.

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Little changes, little successes that we enjoy each day will gather momentum until we have massive changes, and massive success. What we want are daily habits, daily improvements, and daily successes. These are the building blocks of a new mind, a new attitude, and a new life.

When we encourage people, we take time to recognize their efforts, no matter how small. We amplify their successes, no matter how limited. We refuse to see what's missing or flawed. We intentionally identify any growth, and any improvement at all. We do that so the other person can recognize the value of the things we see. When they do, they are encouraged to continue to improve in those areas.

Leadership principle: *God designed leadership to make us more holy than happy... God uses our self-directed desires to move us to a place where He can teach us the hard lesson of serving others. For leadership, like marriage, is a school of character.*

Kevin A. Miller