

# For Real

## Small Group Notes for “Big Hearted” 1 Thess 2:17-3:13

### Discovering Together

How do you react when people encourage you?

### Learning Together

1. How can we justify a desire for rewards for our work in light of God's free gift of salvation and our love for him?
2. What does Christ reward? What doesn't he reward?
3. Why should showing accountability to our Master bring us pleasure? How does it motivate us?
4. Why is Timothy's role to be a strengthener and encourager so important? In what ways is this role a sensitive one?
5. How did it help Timothy to be sent on this assignment? How does delegating ministry help the overall enterprise of the Kingdom?
6. In what ways does persecution discourage Christians from active, open service? In what ways does it mature them? In what ways does it reveal our underlying motives?
7. Why do you think God allows the tempter the ability to tempt us? Why hasn't he done away with Satan already?

### Worshiping Together

Pray for those who are persecuted for their Christian faith especially in the Middle East. You could get the latest news from Open Doors: [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org) Pray that each of your group that they might be encouragers.

### Serving Together

Take a look at my blog item on micro-affirmation (also on the second page of these notes):

<http://behindthewillowtrees.org.uk/leadership/what-are-micro-affirmations/>

How can you become encouragers?

## What Are Micro-Affirmations?

Micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening.

Micro-affirmations lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others – in providing comfort and support when others are in distress, when there has been a failure at the bench, or an idea that did not work out, or a public attack.

Micro-affirmations include the myriad details of fair, specific, timely, consistent and clear feedback that help a person build on strength and correct weakness.

I have come to believe that teaching and training about micro-affirmations may help an organization in several different ways:

1. Appropriately affirming the work of another person is likely both to help that person do well, and to help him or her to enjoy doing well.
2. Consistent, appropriate affirmation of others can spread from one person to another – potentially raising morale and productivity. It helps everyone, men and women, people of colour and Caucasians. It appears to be particularly helpful for department heads, and anyone who is senior to another person, to "model" affirming behaviour.
3. It may be hard for a person to "catch" himself or herself unconsciously behaving inequitably. I may not always be able to "catch myself" behaving in a way that I do not wish to behave. But if I try always to affirm others in an appropriate and consistent way, I have a good chance of blocking behaviour of mine that I want to prevent. Many micro-inequities are not conscious – but affirming others can become a conscious as well as unconscious practice that prevents unconscious slights.

### Implications for Action

- Pay attention to "small things."
- The principles of appreciative inquiry are relevant to micro-affirmations: "leading" rather than "pushing;" building on strength and success, rather than first identifying faults and weakness.
- Small things are especially important with respect to feelings. It is relatively easy for most people to practice and teach how to affirm feelings. This is important because the "mechanics" of affirmation are not trivial in human affairs – attitudes may follow behaviour just as behaviour may follow attitudes.
- Whenever a question is brought to us about how to change offensive behaviour – our own behaviour or that of another – we can teach the principles of changing behaviour [through micro-affirmations], and explore options about how to do it.

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