

Coddling Christians

You often hear it: "So-and-so needs encouragement." A man is a drunkard and abuses his wife and children. He needs encouragement. A young person has become involved in illicit drugs and crime. He needs encouragement. Someone has thrown a childish fit and quit attending the assemblies. He needs encouragement. A member gets angry at something said in a sermon or class and becomes unfaithful to the Lord. He needs encouragement. Someone wants to "be needed" in the church. No one gives him a job to do, so he gets irritated and peevish. He needs encouragement.

Do not get me wrong. I believe that discouragement is one of the greatest problems we face as individuals and as congregations. Edifying one another is one of our most sacred privileges and responsibilities. But often people who are loafing expect others who are already overloaded and overworked to pet and coddle them in order to get them to do the elementary duties of a Christian.

Physical adults can be spiritual babies in need of milk instead of strong meat (Hebrews 5:12-13). What would you think if you saw a grown man sitting in his mother's lap cooing and twiddling his thumbs while she held the bottle for him? Ridiculous? Yes, indeed! But no more so than the spoiled Christian that must be catered to every moment to keep him faithful to Christ.

Yes, we all need encouragement: elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, the young, and the elderly. Everyone does. But you cannot be petted into heaven. The only way to enter that glorious place is by bearing one's own cross.

Adapted From Aubrey Belue