Scratching a cat or dogs ears can be cute and funny and an acceptable thing to do. If your actual ear itches scratching it can be a very practical thing to do. But the Bible warns of people having itching ears in the last days.

There’s something interesting about itches that I learned recently through reading some research. Just as yawning is contagious, so also itching is contagious, and not only that, scratching an itch can also be addictive. There is an actual science behind this conclusion.

We are living in times in which there is a growing dislike and sensitivity towards Biblical truth. This is true even in the church. In the name of “tolerance” and “love” there has been a growing intolerance and hatred for anyone who seeks to establish beliefs and practices based on the truth of God’s word.

In 1984 Christian musician Brent Lamb released a song with the lyric, “If you can’t find something good to say, say nothing at all.” Many co-opted that phrase and used it as a way to silence any one who disagreed. This practice of using soundbites or short quips is nothing new. It did not originate with our modern social media craze, but it has gained a lot of ground since social media.

It’s become one of those statements that has been treated like it is an actual Bible verse. Just because something might sound good and even move us in our feelings doesn’t make it equal to Biblical truth. The bible actually says in Ephesians 4:29,
This verse has been twisted by some. It has been twisted and used as a weapon to silence anyone that disagrees with, or offers Biblical advice contrary to, what someone wants to hear. Such practices are spiritually unhealthy.

Ephesians used the phrase, “Corrupt Word.” We should consider what a corrupt word is in the light of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. For instance: Should encouraging someone in a way that violates a truth in Scripture be considered a corrupt word? We should consider what Heaven would describe edification to look and sound like, and we should understand what is meant when it speaks of grace being imparted to the hearers. I do not think that verse is saying what many may wish it was saying. If it were many of the things Jesus spoke to His disciples would be considered a direct violation of this passage.
THE WORD “ENCOURAGE” IS USED 9 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND 7 OF THOSE 9 TIMES ARE FROM THE GREEK WORD PARAKALEO AND THE OTHER 2 TIMES INVOLVE THE GREEK WORDS EUTHEMOS AND EUPSUCHEO

Too often, however, encourage is only interpreted as that which offers an immediate agreement of enthusiastic support and hope of success.

This leads me to ask 4 important questions:
1. IS THIS THE ONLY WAY TO QUALIFY WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ENCOURAGED BY SOMEONE?
2. WHAT DOES KINGDOM OF GOD ENCOURAGEMENT REALLY LOOK LIKE?
3. ARE WE TRULY DESIRING THE KINGDOM OF GOD KIND OF ENCOURAGEMENT?
4. IF NOT, IS IT POSSIBLE WE ARE SUFFERING FROM AN ITCHING EAR PROBLEM?

4 Important Questions to Consider

To hope to be affirmed in an area of life and practice where Scripture clearly teaches an opposite view is the very definition of an itching ear condition.

Claiming that someone in the body of Christ who did not support our view but instead offered a Biblical alternative to consider was therefore not being an encourager can be dangerous and help establish an itching ear condition.
**THE GREEK WORD PARAKALEO OCCURS A TOTAL OF 27 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

| Romans 12:8, |
| 1Corinthians 14:31, 2 Corinthians 9:5, |
| Colossians 2:2, |
| 1Thessalonians 2:11, 3:2, 4:1, 5:14 |
| 2Thessalonians 3:12, |
| 1Timothy 2:1, 5:1, 6:2, 2Timothy 4:2, |
| Titus 1:9, 2:6, 2:15, |
| Hebrews 3:13, 10:25, |
| 1Peter 5:1, 5:12, |
| Jude 3 |

7 of those times the translators applied the word encouraged or encourage and 21 of those times the word exhort or exhortation was used.

The English word exhort is defined as strongly encouraging or urging (someone) to do something. The word is from Latin origins meaning to thoroughly encourage. This would imply giving a basis for urging someone to do something. This is what we find for instance in, **2Timothy 4:1-5**
I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort ~ (3870 parakaleo), with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2Timothy 4:1-5

Itching ears happen when we insist that encouragement can only be defined as primarily supporting us, as opposed to exhorting us, which means to be told what we need to hear and do as a disciple of Jesus.

In 1Kings 22 King Jehoshaphat visited Ahab at a time when there had been no war between them and Syria for three years. Ahab had a desire to retake the area of Ramoth-gilead as it was under the control of Syria at this time. He asked Jehoshaphat to go up with him against Syria to retake the region. Jehoshaphat was willing to join him in this endeavor but wished to hear from a prophet what the Lord might have to say about it. But all the prophets that stood before them thought they were many all were saying what Ahab wished to hear. So Jehoshaphat said, 1Kings 22:7 & 8
And Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?” So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”

Like many in our modern age, believer and unbeliever alike, here’s Ahab in this story accusing Micaiah of lacking any ability to encourage him because Ahab has defined encouragement as “support.” As hearing what he wants to hear, not what he needs to hear. By the way political correctness is not a new thing, it has always been around just look at what happened in this story, 1Kings 22:13 & 14
Men and women of God are committed to the truth. Micaiah did speak what he heard from the Lord and was put in prison for it. Ahab punished Micaiah for speaking a word that was truthful and accurate. Micaiah was punished as though he were an enemy to Ahab simply because he did not speak in support of Ahab's current desires and future plans. Micaiah warned Ahab accurately but suffered for it. Ahab was told he would not return alive. Later in the story we find that Ahab even traded garments with Jehoshaphat to avoid being detected by the enemy and was still hit with an arrow and died in his chariot just as Micaiah had said he would. Micaiah was not perceived as being an encourager because he spoke the truth, knowing that only the truth was what really mattered.

John the Baptist is another great example of one who spoke truth and paid a price for it. He repeatedly told Herod that it was unlawful that he had his brother Philip killed and had taken his brother Phillip's wife as his own. Herodias, Herod's unlawful wife, hated John the Baptist for speaking this truth and established a plan with her daughter on how to get rid of him. It worked. John the Baptist lost his head. Why? He spoke truth.

Sometimes it's not be enough for a person with itching ears to just avoid someone who speaks the truth. Sometimes they go about things in such a way as to punish the person speaking the truth to them. They act out as it were, or try to attempt to discredit the person who spoke the truth to start with. Trues disciples of Jesus want to hear Hims peak, and they desire the truth as Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.
6 SIGNS OF ITCHING EAR SYNDROME

1. Picking a spiritual leader on the basis of that leader agreeing with you as opposed to the leader being able to show you in the Scripture what truth you need to consider

2. Insisting someone should only say something good about you or say nothing at all with an intent that no correction or challenge can be spoken to you

3. Avoiding others while insisting they are not loving because they spoke truth that you did not like

4. Needing to always be told how wonderful you are to the point of seeking out situations where that will likely happen and avoiding any situation where it might not

5. Inability to be told you can be wrong or be mistaken about something and seeking out situations where it is perceived that will not happen

6. Surrounding yourself only with those who speak glowingly about you and calling those who don’t affirm you like you want to be affirmed “toxic”

There is only one cure for itching ears. Love the truth! Love it no matter what it speaks. Trust that truth is the best advice and counsel you could ever receive, even when it hurts to hear it. Truth deeply encourages us even when it is correcting us. In Christ, truth never condemns us. Truth may challenge us, or even convict us, but real heavenly encouragement will never come to us without it. This brings me to this conclusion,
Jesus is the truth!

So, what’s not to love about truth?