



This is another photo from the Aldridge Botanical Gardens, located in Birmingham, Alabama. Much of the gardens center around small areas of water (waterfalls, lily ponds and brooks); Which was a welcome relief from the heat and humidity of this day. As I stood in this spot trying to make the water look “milky” in my photos (I experimented with slow shutter speeds), I noticed all sorts of insects, birds and bugs hovering close by.

I observed how they interacted around the water; some, would dart in quickly for a drink and then back away. Others, seemed to get as close as possible by hanging onto the vegetation surrounding the pond. Some clung to the wet rocks and others simply were wading in the water. The one thing all these diverse creatures had in common was their love for the water. They wanted to be where the refreshment was found.

Are we any different than the creepy-crawlies? We too want to be where refreshment can be found. We all enjoy being around people who are friendly; we want to be where there is excitement, smiles and laughter. We may not be

able to afford to throw a party 24 hours a day; but we can offer the people who step into our lives a smile; a kind and encouraging word; or just a safe place to talk. Life is not always cake and ice cream, but it can always be a good place.

I think of the “Charlie Brown” character who always had the cloud around him, no matter where he went. We should be like that (except in a good way); everywhere we go there should be an atmosphere of refreshment; an environment of encouragement. All around us are people hanging onto the sticks of discouragement and the rocks of stress. The place we call home (cubical, office, kitchen, etc.) ought to be like an oasis in the desert; a refuge from trouble; a haven from the storms of life.

Something to think about:

- More people fail for lack of encouragement than for any other reason.
- Honesty has a beautiful and refreshing simplicity about it. No ulterior motives. No hidden meanings. An absence of hypocrisy, duplicity, political games, and verbal superficiality. As honesty and real integrity characterize our lives, there will be no need to manipulate others. - CHARLES R. SWINDOLL
- Encouragement is oxygen to the soul. - GEORGE M. ADAMS
- He climbs highest who helps another up. - ZIG ZIGLAR