

5/03/2020 “Encourage” Bible Studies for Life – Senior Adults

Who has encouraged you in your life?

Spouse	Teacher	Coach
Parents	Preacher	Boss
Grandparents	Friend	Sister, Brother

Today we look at a biblical character whose name actually means “Son of Encouragement.”
Today’s Point: Encouragement strengthens relationships.

Encouragement means the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope. We are created to live in a relationship with others. We can strengthen our relationships when we offer support and encouragement to others. Encouragement gives us a boost.

Barnabas was a natural encourager. His actual name was Joseph of Cyprus. His nickname was “Son of Encouragement” which means one who prophesies or preaches. Barnabas had a gift for proclaiming the gospel, building others up and encouraging others. He is also referred to as a “good man” who was full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was one of the prominent Christian disciples in Jerusalem. He was named an Apostle in Acts 14:14. During his ministry, a great number of people were brought to the Lord. When Barnabas first appears in Acts, he had sold a field and gave the profit to the church. He and Paul undertook missionary journeys together and defended converts against the Judaizers. His life challenges us to be a source of encouragement to others. Barnabas showed us 3 ways we can encourage others: Encourage Acceptance, Encourage Growth, and Encourage Service.

Acts 9: 26 -28 ²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the LORD and that the LORD had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the LORD.

Who mistrusted Saul in Jerusalem? Disciples Why?
afraid of him didn’t believe he really was a disciple

Why was Saul’s acceptance by the apostles so important?
The church needed to examine Paul’s teachings.
Paul’s faith needed to be securely anchored in the truths entrusted to the church.
They needed to see his works.

What difference did Barnabas make to Saul personally and to the fellowship in general?

- Barnabas assured the local believers
- he related Saul's conversion experience
- he testified to his courageous preaching in Damascus
- as a result, Saul was openly received
- he had many opportunities to preach and did so boldly

What did Barnabas risk in standing up for Saul?

- his own safety
- the safety and lives of the apostles and other believers in Jerusalem
- the continued growth of the church

What risks do you take when you put yourself on the line for others?

- time and energy
- failure if it doesn't work out
- embarrassment if things don't work out right
- we might make the wrong choice and waste our effort
- missionaries often risk his/her life

What would be the benefits of investing in Saul if he turned out to be genuine?

- he could help them grow
- would be a reversal for those who opposed the growth of the church
- would bring Saul into a new and expanded role of ministry
- would be an infusion of dynamic leadership into the church

Saul spoke boldly. He had confidence in the mission God had given him. Speaking for God is worth the rejection we may receive. Because of the confidence Barnabas had in Saul, the Jerusalem church accepted and supported Saul/Paul. He set an example of courage to share about God to the hostile people.

How could a person like Barnabas help heal wounds in a church group?

- see the good in people
- be willing to befriend them
- be ready to bring people together
- promote forgiveness and understanding

Next, we will see how important it is to encourage spiritual growth.

Acts 11:21-24 ²¹The LORD's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the LORD. ²²News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the LORD with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the LORD.

Barnabas was commissioned by the apostles in Jerusalem to travel 300 miles north to Antioch, a city that was a melting pot of people and cultures. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. The city contained a large Jewish population. Many of the believers in Antioch had begun to spread the message of Christianity. As the apostles heard of the growing Christianity, they wanted Barnabas to see what was happening and to report back to them. Many of the believers were Gentiles. The people were believing in Jesus and turning to Him for discipleship. Barnabas encouraged the believers to remain true to the Lord. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

What was taking place in Antioch that caught the attention of the church in Jerusalem?

- the power of God was at work in the Antioch church
- many people had come to faith in Christ
- the church was growing

How is Barnabas described in these verses?

encourager	a “good man”
“full of the Holy Spirit”	a man of faith

What was his assessment of what he saw?

- he saw the grace of God
- he was glad and encouraged
- he encouraged them to remain true to God with all their hearts
- large numbers of people were added to the Lord

Why is someone like Barnabas a real asset to a church?

- we need encouragers
- it is important that new believers be mentored
- they need to be encouraged in the right things they are doing/believing
- they need to be guided away from misunderstandings, false concepts
- they may need instruction in how to live out their new found faith,
- they need advice on how God wants their lives to change

What encouragement might Barnabas have to say to **us** during this pandemic?

- God is in charge!
- God is all powerful, all wise, all loving.
- More people are showing kindness and reaching out to others.
- God will use this pandemic to bring more people to a saving knowledge of Christ.
- We can all learn new ways to trust God’s faithfulness and sufficiency.
- Jesus will return. We need to be ready.

How can we encourage growth?

- follow God's Word
- look for the good things that are happening
- share God's Word with others
- share your faith in God
- share our website with family and friends
- look for ways to reach out to others
- read God's Word and pray!

Next, we will learn from Barnabas how encouragers cultivate others to serve.

Acts 11:25-26 ²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. Saul had gone there several years before seeking protection because the Jews wanted to kill him. Saul's faithfulness while in Tarsus prepared him for the service he was going to do in Antioch. Barnabas recognized that Saul's gifts were what the Christians in Antioch needed. Barnabas and Saul spent a year discipling new believers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

What kinds of things may have made it hard for Barnabas to find Saul and bring him back to Tarsus?

- he had to travel a long distance to Tarsus
- had been some years since they were together
- would not have known exactly where to find him in a sizable city
- no cell phones, no GPS, no Facebook
- may have had to do some persuading to get him to leave and come to Antioch

It had been about 10 years since their acquaintance in Jerusalem. Why do you think Barnabas made such an effort to find Saul?

- needed help due to the growth of the church
- knew that Saul was a dynamic speaker/teacher
- this would get Saul involved in a church growth situation
- Barnabas' goal was church growth
- may have been thinking ahead to opportunities for future ministries together

What is our responsibility toward someone who is not attending church?

- check to see if they are sick, discouraged, angry, out of fellowship
- maybe they found a new place to worship, minister, serve the Lord
- easier for us today than it would have been for Barnabas to find Saul in a big city

How can we encourage others to use their spiritual gifts?

- invite them to participate – choir, Bible study groups, attend Sunday School, help with children and youth,
- give increasing responsibility
- provide training, mentoring
- get involved in church programs
- strong prayer support
- financially support the church's ministries
- pray against negative influences

Be encouraged to follow Barnabas' example.

Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Application

Express thanks.

- Express thanks to someone who has been an encouragement to you.
- Be specific regarding how their words or actions helped you.

Evaluate your life.

- Consider whether people are encouraged by your example or actions.
- Consider what you might need to change to be an encourager like Barnabas.

Encourage each other.

- Share ways each person can live out one or more of the character traits in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

