

ENCOURAGED BY SHARING

Acts 4:32-37

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WATCH/LISTEN: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/encourages-encouraging-others-through-sharing/

When was the last time you felt really encouraged by another person? How did that feel? Perhaps you felt like a wilted flower receiving water. When is the last time you specifically encouraged another? How did it make you feel to be on the giving end, when you saw their eyes light up?

As we explore encouragement for the next few Sundays, we'll spend time with a New Testament believer named Barnabas. His name wasn't actually Barnabas. It was Joseph. Barnabas was his nickname. That fit his personality and his behavior. It meant son of comfort, encouragement, consolation. What if your friends gave you a nickname to fit your gifts and personality? What if people called you as they see you? "Hi there, complainer!" Or, "Hey, selfish, how's it going? How're you, Mrs. Negativity? What's up, gossiper?"

The very first time we meet Barnabas he is selling his land and giving the money to the new, baby church, just after Jesus' resurrection. We don't know if his land was a small funeral plot or an entire farm. We do know that they're not making any more real estate, so it had some value. Now think about what an encouragement this was to the early church. Believers would eventually lose their jobs, be forced out of their homes and live on the run. How would they survive? Financial resources would become critical to survival. He encouraged others through his generosity.

There was once a widower who was very lonely and would often eat by himself at a restaurant. He would sit and feel sorry for himself, looking at the check, costing just half what it would have if his wife were alive. But then one day he saw a couple dining not far from him. They seemed dejected and tired, eating in silence. He told the waiter he wanted to quietly pay their check. And then he slipped out, unnoticed. Then he repeated this several times a month. On the way home he would pray for whomever he had helped, making an investment through the encouragement of caring ["The Manna Connection," August 28, 2019].

Our words and deeds of encouragement create the world we inhabit. The same for our words and deeds of discouragement. This is the environment we all have to live in. If we curse, oppress, complain, judge, we all have to breathe that air. If we share, love, encourage, bless, we all breathe that as well. Barnabas helped create the climate for the early church. He shows us that we have to be intentional about relationships. The early church lived off the energy of Barnabas' encouragement.

The real-life applications are endless. In our homes, the power to bless our children. The entire atmosphere in a home can be changed by words and deeds of encouragement. In our marriages. One Vermont farmer said to his wife, "You're such a good wife. There are times I can

hardly keep from telling you that.” If you supervise others in the workplace, here is a tip that will increase productivity without costing you a penny: Encourage! Say words of encouragement.

And with fellow-believers, friends, neighbors, family and strangers. This is why the early believers heard this word in Hebrews 10:24-25: “Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”

Would you say this prayer with me this morning? “Lord, thank you for those who encourage me. Lord, help me to leave a trail of encouragement everywhere I go. Amen.”