

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 31 JANUARY 2016



## Raising Up Encouragers

*James Faris*

Some people in the church seem to have the spiritual gift of discouragement. It's all that guy can do – discourage others. Truthfully, we are all “that guy” far too often. We find it far easier to complain and view circumstances negatively than positively.

So, when a person embodies encouragement, we notice. The apostles took note of a such a man named Joseph. They recognized that he was no ordinary Joe. They called him Barnabas instead, which translated means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

The church and her saints grew quickly when Barnabas encouraged people. We know from 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 that when it comes to growth, some plant, others water, but only God causes the growth. Encouragement serves as one form of watering.

Romans 12:8 teaches us that encouragement is one of the spiritual gifts. Not all have it in equal measure. Barnabas had an extra measure of encouragement in his spiritual DNA. Though some have the gift in a special way, Paul exhorted all believers to be about the work of encouraging others when he wrote: “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). All saints can grow in this area by observing those particularly gifted in encouragement.

What can we learn from Barnabas to encourage us to become more able encouragers? What characterizes the life of an encourager? Here are five characteristics of an encourager that we see in the life of Barnabas (tip: a character study of the man will reveal many more):

### **1. Encouragers Give Sacrificially.**

Acts 4:37 records that Barnabas sold a field and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet. We know little of his background, but this much is clear, he knew that Jesus had given his own life sacrificially to save him. Out of a grateful heart he wanted to follow in Jesus' footsteps and give of himself for the glory of God and because he loved people. To be an encourager is costly to self. It may not involve giving monetarily, strictly speaking. It may mean giving of your gasoline, giving of your time, or giving of your energy. But you will always have to give of yourself to encourage others.

### **2. Encouragers Draw Others into Ministry.**

Barnabas saw that Paul was distrusted by the believers in Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:26-28). He embraced Paul because he knew Jesus had embraced him first. Later, after Paul's time in the wilderness, Barnabas was once again the man to draw Paul back into ministry (Acts 11:25-26). He also drew his cousin, John Mark, into ministry (Acts 12:25). We can surmise that there were many others he influenced in the same way. Do you pull others in alongside you in your areas of ministry? Encouragers do.

### **3. Encouragers See the Grace of God.**

Barnabas went to the new church in Antioch. No doubt, there were many people who weren't fully sanctified there yet. Perhaps they were having trouble finding places to meet or struggled to find childcare solutions during Bible studies, faced financial challenges, sin in the lives of believers, imperfect theology, and squabbles between people. Yet, when Barnabas walked in, Acts 11:23 says he: “saw the grace of God” and he was glad. Is the grace of God the first thing you see each day in the life of your spouse, your children, or others in your church? Do you rejoice in it? Do others know you rejoice in it? Or do you manage to see and comment on whatever is wrong in a given situation or person? It takes people, like Barnabas, who are full of the Holy Spirit and of faith (Acts 11:24) to see first and foremost what God is doing.

Then they are able to encourage others to continue in the faith (Acts 14:22).

#### **4. Encouragers Tell Stories.**

They tell stories of grace just as Barnabas is recorded as doing in Acts 14:27, 15:3, and 15:12. Have you ever noticed how a child's eyes light up when you tell others a story about that child's accomplishments? They are encouraged to know you thought so much of the way they hit the ball or played the piano. When we rehearse accounts of the grace of God, the recipients of that particular expression of grace are encouraged, as well as all of God's people who hear it. Have you told a story of the grace of God to someone else today? People love stories. We ought to be a

people with a thousand stories to tell – stories of grace exhibited in our lives and in the lives of others. Most of all, we must be ready to tell the story of salvation found in God's word.



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*Source: [gentlereformation.com/2016/01/13/raising-up-encouragers](http://gentlereformation.com/2016/01/13/raising-up-encouragers)*

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