

Mid-Week Bible Study: RELATIONSLIPS

Week 2: encourage

Text: Acts 9:26-28; 11:21-26

Introduction:

Q: When you have you crossed paths with a natural Encourager?

We were created to live in relationship with others, and we hunger for the affirmation of others. One of the things that we need a healthy supply of is encouragement from others. Just ask any athlete about the benefit they gain when they have the “home field advantage.” The Encouragement from their hometown fans, makes a difference. Unfortunately, too many of us face a deficiency in this area. Our lives and our relationships can grow weak without encouragement.

Setting: Prior to the Apostle Paul meeting Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul the apostle was Saul the Pharisee and persecutor of the church. Initially after his conversion, not many Christians believed his conversion was genuine due to his past. However, Barnabas who was a natural encourager, actions toward Paul/Saul was different. His life challenges us to be a source of encouragement to others. We support the other person and strengthen our relationship when we look for ways to offer encouragement.

**Point: Encouragement
strengthens relationships**

Acts 9:26-28

Q: When have you felt like the new kid on the block?

Verse 26: Barnabas actions toward Saul during his visit to Jerusalem demonstrate how encouragement can make a major difference in a persons’ life.

We all have a past. Paul’s was not the kind of person a Christian would want to be around. At the beginning of Chapter 9, Paul had not been converted.

1. He was a persecutor of the church
2. He was granted authority to lock of Christians

3. He was known to physically threaten Christians.

Verse 26: The Bible says 9:19-25, that Paul had narrowly escaped death in Damascus for because he was preaching the gospel of Jesus, and sought refuge among believers in Jerusalem, which he did not find.

- The text says that there were **“afraid of him”**
- when he arrived in Jerusalem and attempted to build relationships with other Christians, they were hesitant. While Saul knew he had been converted and was not the same man, he was still judged by his past.
 - We must be careful to not hold people, especially new converts to their past. For we all have a past.
 - ***Read Romans 3:23***

Verse 27: The verse begins with the word “But” which is a conjunction. A conjunction negates everything prior to the word. Barnabas arrival in the story changed everything for Saul.

Barnabas actual name was Joseph of Cyprus (Acts 4:36). But his nickname was Barnabas, which means ***“son of encouragement”***.

- Barnabas had a gift for building others up.
 - He built up groups of new Christians through his ministries of preaching and teaching.
 - Barnabas also built up individuals through his gift of personal encouragement.

Q: *What risks do you take when you endorse an outsider?*

- Barnabas took a risk of losing friendships with the other believers because he vouched for Saul. So why does he do it?
 - Similar backgrounds: Both Saul and Barnabas were Hellenists. Hellenistic Jews = followers of Yahweh but grew up/lived in a Greek culture
- Barnabas’s willingness to speak out on Saul’s behalf was the key to Saul’s acceptance into the Jerusalem fellowship and his endorsement as a minister of the gospel.

Verse 28: here the text starts with the phrase “stayed with them and moved about freely.”

- This phrase was also used in Acts 1:21 to describe Jesus' movement. Which means to live among them.
 - Saul now has the freedom to be among them about Barnabas took a risk and formed a new friendship and vouched for him.
 - **Being an encourager often takes courage.**

Because Barnabas took a risk the text then says that Saul began to **speak boldly.**

- The word boldly: was used by the Greeks to describe the freedom of a citizen to speak in a public assembly.
- Saul went from being ostracized to feeling free enough to speak up and speak out about his faith in Jesus.

ACTS 11:21-24

Verse 21: Here Luke States that the Lord's hand was with them. This is an expression used to describe God's power moving among them.

- This is a reminder that our success in ministry is not due to our own ability, but God at work in us
- The people were being converted/turned and transformed.
 - A real turning to God only happens not just when we process Christ as lord and savior. But it's when we change our behavior and actions to allow him to be lord of our life.
 - As Lord, Jesus commands us to turn away from sin and towards him.
 - As this happens its critical for mature believers to encourage new believers that we see the change in them.

Verse 22: When the news of the Antioch's church's conversion reached the leaders in Jerusalem, they wanted to know more.

The early church struggled with the relationship of Judaism to Christianity.

- A group of circumcised believers within the Jerusalem church, the questioned Peter's actions of associating and eating with Gentiles (11:2-3).
- Peter explained that God had given him a vision and commanded him to go to Cornelius's house (v.4-14).

- Furthermore, the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Gentile believers just as the Spirit had been poured out on Jewish believers (v. 15-17).
 - Some people don't know how to be happy for others. They always want skeptical of ones change verse encouraging them.
 - And we wonder why some family members won't accept our Jesus.
- Barnabas was selected to travel to Antioch to investigate for several reasons:
 - Barnabas was a Hellenist
 - The church had full confidence in his character.
 - They knew that Barnabas would deal with new believers with understanding.
 - It's a shame that you have to at time weed out which believers should interact with new believers. Not everyone has the gift of encouragement. Some will run them away as quick as they came.

Verse 23: the text says that Barnabas was glad when he saw the God as work in the Antioch church.

- Encouragers are able to celebrate good things in the lives of others.
- Encouragers are not jealous of what are accomplishing.
- Encouragers are threatened when others do well without their direct leadership.

Barnabas was he direct opposite of the Prodigal son (elder Brother).

- **Read Luke 15:25-30.**

Verse 24: lists and celebrates qualities of Barnabas's life that made him such an effective encourager in Antioch.

- Barnabas was a good man a description Luke gave to only one other person,
- Joseph of Arimathea (23:50).
- He was full of the Holy Spirit.
- Barnabas was also full of faith: He trusted God to accomplish His will. He also had confidence in others, the genuineness of their conversion, and their giftedness for ministry.

ACTS 11:25-26

The church of Jesus Christ should be the most encouraging place on earth. Homes committed to Christ should be greenhouses of growth for young children coming up in them. Good words encourage growth. And they should encourage others to step up and serve.

Q: What are some things that might get in the way of people using their spiritual gifts in the church?"

Verse 25: Barnabas's actions in seeking out Saul demonstrate how believers can encourage others by involving them in ministry service. Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul.

- *Barnabas recognized that Saul's gifts were a perfect match for the needs of the Antioch church.*
 - He was a Hellenist and, as such, understood the ways of the Jews in Antioch.
 - Saul knew the region around Antioch better than any of the Jerusalem apostles. He had gained valuable experience in preaching to unbelievers and could be effective in the Antioch church's evangelistic efforts.
 - *Saul's faithfulness to Christ while in Tarsus prepared him for the next chapter of his service to Christ in Antioch.*
- Barnabas took a chance and empowered a newby and gave him a shot to grow in his faith and development.
 - In our relationships we have to let people try and fail, so they can spread the wings.

Q: What are some ways that we can encourage others to serve in our church.

Verse 26: Barnabas's encouragement produced very practical results.

- The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.