

Digging Deeper
DEVOTIONAL



Son of Encouragement

(Part 2)

Kittiwake Baptist Church

<http://www.kittiwake.org/devotionals/>

(Week 27)

Day 1

Son of Encouragement

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When 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. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-24)

We need more encouragers in the Church like Barnabas. Barnabas knew how to meet a need in Jesus' name. He also knew how to include the excluded. As we look to Barnabas' example, the third profile of an encourager is they are

A Builder of Bridges

After Stephen was stoned many of the believers escaped the city and dispersed throughout the area due to persecution. As they dispersed they took the gospel with them, but at first they only took it to the Jews. Some Greeks, who were believers in Jerusalem, also fled and shared the gospel with other Greeks. This created conflict because some Jews thought that Jesus came only for the Jews. So the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to get to the bottom of what was happening in Antioch. When Barnabas arrived he saw what the Lord was doing there and he encouraged the believers and sent back a good report to Jerusalem.

Barnabas built a bridge between the Greek believers in Antioch and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Is there a situation in your church, work or family where you can be a bridge builder to bring two people together who have been separated by circumstances, attitudes and sin?

Day 2

Son of Encouragement

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19-23)

So often in the Church today there is tension between the younger generation and the older generation, those who want a contemporary service and those who want a traditional service, different factions or families in the church, how people dress and so on. If we are going to be a Congregation that bridges the Generations or any other issue in the church, we need some bridge builders.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

We have enough selfish, easily offended, pessimistic people in the Church. We need some bridge builders who can bring people together in Christ.

Are you a bridge builder? Pray about being a bridge builder and ask God to show you how you can start building bridges.

Day 3

Son of Encouragement

25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and 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. (Acts 11:25-26)

A Developer of Disciples

Saul (later known as Paul) was still new to the faith, but Barnabas could see the gifts that God had given Saul. So Barnabas took Saul alongside him and for a year they taught people and encouraged the church in Antioch. Barnabas provided the example that helped Saul develop into a great missionary.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Tim 2:2)

In 2 Timothy we can see that Paul has followed Barnabas's example and has come alongside Timothy to help him develop into a disciple. And more than that we see Paul now encouraging Timothy to make disciples of those in his sphere of influence. When we are faithful to God's plan and disciple those people he lays on our hearts, our influence may last for generations to come.

When you encourage someone else it could spur them on to greater things. Is there someone that God has put in your life that you can disciple? If not ask God to bring someone into your life. If you are a new Christian ask God to send someone to disciple you.

Day 4

Son of Encouragement

36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. (Acts 15:36-40)

A Friend to the Failure

In Acts we see that Paul and Barnabas are about to take another missionary journey to visit the churches that had started as a result of their first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but Paul didn't want to because Mark had deserted them half way through the first journey. Barnabas saw the potential in Mark and wanted to give him another chance. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted ways and Paul chose Silas to go on the journey with him.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Col 3:12-14)

Is there someone in your life who you consider a failure? Maybe all that they need is a friend who sees what God can do in their life.

Day 5

Son of Encouragement

Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (2 Tim 4:11)

While we don't know exactly what took place with Mark after he and Barnabas parted ways with Paul, we get a clue in 2 Timothy. It's later in Paul's life and he has been imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Here he says that Mark "is helpful to me". The same Paul who didn't want to invest in Mark now says I need him because he is helpful to me. What was the difference? Barnabas.

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. (Isa 1:17)

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. (James 4:17)

Barnabas stood firm on what he believed. Just because he was an encourager didn't mean that he would compromise his principles. Instead we see that Barnabas stood up for those that were considered a failure by others. Barnabas knew what the right thing was and he didn't compromise his principles in spite of opposition. If Barnabas hadn't reached out to Mark and given him a second chance there is a good possibility that he never would have developed into the person that Paul needed.

If you think that you are a failure, all you may need is a Barnabas. Ask God to bring a Barnabas into your life and keep your eyes peeled for who God brings into your life.

Son of Encouragement

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

If your church gave you a name to describe you, would you be a son or daughter of encouragement? Barnabas impacted the early church in a mighty way by meeting needs in Jesus' name, including the excluded, building bridges, developing disciples and being a friend to the failure. What can you do today to be like Barnabas?

Has God shown you a need that needs meeting? Ask God to help you be willing to meet this need.

Is there someone in your church, family, or work who is an outcast? Reach out to them with the love of Christ.

Can you be a bridge builder in your church? Look for ways to build bridges between people.

Are you discipling anyone? Ask God to bring someone into your life.

Is there a brother or sister in Christ who everyone else has given up on? Someone who has committed a sin and everyone else has written off? Someone who has gotten bogged down by life and dropped out of church? Seek to encourage these believers and let them know that God is not done with them yet.