A Ministry of Encouragement"

(A Character Study of the life of Barnabas in Acts)

ACTS 4:36-37, 9:26-27, 11:22-30, 15:3

9-13-2026



*** God wants all of us to have a ministry of encouragem**

What is a practical ministry of encouragement?

Notice the five-fold description of encouragement as seen by the example of Barnabas.

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IS _____ (Acts 4:36-37)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I'm willing to help!")

II. ENCOURAGEMENT IS _____ (Acts 9:26-27)
(A minister of encouragement says, "Let's work this out!")

III. ENCOURAGEMENT IS _____ (Acts 11:22-24)
(A minister of encouragement says, "Stick to it!")

IV. ENCOURAGEMENT IS _____ (Acts 11:25-30, 13:2)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I'll join you!")

V. ENCOURAGEMENT IS _____ (Acts 15:36-40)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I know you can do it!")

A Ministry of Encouragement"

(A Character Study of the life of Barnabas in Acts)

ACTS 4:36-37, 9:26-27, 11:22-30, 15:3

9-13-2026



*** God wants all of us to have <u>a ministry of encouragem</u>**

What is a practical ministry of encouragement?

Notice the five-fold description of encouragement as seen by the example of Barnabas.

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IS **MEETING NEEDS** (Acts 4:36-37)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I'm willing to help!")

II. ENCOURAGEMENT IS **BUILDING BRIDGES** (Acts 9:26-27)
(A minister of encouragement says, "Let's work this out!")

III. ENCOURAGEMENT IS **INSPIRING FAITHFULNESS** (Acts 11:22-24)
(A minister of encouragement says, "Stick to it!")

IV. ENCOURAGEMENT IS **TEAM WORK** (Acts 11:25-30, 13:2)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I'll join you!")

V. ENCOURAGEMENT IS **GIVING A SECOND CHANCE** (Acts 15:36-40)
(A minister of encouragement says, "I know you can do it!")

"A Ministry of Encouragement"

(A man like Barnabas)
ACTS 4:36-37, 9:26-27, 11:22-30, 15:36-40
9-13-2026

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort (encourage) one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25
And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: [25] Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting (parakaleo) one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Example of people who wrongly think that the only ones who can serve Christ are those who are "in the ministry." (that is, those whose "vocation" is full-time pastor, college professor, evangelist, etc.)

However, we must realize that all who are saved are in the ministry.

God has a ministry for you!

This ministry does not require:
--a doctor's degree in theology
--special talent (regardless of your age, education, personality, or feelings of inadequacy - you can effectively excel in this ministry)

All this ministry requires is: --Goodness (Godliness)
--Spirit control
--Eyes of faith (Acts 11:24)
--Patience (I'm not saying this ministry is easy. It will demand your time, loving concern, and selflessness. This ministry will also take lots of empathy, sensitivity, warmth, and initiative.)

Today, all of you can be in the ministry . . . With the ministry of <u>encouragement</u>.

PROPOSITION: God wants all of us to have <u>a ministry of encouragement</u>.

Barnabas' real name was Joseph, but the apostles noted the characteristic of encouragement about him, so they nicknamed him "Barnabas" (an Aramaic word), which means "son of encouragement."
"Encouragement" = - lit. "to call alongside." It refers to a comforter (EX: Holy Spirit) or one who is by your side to encourage and exhort you.

Barnabas was one who lived up to his name.

Prov. 12:25 - "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."

In a society filled with chaos, pressures from all angles, heartaches, loneliness, all of us need someone who cares. Not one of us is beyond the need of an occasional uplift. When the pressures are on, we all need someone who will serve as the relief valve (Robert Roster, The Ministry of Encouragement, "The Challenge," Colorado Springs)

"Encouragement is the inspiration that one man gives to another by his words, actions, spirit and hope." (Foster, P. 3)

What is a practical ministry of encouragement?

Notice the five-fold description of encouragement as seen by the example of Barnabas.

I. ENCOURAGEMENT IS MEETING NEEDS (Acts 4:36-37)

(A minister of encouragement says, "I'm willing to help!")

The church at Jerusalem was "backed to the wall" financially. Many were hungry, in desperate situations, etc. Yet the church members met the needs of each other in the church (4:32-35).

Barnabas helped meet the need:

1) Spontaneously - no one asked him to give
2) Sacrificially - he sold a whole farm!
3) Anonymously - when people received the money from the Apostles, they didn't know how much of it was given by Barnabas.

Giving (especially anonymous giving) results in thanksgiving going to God (II Cor. 9:12-14).

Barnabas' money preached a tremendous lesson.

He "put his checkbook where his mouth was."

We are to love "in deed and in truth," not word only.

"Don't be a leach with perishables." Your stewardship is a test of spirituality.

II. ENCOURAGEMENT IS <u>BUILDING BRIDGES</u> (Acts 9:26-27)

(A minister of encouragement says, <u>"Let's work this out!"</u>)

The conversion of Paul was too much to believe.

The believers thought: "This man who once destroyed the church, this one who breathed out murderous threats -- Paul saved? Are you kidding me? We don't believe it."

Paul tried to join the fellowship, but they locked the door. Then Barnabas came, befriended Paul, stuck his neck out for him, stood by the one in suspicion; became Paul's defense attorney and recommended that the brethren accept him.

We need to make people feel wanted and needed.

It's easy to tear down relationships.
It takes work to build them.

Barnabas was a peacemaker. He gave his life to building relationships. He tied (united) the brethren together.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" is another way of saying, "Blessed are the bridge builders."

Many Christians, sad to say, spend their life looking for faulty bridges.

They spend their life in skepticism of other believers. Especially in NYC (after we have had so many profess Christ, get our hopes up, and then later are proven to have been insincere hypocrites who disguised their inner false motives while hiding under a clock of what appeared to be spirituality), we must not stand in doubt of each other's salvation or hold each other off at arms length and view as guilty until proven innocent.

Love believes the best in people! (I Cor. 13:7)

III. ENCOURAGEMENT IS <u>INSPIRING FAITHFULNESS</u> (Acts 11:22-24)

(A minister of encouragement says, <u>"Stick to it!"</u>)

Barnabas "exhorted" (lit. <u>encouraged</u> - the same word as what his name means).

"With purpose of heart" = with determination

"They would cleave" = remain close

Barnabas said, "Stay close to Jesus, brethren." "Remain true to our Lord."

A spiritual encourager never says, "Quit" "Give up" "You won't make it." "It's not worth it."

Rather, he inspires faithfulness.

Whenever someone has doubts as to which way to go, what to believe, etc., we need a Barnabas.

SEE Rom. 15:1-6.

IV. ENCOURAGEMENT IS TEAM WORK (Acts 11:25-30, 13:2)

(A minister of encouragement says, "I'll join you!")

READ Acts 11:25-30

ILLUS: of the need for companionship, friendship, someone to be a partner in serving Christ.

Sometimes people need something more than what you can offer - they simply need you!

Don't ever underestimate the encouragement of your presence.

(ILLUS: When someone does not come to a service, I really miss them; and if they miss many services, I become concerned about them)

To do any ministry alone is not as good as doing it with someone else.

In Acts 13:2, the first foreign missionary team is sent out.

EXAMPLE: the benefits of team ministry

1)doubled effectiveness
2) fellowship, prayer support, etc.
3)physical and spiritual sustenance
(when one is down, the other can lift up)

We can comfort (encourage) others because of the comfort God gives to us. SEE II Cor. 1:3-4. This is God's purpose for encouraging you.

"A three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecc. 4:12).

It takes humility to be a team player. In team sports, you are to play and win as a team. No one individual receives the glory, but it is shared.

In team work, you may be taken out of the "limelight." You may have to take a "back seat," and follow rather than lead.

In Acts 11:25-30 and 13:2ff, Barnabas is in charge (and therefore leads Paul to his homeland).

But it would not be long before Paul's "fervent spirit and fiery oratory" would move him into the place of leadership.

This is the supreme test to see if you are an encourager. Can you humbly let another, whom God directs, lead you?

Today we have a lot of chiefs, but not too many Indians. Where are the Barnabases?

Where are those who will serve Christ without seeking self-glory? Where are the team members who are more concerned about victory for the team, the cause (i.e. for our Lord) rather than for their own recognition?

V. ENCOURAGEMENT IS GIVING A SECOND CHANCE (Acts 15:36-40)

(A minister of encouragement says, "I know you can do it!")

John Mark joined the team (Acts 12:25, 13:5)

John Mark quit the team (Acts 13:13)

(Reasons unknown - maybe ear; maybe resented Paul's taking the leadership over his cousin Barnabas; maybe he didn't like Paul going to the Gentiles?)

John Mark later had a change of heart and wanted to rejoin the team.

Both Paul and Barnabas could have offered good arguments to prove their point.

Paul was task-oriented, and wanted nothing to hinder the spreading of the Gospel.

Barnabas may have been more people -oriented at this time. And time eventually proved that Barnabas made the right choice.

"John Mark is an encouragement to everyone who has failed in his first attempts to serve God" (Wiersbe, p. 150).

He fell, but he got back up on his feet and became profitable for the ministry (II Tim. 4:11; cp. also Col. 4:10)

Remember, Barnabas never "gave up" on people - because he was a man of faith, he had full confidence in God's ability to change a person.

How encouraging it is to be trusted.
How discouraging it is for no one to believe that you can do it.

Would John Mark have made it if Barnabas had not encouraged him? I seriously doubt it.

After Paul rejected him, if it was not for Barnabas' confidence in him, he might have sunk and drowned in discouragement; and we would not have the Gospel of Mark!

I wonder how many Christians are sinking in despair; feeling all alone; useless, of no value . . . all because someone failed to follow the Spirit's prompting and be an encourager.

Sure, if no one encourages us, we still have God to do so. But why did God ordain a local church? Encouragement (Heb. 10:25 - "Exhorting [ ] one another")

How to be an encourager:

1. Be on the look out (take initiative) for some Christian who needs financial help, a helping hand, or a friend.
   When you see:
   --a need, meet it!
   --a division, mend it!
   --a baby Christian, build him!
   --someone serving, join him!
   --one who as an ex-failure, forgive him and trust God to use him!
   "We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" (Rom. 15:1)
   "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (which is love)" (Gal. 6:2).

2. Make it your goal to specifically encourage at least one person each day. By phone, card, letter, visit (offer words of appreciation, promises to pray).

3. Begin a letter-writing ministry. Brief cards and notes to encourage.

One thing about encouragement is this: It spreads; it's contagious. Your actions will cause a reaction. Your smile helps him/her to smile.
Barnabas was a man who unselfishly gave himself to others.
I'm sure he is one of the most fulfilled men in human history, because fulfillment comes from giving, not selfishly getting.

Since Barnabas did so much encouraging, the question needs to be asked, "Who encouraged the 'Son of Encouragement?' Who boosts the booster? Who helps the helper?"
The answer is in I Sam. 30:6 - with Israel's defeat by the Amalakites at Ziklag, and David's people murmuring against him and conspiring to stone him, the Bible says: "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (I Sam. 30:6).

A trusting relationship with God is the bottom line of our being able to encourage others. A lasting source of positive encouragement is not in us.

Keep remembering and claiming His promises.

Some say people are like corn . . . they'll survive if you must plant them and leave them alone. This is not true. People are not stalks of corn, but human beings with feelings. A better way to see them grow is with cultivation (Foster)

I trust that all of you will let God ordain you to the ministry today - to the ministry of encouragement.

INVITATION HYMN: "Make Me a Blessing."