

A little encouragement will go a long way!

Acts 15:36-39

INTRODUCTION

- Looking at John Ortberg's, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, There is an old story about a preacher leaving a church. At his farewell dinner, he tried to encourage one of the pillar members, "Don't be so sad. The next preacher might be better than me." She replied, "That's what they said last time, but it keeps getting worse."
- Now that was something encouraging to hear wasn't it?
- Life can be very challenging most of the time. As we live our lives, we need a lot of help along the way.
- We face challenges at every turn, and it is important for us to have people in our lives that will get behind us to tell us we can do it.
- What do people need when they are struggling? **Encouragement!** What do people need when they need to be challenged to do something that may seem out of their normal range of ability? **Encouragement!**
- To those that have children, when they make those first attempts at walking, what do you say? "Come on dummy, you should be walking by now, you are 4 months old! No, you try to encourage them."
- What does a person who is struggling with their faith need from other people? Do they need to have someone tell them they are worthless and are going to hell for messing up, do they need for us to just ignore them and hope they go away!
- William Arthur Ward said, "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I

will not forget you."

- What can change the life of another person? **Encouragement!**
- Our lives are full of people who have taken the time to encourage us along life's way, and today we are going to look at the concept of encouragement. I hope this message will inspire us to encourage one another as we try to grow in Christ.

I. WHAT IS ENCOURAGEMENT?

- When we say we are encouraging another person what does that really mean?
- Are we encouraging someone when we yell at them or tell them they are not going to amount to anything in life?
- Is being critical of everything being an encourager?
- When you are around other Christians who are struggling, be careful that you are not only pointing out what they are doing wrong, make sure you are encouraging them to stay in the game.

What does the word "encourage" mean?

1. To encourage means to "come along side of."

- If we are going to encourage others, we need to come along side of them and help them.
- The word can mean that we come along side of them to urge or admonish (or caution) them.
- The root for the word "encourage" comes from the same word Jesus uses when speaking of the Holy Spirit on John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7.
- An important part of encouraging another person is the willingness to step in and walk beside them. People will take better to being admonished if they know you

are in or willing to get into the trenches with them.

2. Barnabas was known as the son of encouragement.

- How would you like to be known as the son of encouragement!
- **Acts 4:36**
- Barnabas was a person who must have been an inspiring person to be around. I would imagine he was a good balance for the hard charging Paul.

II. HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE OTHERS?

If we are going to encourage people, how are we to do it so it will be most effective? We want our efforts in encouraging to count for something.

1. We get in the game with others.

- a. In **Acts 13** we see John Mark on the 1st missionary journey, but he turns back at Pamphylia. These missionary journeys were trips in which Paul would go to plant churches.
- b. Now in **Acts 15** it is time for the second missionary journey and Barnabas wants to take John Mark with them and Paul is going to have no part of it.
- c. In Paul's mind John Mark had his chance and failed.

Let's turn to **Acts 15:36-39**

- John Mark could have been ruined for service for God if it not for Barnabas being willing to take him along with him. Barnabas was willing to get into the game with John Mark.

2. We display a positive attitude.

- If we are going to encourage others, we **MUST** maintain a positive attitude. You can encourage someone while pushing them past what they think they can do, but

they have to see we have a positive attitude with them.

- Look for the best in people and extend grace to the worst.

3. We instill faith in others.

- We must encourage or inspire faith in others. My father instilled a faith in me, and he was a man I respected, so when he told me I could do something, I would start to believe I could do it.
- People will achieve great heights if they know people believe in them.

III. WHY DO WE ENCOURAGE OTHERS?

Why should we make it a priority to be a Barnabas, or an encourager? There are several reasons; here are **five** for you to ponder.

1. To keep the fainthearted from quitting.

- **Acts 11:22-23** and **Thessalonians 5:14**

2. To draw out potential in others.

We have many examples, but here are two quick ones.

a. Joshua (**Deuteronomy 1:37-39**)

- Joshua had been at Moses side for a long time, so Moses is telling the people it will be Joshua who will lead them into the Promised Land which Moses was banned by God from entering because of an incident involving Moses temper.
- Moses asks the people to encourage Joshua.

b. John Mark

- Remember John Mark, or as we more commonly know him, Mark, the writer of the second Gospel. Remember how Paul wanted nothing to do with him on the second missionary journey?

- Look at [2 Timothy 4:11](#) says: "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."
- Think of what could have happened to him if it not for Barnabas. He unlocked the potential within Mark!

How many people have we encouraged to go out into Christian service from this church? We need to start getting our young people excited about serving God in full-time Christian service.

3. To help people see God in the tough times. (James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28)

- When the tough times of life hit us, we need to be encouraged that God is still in the mix. We need to know that God has a plan. That is so difficult to see when we are in the midst of the struggles of life.
- There has been a verse that has been on my heart for many people lately. It is [Romans 8:28](#).

4. To strengthen others.

- We should always be trying to help make others have a stronger faith. We need to make sure we are investing ourselves in other people in order to help them.
- I am in ministry to help strengthen others. Paul when he was even in prison was trying to encourage others. [Philippians 1:14](#), "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."
- There is a great verse in [Proverbs 27:17](#), "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

5. To strengthen the church community.

- We gather together on the first day of the week in part to help build one

another up.

- We need each other and a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.
- We need to do all we can to strengthen the church family, the Christian community.
- [Hebrews 10:24-25](#) says, "We must also consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things. We should not stop gathering together with other believers, as some of you are doing. Instead, we must continue to encourage each other even more as we see the day of the Lord coming."
- Why do you think we need to encourage one another? We need to be a strong church that has an impact on the world around us!

Jean Nidetch, a 214 pound homemaker desperate to lose weight, went to the New York City Department of Health, where she was given a diet devised by Dr. Norman Jolliffe. Two months later, discouraged about the 50 plus pounds still to go, she invited six overweight friends home to share the diet and talk about how to stay on it. Today, 28 years later, one million members attend 250,000 Weight Watchers meetings in 24 countries every week the group she founded. Why was Nidetch able to help people take control of their lives? To answer that, she tells a story. When she was a teen-ager, she used to cross a park where she saw mothers gossiping while the toddlers sat on their swings, with no one to push them. "I'd give them a push," says Nidetch. "And you know what happens when you push a kid on a swing? Pretty soon he's pumping, doing it himself. That's what my role in life is--I'm there to give others a push." • We are here to help give one another a push when we need it!

CONCLUSION

- A little encouragement will go a long way! If you are not an encourager, if you are an "I knew it would not work", or an "I told you so" person, it is time to get on the encouragement band wagon.
- We are called to be a blessing to others, whose life are you blessing with encouragement?