**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | The Gift of Encouragement |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | Acts 4:34-37 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #1575 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Acts 4:34-37
      1. Barnabas was his nickname.
         1. “Surnamed” means that is what they called him.
      2. The word “consolation” literally means “encouragement.”
   2. Barnabas had the gift of encouragement.
      1. He had a way of encouraging people everywhere he went.
   3. Some people are encouragers, and some are discouragers.
      1. It has been said that discouragement is a dark room where the negatives of fear and failure are developed.
   4. The Bible tells us that God Himself is the God of all consolation.
      1. 2 Corinthians 1:3
      2. God is the God of all encouragement.
   5. All real encouragement comes from God.
      1. Therefore, all discouragement comes from the devil.
      2. We are never more like God then when we are encouraging people.
         1. We’re never more like the devil than when we are discouraging people.
   6. Discouragement is a terrible thing because it is the tool the devil uses to open the door to all other kinds of problems that come into our lives.
      1. We all get discouraged.
   7. 1 Thessalonians 5:14
      1. The word for “feeble minded” in this passage literally means “the discouraged,” “the faint-hearted.”
         1. It means a person who is small-souled, one who is discouraged.
   8. In today’s message, we will see five instances in the life of Barnabas where he encouraged someone.
      1. These instances show us five types of people whom we should seek to encourage.
2. find a needy person and enrich him (Acts 4:34-37)
   1. This was a time of great persecution for Christians in Acts 4.
      1. These early Christians had their goods confiscated.
      2. Many of them were hiding in secret places and in caves.
      3. They were afraid of the authorities.
      4. Many of them were put to death.
   2. Barnabas was a wealthy man and a landowner.
      1. Barnabas sold his land and took the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.
         1. He wanted the money to go to help those who needed to be helped.
         2. He saw that there were some who carried a heavy load, and he moved in to help bear their burden.
   3. If there is someone who is struggling financially and we have money that we could give to help them, then we should help them.
      1. It’s not what we keep in the barn that multiplies, but it’s what we sow that multiplies.
      2. Luke 6:38
   4. It has been said that stewardship is that area of life where men make money, and God makes men.
   5. Barnabas realized that God had not given him money just for his own enrichment.
      1. God had given it to him to encourage others with it.
      2. Barnabas took the resources that God had given him, and he used them to bless those in need and those who were hurting.
   6. Some people want to hold on to their wealth just in case they ever experience a financial reversal.
      1. One day when our lives are over, the only thing we will have left is what we gave away.
   7. We can give more than money.
      1. We can give love.
      2. We can give help.
         1. Perhaps we could help a neighbor with household chores.
      3. We can give time.
         1. Perhaps we could help tutor a child who is struggling in his school work.
      4. We can give wisdom.
         1. Perhaps a retired business person could help a young couple learn how to put together a budget.
   8. Barnabas loved to encourage people so much that he was called by his nickname, which means “an encourager”, “the son of consolation.”
3. find a lonely person and include him (acts 9:23-27)
   1. Acts 9:23-27
      1. In this passage, the Apostle Paul had recently been saved.
      2. The Christians did not trust him because he had been a persecutor of the church.
      3. He was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, but they did not trust him because he had professed Christianity.
      4. Saul (who later became the Apostle Paul) was a lonely man, and Barnabas took him in.
   2. Like Saul, new Christians may lose their former friends.
      1. We need to include new Christians and befriend them.
      2. It has been said that a friend is someone who comes in when everyone else has gone out.
   3. We need to be careful in our churches and Sunday school classes that we don’t become sacred societies for snubbing sinners.
      1. Invite newcomers to sit with you in church.
      2. Invite them to join your Bible study group and for fellowship after church.
   4. Studies show that a significant percentage of today’s population suffers from chronic loneliness.
   5. The Apostle Paul never forgot what Barnabas did for him.
      1. Romans 15:5-7
         1. God is a God of comfort, and we are to be that way with one another.
      2. Paul knew what it was to be received because he knew what it was to be rejected.
   6. A new believer in Christ does not need to be shut out.
      1. They need love and encouragement.
      2. They need contact with other believers in the family of God.
4. find a misunderstood person and affirm him (acts 11:20-24)
   1. Acts 11:20-24
      1. Barnabas found some people who were perhaps misunderstood, and he affirmed them.
      2. During this time, the Gospel was spreading, and revival had broken out in Antioch.
         1. But the center of Christianity at that time was Jerusalem, and that is where the apostles were.
      3. Barnabas was sent to investigate whether the revival in Antioch was real or not.
         1. They did not want to deny the work of the Holy Ghost.
         2. They did not want to attribute to Satan the work of the Holy Ghost, but they also did not want to attribute to the Holy Ghost the work of Satan.
         3. When he got there, Barnabas saw that the revival was real, and he affirmed the new believers.
   2. There are a lot of people who are misunderstood and who need our affirmation and encouragement, just as Barnabas encouraged these new believers in Antioch.
   3. Barnabas could have gone to Antioch and been a wet blanket.
      1. He could have told the new Christians, “You’re not doing things just exactly the way we think you ought.”
      2. Some people don’t want anything to happen that they can’t control or that they don’t understand.
         1. Any kind of growth threatens them.
      3. But Barnabas saw the grace of God on these people, and he affirmed them and blessed them.
   4. Instead of thinking why a thing can’t be done, an encourager thinks of why it can be done.
   5. We can encourage others who are starting something new or trying to accomplish something.
      1. We can encourage them by coming along side of them and believing in the grace of God that we see in them and through them.
5. find a potential and undeveloped person and disciple him (Acts 11:25-26)
   1. Acts 11:25-26
      1. Barnabas went to get Saul and brought him back to Antioch to teach the people.
         1. He didn’t stay in Antioch and lead the whole thing himself.
         2. He knew that his job was behind him, so he found Saul who had the gifts and abilities to teach the people.
            1. He saw that Saul (the same one who had fled from the wrath of his enemies) had hidden talent and buried abilities, and he began to work with and develop Saul.
            2. Barnabas didn’t put himself first.
   2. We have in our churches today a lot of Saul’s.
      1. We need to find them and develop them.
      2. Many of them are overlooked, and they need to be in service in our churches.
   3. People need to be encouraged.
   4. Barnabas never wrote a book in the Bible, but half of the New Testament was written by Paul, whom Barnabas encouraged.
      1. The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, whom Barnabas also encouraged.
   5. We may never be great leaders, but we can be great encouragers.
6. find a failing person and restore him (acts 15:36-39)
   1. Acts 15:36-39
      1. By this time, Paul had become the leader, and Barnabas was following Paul.
         1. It takes much grace to play second fiddle well, but Barnabas knew how to do it.
      2. Barnabas found John Mark, a failure and a quitter, and put his arm around him and invited him to work with him.
         1. Paul may have been logically right, but John Mark learned from Barnabas that failure is not final.
   2. We don’t know all that Barnabas did for John Mark, but we see evidence of his impact upon John Mark’s life.
      1. 2 Timothy 4:11
         1. Paul was in prison, and he said that he needed Mark (the same one whom he earlier wouldn’t have anything to do with).
   3. Galatians 6:1
      1. Perhaps Paul learned this lesson from Barnabas.
   4. We need to be a Barnabas to those who have quit going to church, failed in business, perhaps ruined their marriage, who are looked upon as a disgrace, and those who feel like failures.
7. CONCLUSION
   1. Acts 11:24
      1. This verse contains a character sketch of Barnabas.
      2. Barnabas was a good man because he was full of the Holy Ghost.
         1. It was God in him.
         2. God is the God of all consolation.
      3. Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost because he was a man of faith.
   2. Each of us can be a person of faith today.
      1. Trust God to fill you with the Holy Spirit and give you the gift of encouragement.
   3. In order to become a person of faith and be filled with the Holy Ghost, you must first receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.
   4. Do you know Jesus personally?
      1. Are you saved?
      2. If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   5. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16