

A Timely Word Spoken

Acts 4: 36-37 *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,*

37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Synopsis:

My prayer is that through this message God will inspire you to become an encourager.

Introduction:

There is an old story about a preacher leaving a church.

At his farewell dinner, he tried to encourage one of the founding members that looked very sad, "Don't be so sad.

The next preacher might be better than me."

She replied, "That's what they said before you came but it just keeps getting worse."

That wasn't a very encouraging thing to hear was it?

We all need encouragement.

This life that we live can be challenging at times and we all need encouragement.

We all need someone to lift us up don't we?

On June 18, 1956, a freak accident happened on a lake in New York.

A speeding motorboat bounced on a wave and shot into the water two of its passengers, a 50-year old man and a little girl.

To keep her from drowning, the man held her head above water while the boat circled back.



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They rescued the girl.

But the man drowned.

That's how Dawson Trotman died, the founder of the Navigators, an international discipleship ministry.

According to a quote in Time Magazine, "He lived to save others."

His death was just the way he would have planned it.

In his obituary someone wrote that he died just the way he lived, always lifting someone up.

What a legacy.

To be known as someone who always lifted others up.

Someone who was always encouraging others.

It has taken me many years to learn that one good word, one word of encouragement can inspire and physically help people.

There was a study done using children and the affects that encouragement has on them.

These psychologists hooked up all these wires and sensors to children and then they would either use encouraging words and gestures or discouraging words or gestures.

What the study showed was that when children were encouraged, their physical energy would increase.

When they used discouraging words and gestures, the energy level of the kids would drop immediately and dramatically.

While this study was done using children, I'm sure that they would get the same result in adults.

We all need some encouragement.



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We all like to receive encouragement, don't we?

When we receive encouragement, we feel that others care about us.

I titled this message, "A Word Timely Spoken."

I want us to look at one of the great encouragers in the bible this morning.

Acts 4:36 is the first time we hear of this man.

The church was young.

It had just gotten its start there in Jerusalem and all of the church was in one accord the scriptures tell us.

The apostles were preaching and teaching every day and more and more believed that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah and they were placing their faith in Him and what He had done on the cross for them.

They were excited and on fire for God.

There is one man though who was singled out for his generosity and encouragement of others.

Let's read our scripture again at this time.

Acts 4: 36-37 *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,*

37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

His name was Joseph but we don't know him by this name.

This is the last time that his proper name is used in scripture for him.

His nickname was Barnabas.

The apostles gave him a nickname.



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How many of you have had a nickname?

Some nicknames don't mean anything but Joseph, nicknamed Barnabas did.

Names had a meaning back in Jesus' day and it meant "Son of Encouragement" or encourager.

Barnabas' character as an encourager was so well known that they actually changed his name.

His nickname became his identity.

As you look through the New Testament you will find that everywhere he went, Barnabas was an encourager.

Look at **Acts 11: 22-24** *The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.*

23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,

24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

The church was expanding and starting to reach the gentiles. When the church in Jerusalem heard about this guess what they did, they sent an encourager.

They sent the encourager, Barnabas.

Everywhere Barnabas is present; you will find encouragement going on.

Even when the great apostle Paul was angry with John Mark and didn't want him to be part of his ministry team anymore Barnabas chose to stay and encourage John Mark.

Look at **Acts 15: 36-40** *And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."*

37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,

40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Paul didn't want John Mark with them because he saw him as a quitter.

One who wouldn't follow through on his commitments.

Barnabas saw a young man who needed encouragement.

Obviously, it worked.

This young man we call John Mark is the writer of the Gospel as recorded by Mark.

This episode happened around 50-52 AD and the Gospel of Mark was written somewhere around 64 AD according to most biblical scholars.

Something happened in those 12-14 years to bring John Mark from a young man that wasn't committed to one that wrote boldly about the life and purpose of Jesus Christ.

I don't know all that happened, but I do know that Barnabas had something to do with it by not abandoning him and encouraging and spending time with him.

As I study this character, I realize that all of us should want this nickname of Barnabas.

I encourage you this morning to be a Barnabas, an encourager.

The Greek word we translate encourage from is *parakaleo*.

This word in its original form means "to call to one's side, to comfort, to console, to strengthen.

When we encourage each other we walk beside them which means to share in their life by way of support and strengthening.

To do what we can to strengthen instead of tear down.

I want to take a few minutes this morning and look at just how we can become encouragers.

The first thing we must realize in order to be an encourager is that encouragement must be spoken.

It doesn't do any good just to think good thoughts about a person, we need to communicate with people in order to encourage them.

We need to learn to speak words that encourage each other.

Acts 13: 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it."

Paul and Barnabas had just arrived in Antioch and had gone to the synagogue on the Sabbath for worship.

What would happen at these services was the reading of part of what we call the Old Testament.

After they did that people would stand and speak.

It's amazing that they looked at Barnabas and Paul and said, Brothers if you have any word of encouragement come and give it.

They were looking for words of encouragement.

We all look for those words of encouragement.

Words that will build us up, words that will help us in times of despair and trouble.

Words that will help us stay the course when times get tough and words that affirm that what we are doing is the right thing.



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While we need to speak words of encouragement, it's easy to speak words of discouragement.

It's a typical problem with human nature.

It's easy to put someone down isn't it?

Scripture warns us about this repeatedly.

In *James 3: 2-6* For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.

4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

The words that we choose to use are so important.

We need to think and speak slowly.

Ann Landers once said, "The trouble with talking too fast is you may say something you haven't thought of yet."

Ephesians 4: 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.



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How many of you have heard of hoof and mouth disease that cattle get.

Sometimes we in our rush to speak and we get what I call the “Foot in Mouth disease.”

We must be careful not to allow our words to discourage.

Our society today has a new phenomenon that wasn’t present in Jesus’ day.

We have social networking.

We have twitter and facebook and other sites that someone like me who is technologically challenged can’t even begin to understand.

Let me encourage you to think carefully what you speak through writing in this medium.

Use this great technology to encourage and build people up, not to tear people down and discourage them.

While speaking with our voice is limited by those that hear us, this medium can place your words forever in the land of technology.

Encouragement must be spoken, fill your mouths and technology pages with words that comfort, uplift and inspire.

I’m sure that you have heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words”.

While that may be true in some cases, in the context of encouragement, they go hand in hand with each other.

We encourage people with our actions as well as our words.

Let’s look at another example of Barnabas to see encouragement in action.

Act’s 9: 26-27 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

Paul was still going by the name Saul at this time.

He had been saved on the road to Damascus and had answered God's call to preach and teach others about Jesus.

The trouble was that he was known as a persecutor of Christians.

Not a follower of Jesus.

The Christians in Jerusalem were afraid of him.

They thought maybe he was trying to deceive them or even trap them.

Barnabas took Paul to the Apostles and stood up for him.

He told them of Paul's conversion and how he personally had heard Paul preach the Gospel of Jesus.

Think what might have happened had Barnabas not took Paul by the hand and encouraged him to go see the apostles.

It would have been easy for Paul to say.

These people don't accept me.

Maybe I don't belong here.

Barnabas through his actions encouraged and strengthened Paul in his faith and his reputation.

Barnabas' actions matched his words didn't they?

Folks our actions need to match our words if we are to truly encourage people.

People need a warm and encouraging word sometimes.



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Occasionally I get a card from some of you here in the church.

I may be having a bad week or need a little encouragement. I will go to the mail box and a card will be there. No special occasion, just an encouragement.

While the words are comforting, I realize that it took an effort to do this action of encouragement.

Most of all, people need our prayers.

What an act of encouragement just to pray for someone.

Let them know that you are praying for them and then do it.

Folks, we encourage by our actions and our words.

I encourage you this day to be an encourager.

Lift each other up. Encourage your friends and neighbors every chance you get.

You never know how God uses our encouragements to bring people into a relationship with Him.



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