

Encourage As Did Barnabas

Text : Acts 4: 32-37 , 11: 19-26

INTRODUCTION :

A. What's your nickname ?

1. Customs vary, but in our culture nicknames are given for a variety of reasons.
 - a. Sometimes it just an abbreviation of one's name, e.g., Joseph is usually Joe.
 - b. Sometimes it refers to a physical characteristic, e.g., Red, Lefty, Stretch, etc.
 - c. My son best H.S. friend was called "Juicy" because of the character of his diapers.
2. We tend to prize nicknames that describe something about the person.
 - a. William Code was called "Buffalo Bill" because he hunted buffalo.
 - b. Andrew Jackson was called "Old Hickory" because of his toughness.
 - c. Walter Payton, the famous running back, was called "Sweetness" because of his ability to make big plays out of poor situations.
3. Names were changes in bible times because of significant events or attributes.
 - a. Abram was changed to Abraham in order to reflex God's plan for him.
(Abram = *Exalted Father*, Abraham = *Father of a multitude*)
 - b. Jesus called James and John "Boanerges", which means "Sons of Thunder."
 - c. Jesus changes Simon's name to "Peter" to indicate what he would become. "Rock"

B. With this lesson we will learn from the life of a man whose name was changed to reflect his character.

1. His name was Joseph which means "God will add." (*Birth names mean little.*)
2. Because of his character, Joseph was given the name "Bar-nabas."
 - a. It would have been pronounced as a compound word ... Bar-nabas.
 - b. Any name with the prefix "Bar" means "son of", e.g., "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona, ..." which means "Simon son of Jonah." Matt. 16: 17
 - c. Thus, Joseph was call the son of encouragement, of comfort, of exhortation, ...

C. Bar-nabas will be an excellent way to summarize our series on encouragement.

1. We've seen the need to keep ourselves encouraged.
2. We learned that we are required to keep each other encouraged.
3. We observed a few practical ways to encourage each other.
4. By studying Bar-nabas we'll see a practical example of an encourager in action.

I. The scriptures give little personal information about Joseph Bar-nabas.

A. **Acts 4: 36-37** Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Bar-nabas by the Apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

1. He was known and respected by the Apostles. (*They gave him an honored name.*)
2. He was a Hellenistic Jew.
 - a. A Levite meant he could trace his ancestry back to Aaron
 - b. He was born on the Island of Cyprus. (*Outsider, just in Jerusalem for Passover*)
3. He was a wealthy man.
 - a. He owned land. (*Probably not in Judea .. Levite*)
 - b. He could afford to live without the income from it.
4. He was a generous man.
 - a. He gave all the proceeds of the sale of his land to the poor. (cf – *Ananias .. chap 5*)
 - b. This was not a command, but it demonstrates his faith and commitment.

B. It's interesting that nothing is said about his professional credentials.

1. We don't know if he went to a rabbinical school.
2. We're not told about his life experience, if he had been a priest or a tradesman.

C. The scriptures focus on his spiritual information, on his character.

1. We are told that Joseph Bar-nabas was a Levite. (*That affected his world view.*)
 - a. The Levites belonged to God. **Num. 3: 40-41**
 - b. All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.
 - c. Levites received no inheritance in the land, but were paid a tithe to serve.

2. Joseph Bar-nabas was a good man.

Acts 11: 22-24 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

- a. Jesus said that no man is good (**Mark 10 17-22**), is Luke contradicting Him ?
- b. No ... Jesus also spoke of “good” men.

Matt. 12: 34-35 You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil.

- c. Bar-nabas was a man who did his best to practice personal holiness in his life.
- 3. Bar-nabas was “**filled with the Holy Spirit.**” (*overwhelmed by desire for spiritual ...*)

Note : There are many misconceptions about what “**filled with the Holy Spirit**” means.

- 1- Being “**filled with the Holy Spirit**” doesn’t mean one has more of the Spirit.
- 2- It doesn’t mean that one becomes robotically controlled by the Spirit.
- 3- One who is “**filled with the Holy Spirit**” allows the Spirit to influence him.
- 4- The scriptures refer to many people as being “**filled with the Holy Spirit**”, e.g.,
 - a. **Luke 1: 15** ... The angel foretold that John the baptizer would be.
 - b. **Luke 1: 41** ... When she saw Mary (Elizabeth) his mother was filled
 - c. **Luke 1: 67** ... After the birth of John the baptizer (Zacharias) his father was
- 5- Being filled with the spirit was one of the three qualifications for the first deacons :
Acts 6: 3 – ... **select from among you seven men of** ⁽¹⁾ **good reputation,**
⁽²⁾ **full of the Spirit** and ⁽³⁾ **of wisdom, ...**
- 6- Christians are commanded to be “**filled with the Holy Spirit.**” **Eph. 5: 18**
 - a. This command applies to all Christians.
 - b. It does not involve anything miraculous. The result of it is to speak in songs.
- 7- It’s an influence, a zeal for God that one permits to affect his actions.
 - a. The command is to “**Be filled**” ..., i.e., to allow it to happen, not to *fill yourself with.*
 - b. One who is “**filled with the Holy Spirit**” is allowing himself to function spiritually.

D. Bar-nabas’ personal life made his words credible and made him an encourager.

- 1. Lack of personal sanctification and holiness destroys one’s credibility.
- 2. When Bar-nabas encouraged others to be faithful, they could see it in his life.

II. Bar-nabas was an effective encourager because he genuinely cared for others.

A. Being a Levite would have prepared Bar-nabas for a life of service. (cf- I. B. 1.)

B. He had mastered one of the most difficult concepts in Christianity.

- 1. **Phil. 2: 3-4** **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**
4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 2. He sold his property and donated all the proceeds.
 - a. This was a completely voluntary act ... **from the heart.** Cf – **Acts 5: 1ff**

- b. Hellenistic widows were probably benefited, but there were no strings attached.
- c. He gave the money to the Apostles, but was not appointed to distribute it. **Acts 6**

C. He stood up and vouched for the Apostle Paul when he first came to Jerusalem.

1. **Acts 9: 26-28** When he (Paul) came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.
2. Bar-nabas had not been with Paul at Damascus. (*He trusted the reports.*)
 - a. Where others were afraid, Bar-nabas put himself at risk for Paul.
 - b. Imagine what would have happened to Bar-nabas if he had been wrong.
3. Imagine how the history of the church would have been if Paul had been rejected.

D. Bar-nabas also stood by his sister's son (Col 4: 10) when he was rejected by Paul.

1. **Acts 15: 36-41** After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸ But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰ But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (compare ... **II Tim. 4: 11** ... useful)
 - a. Some scholars think this is the Mark who wrote the Gospel According To Mark.
 - b. Joseph Bar-nabas was from Cyprus so he was taking Mark to familiar territory.
2. Again, Bar-nabas accepted the personal loss in order to do what he felt to be right.
 - a. He strongly advocated for his position, but didn't press when it was not accepted.
 - b. Consequently, he missed being able to go on the mission in order to support Mark.

III. Faith motivated Joseph Bar-nabas to humble himself in service to others.

A. When sent he gave up his position in Jerusalem to go to Antioch.

1. Members of the Jerusalem church had established a congregation in Antioch.

2. After a while they began teaching gentiles as well as Jews.
 - a. The Jerusalem members were from Cyprus so they had lived among the gentiles.
 - b. God had already commanded Peter to teach gentiles in Acts 10. (*Cornelius*)
3. Bar-nabas was instructed by the Apostles to go inspect and make a report.
 - a. Jerusalem accepted responsibility for its members. (*Remember Gal. 2 -cf- Acts 15*)
 - b. This appointment indicated a high level of trust and confidence in Bar-nabas.
 - 1) They considered him as “beloved.” *Acts 15: 25*
 - 2) He was known as a man of faith. *Acts 11: 24*
 - 3) Bar-nabas was from Cyprus so he spoke their language and may have known the men.

B. Bar-nabas arrived looking for good to report back to the Apostles.

1. If it’s your nature to look for problems, you will find them. (*“Yeah, but they ...”*)
2. He could see the grace of God at work in them.
 - a. Grace produces visible fruit ... changed lives, zeal, church growth, etc.
 - b. What is the visible fruit of grace in our lives, in our congregation ?
3. He rejoiced at their success in evangelism.
 - a. There was no jealousy of their success.
 - b. He encouraged them to keep on being faithful to God. (*Motive = faith filled heart*)

C. Seeing their need and the potential for the work, he went for help.

1. Bar-nabas could have decided in one of at least three ways : *Vs. 25*
 - a. He could have gone back to Jerusalem and been commended for a good report.
 - b. He could have stayed and have become a great leader in Antioch.
 - c. Instead he chose to bring to them a great teacher who would overshadow him.
2. This decision turned out to the advantage of everyone except him.
 - a. Paul was brought out of his “silent years.” (*Nothing recorded about time in Tarsus*)
 - b. The church in Antioch was developed into a great congregation.
 - c. The Antioch congregation sent out missionaries to evangelize the gentile world.
3. The actions of Joseph Bar-nabas quietly affected the entire history of the church.

D. In Bar-nabas the scriptures give us a character study in encouragement.

1. He was so dedicated to sanctified living that he inspired others.
2. He had a heart of love for other people so they received him.
3. He humbled himself to serve others. (*He had the heart of a servant.*)

CONCLUSION :

A. Our study on encouragement has been fruitful. We' ve learned :

1. that we need to make an ongoing effort to keep ourselves encouraged.
2. that every Christian has a responsibility to every other Christian and to the group.
3. that encouragement is not rocket science so everyone can do in is some ways.
4. and from Joseph Bar Nabas we have learned that encouragement is a lifestyle which flows from a heart that is :
 - a. full of faith.
 - b. dedicated to holy living.
 - c. and willing to have his life guided by the values of the Holy Spirit.

B. In the great Antioch congregation, we saw that God blesses a congregation when the atmosphere in the group is characterized by :

1. By zeal for God.
2. By eagerness to share the gospel.
3. And by mutual love which manifests itself in practical ways.

C. The Apostles gave Joseph the nickname ... Bar-Nabas ... son of encouragement.

1. If they were to give you a nickname, what would it be ?
2. Based upon his spiritual character, the Apostles sent Bar-nabas on a mission that changed the world. Based upon yours, on what mission would they send you ?

If we each emulate the character of Joseph Bar Nabas we will change this congregation, this city, and then the world.

D. Have you yielded your life to obey the gospel ?

Are you yielding it in service God on a daily basis ?

INVITATION :

Lesson Texts

Acts 4: 32-37

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. **33** And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. **34** For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales **35** and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), **37** and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 11: 19-26

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. **20** But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. **21** And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. **22** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. **23** Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; **24** for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. **25** And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; **26** and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.