

## Acts 11:1-30

### The Gift of Encouragement

Some of the greatest success stories in history have followed a word of encouragement from a loved one or a trusting friend. **Example**

A) Nathaniel Hawthorne is listed as one of the great names in American Literature.

B) But he probably would not have been had it not been for his confident & encouraging wife, SOPHIA

1) See Nathaniel came home one day – heartbroken because he had been fired from his job!

When Nathaniel brought the news to his wife – she responded with an **exclamation of Joy & enthusiasm**

A) **“Now you can write your book!”**

B) He responded with a frustrated tone – And what are we supposed to live on while I write it!

C) To his surprise she opened up a drawer and pulled out a substantial sum of money.

1) Nathaniel asked – Where did you get all that!

**This was her response:**

“I have always known you were a man of genius, I knew someday that you would write a masterpiece. So every week, out of the money you gave me for housekeeping, I saved a little bit. So here is enough to last us a whole year.” Sophia Hawthorne

D) During that year Hawthorne wrote the American bestseller – **The Scarlet Letter!**

When most people who have achieved great things tell their stories, they mention those who encouraged them along the way.

A) Those who encouraged them to not quit – but to keep on going – **keep trying – keep believing – keep knocking!**

B) Those who inspire us in that way – are essential to our growth and success in life!

C) Encouragers are **ESSENTIAL** for the Church!

D) So much so Did you **know that Encouragement** is a spiritual gift?

## Romans 12:5-8

**“So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”**

E) So Encouragement is a Spiritual Gift!

Tonight we are going to see a man who had the gift of encouragement – His Name is Barnabas –

A) A great guy to pattern our lives after.

B) Chapter 11 opens with a recap of the events we looked at in Chapter 10

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision **contended** with him, 3 saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”

**Now stop right there. Wouldn't you think that the response would be, oh, hallelujah. That's awesome. A) Well, you should think that way.**

B) But unfortunately, many in the early church didn't think that way,

1) Always God's heart that the Jews would be lights to the gentiles and reach the gentiles

C) But instead most of the people in the Jewish nation had been erroneously taught to see gentiles

1) A Gentile is a non Jewish person and the Jews saw gentiles as a nuisance.

D) They regarded them as defiled, as worthless.

For example, a Jewish person, walking down the street, would hold their robes close to themselves

A) To avoid brushing up against a Gentile.

B) If you touched a Gentile, if your clothing just rubbed against a gentile, **you were considered, defiled**

**C) Understand that wasn't God's heart but that was what the rabbi's taught**

D) The rabbi's taught that the Gentiles, were marked by God, for destruction.  
1) Embers to fuel the fires of hell

**This attitude was prevalent in some of the early church.**

A) Part of the problem was you had Priest and Levites who came to Christ –

B) They were having a hard time shedding their old prejudices

C) Problem for all of us – we come to Christ with baggage and our minds have to be renewed by the word of God

D) So they questioned Peter –

1) Peter is going to respond by sharing 3 testimonies – proving this was a work of the Lord.

**Testimony #1 Peter's personal experience and vision.**

4 But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. 6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' 10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

**Peter says -"Don't blame me," I didn't make this happen.**

A) I was just waiting for lunch when I saw a vision the Spirit told me 3 men would come and escort me.

B) When they showed up at my gate, I went with them

1) and heard about the angelic preparation in Cornelius' heart and life.

C) I was just doing what the Lord instructed me to do!

1) Testimony #1 Peter's personal testimony

**Testimony #2 The Witness of the Holy Spirit**

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.

**Paul taught in Galatians 5 about the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

A) The idea being that when the Holy Spirit gets a hold of a life – there is evidence.

B) You can tell – in this case the Holy Spirit came upon those at the house of Cornelius like He did on the apostles

1) They began to speak in tongues

C) Peter is like – I couldn't deny that the Lord was doing something with these people

**Testimony #3 the words of Jesus**

16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

18 When they heard these things **they became silent**; and they **glorified God**, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

**I like this: They became silent – if that was all that it said- bummer**

A) It would simply mean – they could argue with Peter's testimony

B) They might not have liked it but they couldn't argue with it.

**C)But the fact that it says- and they glorified God – means that they were open to this new thing the Lord was doing**

**D)Remember for 10 years they had only seen the Lord working ONE WAY – among the Jews**

**1)Now the Lord was expanding to the gentiles**

**E)Were they going to resist – hold on to prejudices and old ideas**

**1)Or were they going to get with the program**

**There is always that challenge – when God wants to do something new – work in a new way**

**A)Are we going to be sticks in the mud – I don't like that – or are we going to glorify God**

**B)God used CC in such a powerful way in the late 60's 70's 80's 90's**

**1)But beginning in the 2,000's God started working through other movements**

**C)Some in CC – were quick to critique and criticize – I don't like what they are doing – different**

**1)Wasn't wrong but it was different –**

**D)Sometimes people can't discern different from right or wrong!**

**1)They get stuck – instead of appreciating what God is doing with someone else – criticize**

**I can honestly say that I used to be that way – but the Lord has taught me to appreciate the body of Christ**

**A)To see what others are doing and try to glean and learn and grow – be open to new methods**

**B)Message just change: Always be the Word – the gospel – that is what changes hearts**

**1)Transform lives**

**C)But METHODS change – and I want to be open to seeing God work in new ways – new platforms**

**D)If there is a new medium that God wants to do something – I don't want to be a stick in the mud**

**1)I am hoping you don't want to be one either**

**E)When we see the Lord working in a new way – through a new method – glorify God**

**1)AMEN!**

19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But **some of them** were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, **and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.**

**The Lord is on the move – working in the Church – the work of God spreads to Antioch**

**A)Persecution is like trying to stomp a fire out with your boot – embers – float off**

**B)Catch other things on fire- spreads**

**Bb)I want you to note here: The People that the Lord is using here are no names!**

**1)Not Peter, John, not one of the Apostles, not another super Deacon!**

**C)No name guys ! – God does a great work through!**

**1)I think – God leaves off the names – so that we understand – He can use anyone!**

**D)We have a tendency to Elevate people – Some pp have extraordinary gifts.**

**1)Others are ordinary – God uses in extraordinary ways.**

**You have all heard of Billy Graham, DL Moody, Billy Sunday? Three great American Evangelist**

**A)Probably haven't heard of Edward Kimball, Wilbur Chapman or Mordecai Hamm.**

**B)It all started with Edward Kimball – who was concerned about a young man who worked at a shoe store – One day back room shared Christ**

**C)Young man received Jesus – Dwight L Moody**

**1)DL Moody – Became a Great evangelist**

**D)Moody was speaking in the British Isles**

**1)invited to a small Church – the Pastored by a man named Frederic Brotherton Meyer.**

**In his sermon Moody told the story about a Sunday School teacher E. Kimball who personally went to every student in his class and led each of them to Christ.**

**A) That message changed Pastor Meyer's ministry, it birthed within him a desire to Share Christ –**

**B) Inspiring him to become an evangelist like Moody. {Became known as - FB Meyer**

1) Over the years Meyer came to America.

C) While speaking in Northfield, MA a young preacher heard Meyer say, "**If you are NOT willing to give up everything for Christ, are you willing to be made willing?**"

D) That remark led **J. Wilbur Chapman** to respond to the call of God on his life.

**Chapman went on to become one of the most effective evangelists of his time.**

A) A volunteer by the name of Billy Sunday, a retired **Baseball player** - helped set up his crusades and learned how to preach by watching Chapman.

B) Billy Sunday eventually took over Chapman's ministry becoming one of the most dynamic evangelists of the early 1900's .

**C) Billy Sunday's preaching brought thousands to Christ.**

**Inspired by a 1924 Billy Sunday crusade in Charlotte, NC a group of Christians dedicated themselves to reaching their city for Christ.**

A) They wanted to have Billy Sunday come back but he was unavailable so they asked a little known evangelist Mordecai Hamm to come and share.

B) The Crowds were small but one night at the end of the meetings a tall lanky 16 year went forward to give his life to Christ - - **His name was Billy Graham!**

**C) Billy Graham has communicated the gospel to more people than any other person in history.**

1) And it all started with a Sunday School teacher named Kimball.

**D) Millions have been affected by his decision to go into a shoe store and share Christ with one person.**

**E) We know the Names but often not the people who started it all.**

**1) So some no names from Cyprus and Cyrene are used by the Lord to start this work in Antioch**

22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 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.

**So God was moving in Antioch – the Church in Jerusalem heard about it**

**A) We need to send someone there to encourage the believers – Who? Barnabas**

**B) Who was Barnabas?**

**C) We first met Barnabas in Ch. 4 – Growing Church – Communal living out of necessity.**

**1) Growing need for Provision**

**Acts 4:36-37 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**

**A) Sold to it to Bless the body!**

**B) So First thing we learn about him Acts 4 he was a Generous man!**

**1) Those with the gift of encouragement are often Generous – Generous with time, talents, resources**

**C) Something special about this guy – so much so that the Apostles Changed his name from Joses to Barnabas**

**1) Son of Encouragement! – Such an encouraging guy**

**D) DESCRIPTION 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.**

**I like that description Full of the Holy spirit –**

**A) Full covered completely – exuding the fruit of the Holy Spirit –**

**B) Primary Characteristic is LOVE**

**C) FULL OF FAITH**

**D) Full of faith:** Encouragers are those who are able to see the Lord in every situation.

1) Others see A Giant – Full of faith person sees a Ginormous God.

E) Others see a Storm – Encouragers see the stiller of

THE STORM

**Encouragers are those who believe in a God who can do great things! - Nothing too big for Him!**

A) See God as the one who desires to show himself strong on our behalf.

B) They live with a certain degree of expectation – Lord what are you going to do next!

**Notice The Focus of his Encouragement!**

V.23 “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”

C) With Purpose of heart they should continue in the Lord! – Continue to pursue the Lord

**Purpose of heart – speaks of diligence!**

A) Speaks of focus – not wavering – eye on the prize!

B) But his encouragement had to do with their relationship with the Lord.

C) I mention this – because sometimes in our love for people – **our encouragement** – allows them to remain in their sin.

**You have a girl friend who is having a rough time with her husband. She says he is selfish jerk.**

A) You are trying to be encouraging – get caught up in the emotion –

B) **Yea he is jerk – you deserve better .....**

1) You are so great! – Kick him out!

C) Hello – that is not encouraging them in the Lord – encouraging them to sin!

1) Always two sides to a story -

D) An encourager is not an enabler either!

1) Showing sympathy – even giving help to someone that enables them to stay in their sin.

**Encourager is going to point people to the Lord !**

A) His ability to work – Do miracles – the faithfulness of His word

**B) An Encourager is one who will lovingly challenge you to deal with your sin!**

1) Deal with a bad attitude!

C) Move forward in the Lord and not be crippled by things like Bitterness & unforgiveness

Hebrew 10:24-25 “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**”

**The Result of his encouragement:**

A) V.24 **A great many were added to the Lord!**

B) Heart of Godly Encouragement is contagious

1) It is awesome to be around people who love Jesus and love each other.

C) Those who are excited about the Lord and stirring each other up in the Lord!

So Barnabas: Generous, Full of HS – Full of faith  
**NEEDS HELP**

**Barnabas saw Potential not Problems:**

25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.  
26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

**Now we last saw Saul in Ch.9 after his conversion – went up in to Jerusalem**

A) His presence there created quite a stir – They ended up sending him – home – 7-11 yrs pass

B) In obscurity – Some looked at Saul – Problem Trouble follows that guy

C) **Barnabas saw Potential** – earlier Acts 9 everyone was afraid – he brought Saul to the Apostles

1) When no one wanted anything to do with Saul, Barnabas stood up for him, believed in him

D) Now 11 yrs later – needs help – who do I get – I am going to go look for Saul!

**Barnabas is probably thinking. We have a mix of Jewish people, Greek people, and Roman people.**

A) Who would be the best guy to bring to this city? He thought, I know.

B) That guy, Saul, who's over in Tarsus, not far away.

C) Saul was Jewish to the core Hebrew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews,

1) knew all the traditions and rituals of rabbinic Judaism.

D) But he was also Greek by culture

**Saul was a Hellenistic Jew, Greek-speaking, Greek-culture Jew, living in that part of the world.**

A) But on top of all that – Saul was a Roman citizen

The trifecta

B) Barnabas saw Saul of Tarsus as the perfect guy to help out the ministry in Antioch

C) Encouragers see potential where others only see a problem

E) Other might give up on us – But God never does!

**V.26 First called Christians –**

A) This was not a compliment – Christians meant little Christ

B) Derogatory comment by the enemies of the gospel – these people remind us of Jesus ‘

C) Best compliment we can get – but the first time it was used – was not friendly

1) Those stupid Christians

27 And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

**A prophet was either a forth-teller, that is, spoke predictively about the future,**

A) or a foreteller of God's word, spoke forth the word of God.

B) Agabus was a forth-teller, he spoke forth, he spoke in advance.

1) Prevalent in the OT – but Rare in the NT – John the Revelator -

C) Agabus was a prophet that could predict the future/ he does here, and he does later on, with Paul.

D) So he predicted that there would be a famine, which, by the way, happened.

**History shows there were four famines throughout this time, two in Rome, one in Greece, and one in Judea.**

A) Judea was the most affected. It was the worst of all the famines. And that is the one he predicted

B) The Believers in Antioch decide that they want to help out the believers in Judea

1) Take up an offering –

29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

C) Offering is taken – who can we trust to deliver it?

**Barnabas and Saul**

A) Barnabas was trustworthy – we can trust him with the funds –

B) We can trust him to get the job done – he will get it there –

C) He will encourage the brethren there.

**As we finish up tonight – notice V.30 – sent by the hand of Barnabas and Saul**

A) Note the order – Barnabas name is mentioned first

We will see it like that for awhile.

B) But you'll also read, soon enough, in the chapters ahead, where that changes to Paul and Barnabas.

**C)the leader becomes subservient to one that he has trained and encouraged, and Paul will take the lead.**

**D)Barnabas worked himself out of a job – he knew when it was time to step aside.**

**The goal of ministry is to raise up others to do the work of the ministry.**

**A)Hold ministry in an open hand**

**B)See God using someone else in great way – don't get in the way!**

**C)Your ministry belongs to Jesus – don't hoard it**