

Son of Encouragement

Text : **Acts 11: 19-30**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Do you know what your name means ?

1. Many Americans don't.
2. Today, names are not commonly given because of their meaning.
 - a. Some honor a relative.
 - b. Some are named after famous people.
 - c. Some are named for ethnic identity.
3. My name means "skilled wagon maker." How's that name relative to life today ?

B. What would your name be if people gave you a name reflective of your character?

1. Would it be "Happy" -or- "Worrier?"
2. Would it be "Wise" -or- "Foot-in-Mouth?"
3. Would we be proud of our character name or seek to change it ?

C. In the bible it is common for people to be renamed appropriate to their character.

1. James and John were called the "Sons of Thunder" because of their aggressive natures.
2. The Apostle Peter was changed from "Small Stone" to "Bedrock."
3. All such names were earned or given because of circumstances.

D. The subject of our lesson today earned the name "Son of Encouragement."

1. His given name was "Joseph" (Joses) which means "He Who Forgives."
2. His character earned the name "Barnabas" which means "Son of Encouragement."

TRANSITION :

Like Andrew, Barnabas is a minor character in the New Testament, but one from whom we can learn some major lessons.

I. The New Testament gives us but limited information about Barnabas.

- A. Acts 4: 36-37** 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.

1. He was a Levite.
 - a. That was the priestly tribe.
 - b. He was not a priest or the text would have said so.
 - c. Being a somewhat wealthy Levite, he was most likely an educated man. (**had land**)
2. He was born in Cyprus, but lived in Jerusalem or near by.
 - a. Being from Cyprus, he spoke the Greek language.
 - b. He also spoke the language of Jerusalem. (**dealings with Apostles, etc.**)
 - c. His coming to Jerusalem was unquestionably related to his religion.
3. We can justly reason that he had been in Jerusalem for some time.
 - a. He owned land there. (**Acts 4: 36-37**)
 - b. Thus, he was not among those who came for the Passover and stayed when baptized.
4. He was a person of some substance.
 - a. He not only owned the land he sold,
 - b. But he was also able to sustain his life without the land.

B. There's more written about Barnabas in early Christian writings than in scripture.

1. The early Christian writings are not inspired so it's possible they are not correct.
2. In these writings, Barnabas is said to be one of the 70 sent out by Jesus.
3. Thus, he most likely would have been among the 120 in the upper room.
4. Early Christian leaders ascribed writings to him.
 - a. Tertullian said he it was Barnabas who wrote the bible books of Hebrews.
 - b. Clement of Alexandria names him as the author of "*The Epistle of Barnabas.*"
5. These ascriptions and other literature about him demonstrated he was highly esteemed.
6. Barnabas is reported to have died a martyr's death in Cyprus.

II. Barnabas was a man who lived his faith

- A. Acts 11: 23-24** 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.

1. Barnabas was known to be a "good man"
 - a. He was not just an average Christian.
 - b. **Rev. 3: 15-16** ... God will never accept just average.
 - c. We should all seek to establish the reputation of being a "good man" or woman.

2. He was known to be **“full of the Holy Spirit..”**
 - a. This is an indication of zeal. **He was highly motivated by the things of God.**
 - b. He didn't require anyone to prod him on to good works. **He saw it and did it.**
 - c. O that all of us could learn to see the opportunities all around us and ...
3. His reputation for being a man **“full of faith”** was well deserved.
 - a. His faith was made obvious to others by the fruit it bore.
 - b. One such evidence was the fact that he voluntarily sold his land to support others.
 - 1) **Acts 5: 4** makes it clear that it was a voluntary act.
 - 2) After offering up his substance to God, he trusted God to sustain him.
 - c. Would to God that every Christian could reach that degree of faith.

B. Most Americans can't even comprehend such commitment.

1. How many of us could sell our land or home to support a brother to study God's word.
 - a. Most Americans would laugh at you if you asked them to even sell their second car.
 - b. Less than 1 out of 10 missionaries are able to raise enough money to go to the field.
2. Barnabas had enough faith to realize :
 - a. That God is the source of all blessings so He can give us as much as **He** desires.
 - b. When God purchases us, He becomes the owner of all we possess.

ILL.- When a man purchases an apple tree, he purchases all the fruit it bears.
 - c. May God help us to understand that when He places anything in our hands He does so with the anticipation that we will be faithful stewards, i.e., that we will use whatever it is in His service and to His glory.

C. How many of us here would leave everything and move to a strange city because the elders told us to ?

1. The elders in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch and he went. (**refer to text**)
2. The elders in Antioch sent Barnabas out to travel to strange places and he went.

Acts 13: 1-3 **Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**

 - a. The Holy Spirit must not have spoken directly to Barnabas and Saul.
 - b. Barnabas was the leader of the church in Antioch, but others sent him out. **“They”**
 - c. How many church leaders do you know who would take kindly to that today ?

III. When it came to building others up, Barnabas was one of God's "go-to guys".

A. Have you ever had an acquaintance whom you liked, but often dreaded their call.

1. After you talk with them you just feel down, or emotionally drained.
 - a. They are negative and constantly complaining.
 - b. They see the worst in everyone and in every situation.
- * **"It probably won't, but if the sun DOES come up in the morning, it will fry the earth and kill every living thing on the planet."**
2. These are the kind of people one tries to avoid when he's feeling down.
 - a. If you have a problem they can explain how it will get worse.
 - b. They'll dutifully reinforce every negative feeling you express. (**No, no one loves you.**)
3. When a brother is down, he needs a Barnabas, not Bro. "Lemon-sucker."

B. Barnabas was the kind of guy we all want to be around.

1. He was so positive they called him "Son of Encouragement."
 - a. He was the kind of guy who made you feel better just being around him.
 - b. He drew people to Jesus, not drove them away with attacks or fault-finding.
2. That's why the brethren at Jerusalem sent him to Antioch.

Acts 11: 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;

 - a. Seeing new Christians added to the church filled his heart with joy.
 - b. He did not arrive complaining :
 - 1) I had to leave my livelihood, my family and all my friends, I hope you appreciate ...
 - 2) I'm a Levite and here I am ministering to Gentiles.
3. Barnabas encouraged the brethren wherever he went.

Acts 14: 20-22 ... The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

C. That encouraging spirit is exactly what God desires from each of us, every Christian.

1. **Heb. 3: 12-13** Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

2. **Heb. 10: 23-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²² and let us consider how to motivate one another to love and good deeds, ²³ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
 3. Even if Barnabas didn't write the book of Hebrews, it's a message that he would have sent to the brethren.
- D. May each and every one of us master the art of building up one another to the point that people will call us a son or daughter of encouragement.**

IV. Barnabas also demonstrated for us the accepting heart God wants us to possess.

- A. When others would not trust the Saul, Barnabas staked his life on him.**
1. **Read ... Acts 9: 26-31**
 - a. People had good reason to fear Saul. (**Apostle Paul**)
 - b. Barnabas believed in him.
 - c. He was willing to risk everything to help a new brother.
 2. Barnabas showed himself to be a forgiving person. Paul had been killing Christians.
- B. Barnabas was the one to go get Paul and put him to work in Antioch.**
1. He needed help and knew Paul was the right man for the job.
 2. The brethren at Antioch were Greeks and Paul was called to preach to gentiles.
 3. Barnabas did not become confrontational when Paul took over his ministry.
 - a. In Acts 12:25-13:14 Barnabas is the leader. (**Listed first**)
 - b. After Acts 13: 42-43 Paul is listed first.
 4. At the Jerusalem conference the Apostles still recognized Barnabas as the leader.
 - a. **Ax 15: 2, 25**
 - b. They knew Barnabas more than Paul.
- C. Barnabas had that same care for his nephew (John Mark) he had had for Paul.**
1. Mark had failed, but Barnabas wanted to make sure he did not drop out altogether.
 2. There was strong disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.
 - a. Paul was task oriented. **John Mark would be a liability.**
 - b. Barnabas was people oriented. **John Mark needed nurturing.**
 - c. They parted, but did so amicably. (**They worked together again.**)

3. Barnabas was successful in making a good worker out of John Mark.
 - a. **Col. 4: 10** ... Paul later endorsed him to the brethren.
 - b. **II Tim. 4: 11** ... Paul urged Timothy to bring John Mark to him in prison.

CONCLUSION :

A. We can learn a lot of lessons from Barnabas.

1. He truly knew how to love other people.
 - a. He put God first in His life.
 - b. He did his best to minister to the needs of others.
2. He sacrificed everything for the furtherance of the gospel.
 - a. He voluntarily sold his possession and gave it to the poor. (Cf. - **Matt 19**)
 - b. He went wherever he was sent and served faithfully.
 - c. When necessary, he worked to support himself and his ministry. (**I Cor. 9: 6**)
 - d. He forfeited having a home and family to serve others and to serve God.

B. Sometimes he made mistakes.

1. **Gal. 2: 11-14** ... When Peter came down to Antioch he caused division.
 - a. Peter knew he was doing wrong, but he feared the party of the circumcision.
 - b. This was ungodly church politics. The party spirit is contrary to Christianity.
2. It was so bad that “**even Barnabas**” was caught up in it. (**implication = really bad**)
 - a. It is never safe to blindly follow a leaders. (**Peter was an inspired Apostle.**)
 - b. When Peter was rebuked, the rebuke also applied to Barnabas.
 - c. Barnabas did not become confrontational or defensive.

C. Let us all examine the life of Barnabas and follow his good example :

1. Let us devote ourselves to serving God and HIS family no matter what the cost.
2. Let us be accepting and forgiving of others.
3. Let us do all we can to bring people to Jesus and encourage Christians to faithfulness.
* **Let's be the kind of people that others seek to be near when they are down.**
4. When we make mistakes, let us repent and go on joyously serving God with zeal.

INVITATION :