

Seeking The Heart Of Barnabas #2a

Text : **Ephesian 4: 1-16** (esp. vs **12, 15**)

INTRODUCTION :

- A. This lesson will build on last week's lesson on being an encourager.**
1. The topic is too large to be covered in one lesson.
 2. It is such a very important topic that we dare not sell it short.
 - a. This is something that is essential to the survival of one's faith.
 - b. It is also essential to the survival of the Christian collective, the church.
 3. Thus, we are considering something which is essential to our eternal salvation.
- B. Christianity is a relationship religion.**
1. It addresses the establishment and maintenance of man's relationship with God.
 2. In God's wisdom, He placed all of His followers into a group (the church) and instructed us to stay close and watch out for each other. (*pictured as sheepfold*)
 3. Christianity controls (governs) the relationship that God-followers have with those outside God's selected group, His church.
- C. Therefore, God requires every Christian to be engaged in relationship building.**
1. No Christian has the option to stand aloof from the group in which God has placed him.
 2. God's goal is to gather everyone into that group, into His church.
 - a. The group provides protection from Satan while He seeks others who are lost.
 - b. God has commanded ALL of His followers to participate in the gathering.
Luke 11:23- He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.
 - c. No one has the right to opt out of any of our Lord's commands. **ALL must gather.**
Luke 11:23- Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say ?
- D. Once God's followers have gathered together His lost sheep into His church, God commands us all to work together to keep all of God's sheep in His fold.**
1. **I Thess. 5: 11- Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, ...**
 2. **Rom. 14:19- So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.**
 3. **Heb. 3: 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.**
Heb. 10: 24-25 and let us consider how to motivate one another to love and good deeds, **25** 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. (Cf- Text : **Eph. 4:11-16**)

Since our relationships with God depends upon our being an encourager of others, we will take a few minutes to observe the anatomy of an encourager.

I. The mind of an encourager. (*All actions originate in the mind, i.e., the heart.*)

A. The mind is so powerful it can cause physical symptoms.

1. One who convinces himself he is sick will be. (**80% psychosomatic**)
2. Depression and discouragement can cause debilitating physical symptoms.
3. The reverse is also true ... The mind can bring about positive physical results.
 - a. According to the A.M.A. ... laughter facilitates healing.
 - b. Those with a positive attitude and a strong desire to survive tend to recover.
 - c. Solomon said it this way :

Prov. 17: 22- A joyful heart is good medicine,
But a broken spirit dries up the bones.

**Thus, there is an undeniable link between the mind and health.
AND, this is equally true in the spiritual realm.**

B. Basically, you are what you think you are. (**Believe it .. then become it.**)

1. **Prov. 23:7-** For as he thinks in his heart, so is he: (KJV)
2. **Read ... Mark 7:14-23** ... Jesus referred to this principle in His preaching.
3. The one who becomes a Christian must alter his heart.
 - a. *Learn to think differently.*
 - b. *Become a minister of encouragement.*

C. The Lord's Apostle instructed us to control what we think about.

1. **Col. 3: 2-** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
2. **Phil. 4:8** - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.
3. We Christians cannot allow our minds to remain undisciplined.
II Cor. 10: 5- We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,
4. **Rom. 12:2** ... We must bring our minds into conformity with God's mind.
5. **Gal. 5: 16-17** ... It is only after our minds (our hearts) are changed that our lives will change. *We'll become a minister of encouragement.*

II. The eyes of the encourager.

A. Spiritual blindness is as devastating to the spirit as physical blindness is to ...

1. We all fear physical blindness. It's a tremendous obstacle in one's life.
2. Spiritual blindness is even more disruptive to one's spiritual life. (*threatens destiny*)
- * 3. Spiritual eye disease is an obstacle to encouragement.
 - a. Discouraged & discouraging people are convinced their worldview is correct.
 - b. Discouragers ("*lemon-suckers*") are motivated by a perverted view of duty.
 - c. The prime motivator of the Christian is love ... NOT duty , not rules keeping.

B. Encouragers must learn to keep their eyes focused. (*not in the past or future*)

1. From all life's clutter, people choose one focus upon which to concentrate their life.
2. The ability to see and focus on others is the cornerstone of encouragement.
 - a. The focus must be outward to be aware of the need for encouragement.
 - b. Encouragers must be able to see the good in people and in situations. (*reinforce it*)
3. Discouragement and negativism is a communicable disease.
 - a. We are all exposed to negative people and events. (**Satan's minions are at work**)
 - b. Negativism spreads like the flu and can quickly take over a congregation.
4. Encouragers are the doctors who cure this disease.

C. Encouragers have learned to appreciate the blooms among the thorns.

1. Like a rose, every person is composed of both blooms and thorns.
2. Commending one trait in a person does not mean one endorses all his traits.
 - a. Will Rogers said, "*I never met a man I didn't like.*"
 - 1) He did not like every quality of every person he met.
 - 2) There is something in every person to like.
 - b. The Apostle Paul pointed out strengths in churches before correcting weaknesses.
 - c. **Rev. 2 & 3** ... Jesus pointed out the good of churches before condemning evil.
- * 3. **This emphasizes the importance of having :**
 - a. **enough daily fellowship to really know each other.**
 - b. **a mindset to be on the alert for those who need encouraged.**

III. The ears of an encourager.

A. Listening is one of the most important skills needed by an encourager.

1. "Listening" is very different from physically hearing.
2. An encourager must care enough to be perceptive of the needs expressed by others.
* **Cries for help are often not plainly spoken.**
3. For the encourager to master the art of communication requires that he listen with an understanding and a caring heart. ()
 - a. *We hear what we listen for.*
 - b. **ILL. – The hunter tunes his ears to hear one sound among many.**

B. Learning to listen requires determination to do so.

1. The encourager is not born with listening skills, they must be developed.
 2. Few develop listening skills because to do so requires a concerted effort.
 3. Listening skills are needed because poor listeners :
 - a. Hurt people's feelings.
 - b. Cause others not to reach out when they need encouragement.
- * **Most who commit suicide feel that others don't care about their pain.**

C. Sadly, most people would rather talk than listen.

1. Too often a conversation consists of two people just taking turns talking.
 2. Instead of listening to the other person, they are thinking about what to say next.
 - * 3. Listening is a learned behavior.
 - a. One cannot just wait for it to happen.
 - b. One must first develop the desire to become a listener and then work to learn how.
- * **Anyone can learn how to be a good listener ... commit to it and work at it.**

D. Listening is part of loving others.

1. The core problem which prevents listening is selfishness. (*opposite of love*)
 - a. Lack of interest can be observed in the listener's body language.
 - b. Indifference can be heard in one's tone of voice.
2. "Agape" love is unselfishly acting in the best interest of another.
3. Everyone wants to feel heard, understood, valued, respected, etc.
 - a. Listening demonstrates the value the listener placed on the speaker.
 - b. Listening can dramatically alter the way two people feel about each other.

E. Being a good listener is part of the Christian character.

1. It is an essential element, NOT a nicety. (*It would be nice if ...*)
2. Love demands that we develop the skills of loving. (**NOT WAIT FOR A FEELING**)
3. We must all develop “**ears to hear.**” (**Luke 8: 8**)

F. Let us remember the instruction of the Holy Spirit via the pen of James.

James 1:19- ... **But everyone must be quick to hear,
slow to speak and slow to anger;**

1. “**be quick to hear**” We must stay attuned to the opportunities to serve as presented.
2. “**be slow to speak**” We must stay focused outward to be perceptive of others’ needs.
3. “**be slow to anger**” We must never be reactionary or judgmental of others.

CONCLUSION :**A. We have only had time to begin our study of the anatomy of an encourager.****B. This lesson has focused on the perceptive skills required to be an encourager.**

1. The foundational skill of the encourager is a heart of LOVE.
 - a. One must develop the mindset, the heart of an encourager.
 - b. We must focus our vision, our concerns outward toward others.
 - c. We must then learn to think in terms of “*How can I be of encouragement.*”
2. The encourager must learn to see the good in others and their potential for growth.
 - a. We must guard against being infected by the disease of negativism and judging.
 - b. We must learn not to be distracted by the negative people and events around us.
 - c. We must learn to focus on the blossoms, not on the thorns. (**beam out of eye**)
3. The encourager must learn to truly listen to others.
 - a. We must keep our ears attuned to hear the hidden cries of the discouraged.
 - b. Always remain vigilant for Satan’s attempts to keep us thinking about ourselves.
 - c. Love causes us to care and care causes us to listen. *We must learn to love.*

C. The greatest encouragement is knowing one is safe in the arms of Jesus.

Do you have that security ?