

## Seeking The Heart Of Barnabas #1

Text : **I Thess. 5: 1-14** ( esp. vs **11, 14** )

### **INTRODUCTION :**

#### **A. What has most affected your life ?**

1. Basically, we are the sum total of our life experiences.
2. Some events affect us for years to come. ( **9-11-01** ... *still affects us* )
  - a. The great depression shaped a whole generation.
  - b. The death of a loved one can change the course of our lives.
  - c. Personally - The first time I baptized someone set the course for my life.
3. People can influence the whole course of our lives.
  - a. Parents , Teachers , Friends
  - b. Perhaps our spouse influences us more than any other person.

**ILL. –** Five people from a youth group of twelve are serving God full time.  
They are the fruit of one youth minister's influence.

#### **B. The Christian religion is all about affecting hearts, minds, and lives.**

1. The Jews worshipped the same God we worship,  
but they had a completely different perspective.
  - a. Their lives were strictly regulated by rules.  
**Col. 2:21 - Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!**
  - b. Consequently, their lives were affected more by rules than by God.
2. Christianity is not a strictly regulated religion. ( **Not a legal system** )
  - a. The Christian's relationship with God is based on faith - not rules keeping.
  - b. Faith more strictly regulates lives than could any law.
    - 1) **Gal. 5: 24-25** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ( cf. - vs **16-17** )
    - 2) **II Cor. 5: 14-15** For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; **15** and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

#### **C. When hearts are changed by faith and by love, lives voluntarily change.**

1. We find no chapters devoted to the mechanics of Christianity.
  - a. How to conduct worship services.

- b. How to fellowship.
- c. How to care for the needy.

**-\*- Moses covered these in great detail.**

2. The teaching of Jesus was primarily about the heart.
  - a. Have complete faith in God and in His Christ.
  - b. Love God and each other.
  - c. Seek and save the lost.
3. The life and the ministry of Jesus illustrated the heart He desires His followers to possess. He demonstrated :
  - a. Obedient devotion to God and to His will.
  - b. Caring for the needy and the helpless.
  - c. Standing against evil and setting an example of righteousness.
  - d. Seeking and sacrificing to save the lost.
4. The epistles of the Apostles illustrate how to apply the principles taught by Jesus.
  - a. They are NOT for the purpose of establishing rules.
  - b. They teach us the proper applications of faith and love.
  - c. God knows that when we get our hearts right, we'll also get the rules right.

**THEREFORE ... it is abundantly clear that maintaining the proper heart is essential to maintaining the faith required to have a positive relationship with God.**

**BUT ... how is it possible for one to maintain his faithful heart ?**

**SATAN ... continually seeks to destroy our faith, to discourage us.**

**I. Every Christian is part of the constant, ongoing struggle. ( cf – I Pet. 5:8 )**

**A. Everyone needs the strength of other people.**

1. Man is a social creature. ( *We are herd animals.* )  
**Gen. 2: 18-** Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; ..."
2. *Isolation is an effective punishment for even hardened prisoners.*

**B. One function of the church is to insure that Satan cannot isolate a Christian.**

1. **Rom. 12: 10a** - Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; ...
2. **I Thes. 5: 11** - Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

3. The assembly of the church is one forum in which encouragement is to occur.

**Heb. 10: 23-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; **24** 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.

4. Encouragement must also occur out of the assembly ... **daily**.

**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.

**NOTE :** *This requires regular contact OUTSIDE the assembly.*

**C. As members of the church, every Christian functions as ministers of encouragement.**

1. Though God doesn't give us a blueprint for assembly, He does give us it's earthly objective.

**I Cor. 14: 26** - What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

2. Though God doesn't give us step-by-step instructions for conduct our fellowship He does give us it's earthly objective.

**Gal. 6: 1-2** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

**D. Some are more capable ministers, but all are ministers of encouragement.**

1. This is part of the transition every Christian must make.

**Rom. 12: 2** - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, ...

2. Some are naturally more adapt at encouraging than are others.

- a. Such folks are usually capable of generally relating to others in a positive way.

- b. Self-confidence enables one to focus on other rather than fulfilling their own emotional needs.

- c. Those who don't come by it naturally have to expend more effort to learn it.

3. Christianity is a relationship religion. It focuses on one's relationship

- a. With God.

- b. With others.

## II. In His holy word God holds up many examples of encouragers for us to emulate.

### A. God commanded Moses to encourage Joshua.

1. **Deut. 3: 27-28** Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. **28** But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see. (*Each generation encourages the next.*)
2. Moses had to be disappointed that he could not enter the promised land, but he encouraged Joshua to do the very thing he longed to do, but could not.

### B. When all appeared to be lost, King Hezekiah encouraged the people.

1. **II Chron. 32: 6-8** He appointed military officers over the people and gathered them to him in the square at the city gate, and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, **7** Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. **8** With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.
2. Those whose faith is strong must always lift up the weak.

### C. The Apostle Paul continually encouraged all who needed it.

1. **Col. 2: 1-2** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, **2** that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,
2. He worked just as hard to keep brethren faithful as he did to convert them.
3. **All of us are commanded to also be encouraging.**  
**I Thes. 5: 11** - Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, ...  
**14** - We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

## III. Clearly, it is God’s will that every Christian be an encourager.

### A. Being increasingly isolated and frustrated people today need encouragement.

1. Suicide rates are a clear barometer of this problem.
2. Though affluent, people feel isolated, lonely, and fearful.
3. Folks desperately want to feel a sense of belonging.

**B. These negative feelings give rise to many negative behaviors.**

1. Gangs.
2. Adulterous relationships
3. Drugs & Alcohol

\* **Low self-esteem destroys one's ability to contribute positively to society ; to the church.**

**C. Those who sink into a negative quagmire are drawn to those who offer relief.**

1. Unhappiness and despair are both habitual, but they're seldom one's first choice.
2. We all like to be around people who :
  - a. make us feel good about ourselves. ( **not judged** )
  - b. who give us a sense of self-worth.
  - c. make us feel understood and appreciated.

**D. Jesus called people out of the world to become the kind of people who uplift others.**

1. Christians love other - **and** - love attracts. ( **Matt. 22:39** , **I John 3:13 ff** )
2. Christians value others above themselves. ( **Phil. 2: 3-7** )
3. Christians demonstrate their desire for relationship. ( **I Cor. 9: 22** )

\* **It is normal to respond in kind ... love to love ... acceptance to acceptance**

**IV. Each one of us can become an encourager. How ?****A. First, honestly evaluate ourselves.**

1. What effect do I have on people ?
2. Everyone is one or the other ... an encourager or a discourager.
3. To some degree **you** are either one or the other.

**B. Second, make a conscious choice and commit to it.**

1. **Decide** : I want to an encourager.
2. **Commit** : I will be aware of the influence I have on others.
3. **Vow** : I am going to make whatever changes required to become an encourager.

**C. Third, once you have chosen, work at it as your goal.**

1. Be selective of who you allow to influence you.
  - a. Avoid negative people ... discouragers.
  - b. Seek out and spend time with encouragers.

2. Learn about what encourages and what discourages.
3. Learn and master the basic skills of encouragement.

\* **Practice , Practice , Practice**

### **CONCLUSION :**

#### **A. Christianity is a relationship religion.**

1. We will not go to Heaven alone.
2. When God gets our hearts ... we will love like HE loves.
3. When we love like God loves ... we will be concerned about others.

#### **B. Jesus is so concerned about others that He was willing to give His life for them.**

1. Thus, Jesus was the ultimate encourager.
2. Because of Jesus we can face whatever Satan ( this world ) throws at us.

**Rom. 8: 18** - For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

3. Jesus made it possible for Christians to have confidence to face the future.

**II Tim. 4: 6-8** For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; **8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

#### **C. Do you have this confidence ?**

1. If you do, share it.
2. If you don't, Jesus is offering it to you.

### **INVITATION :**