

Seeking the Heart Of Barnabas #2c (The Anatomy Of An Encourager - Part 3)

Text : **James 2: 14-18 ; I John 3: 13-18**

INTRODUCTION :

A. The Christian's walk on earth is an ongoing warfare against Satan and his minions.

1. Every Christian needs allies in order to prevail in his battle against evil.
2. God designed His church to be a constant source of reinforcement for His people.
3. As in any war, Christian soldiers may stand together or they will fall alone.

B. Since every Christian is required to encourage others, we've been examining some aspects of encouragement.

1. It's an ability that must be acquired; it must be learned. (*never inherited*)
2. The learning requires effort and practice. (**feels awkward at first**)
3. If he will commit himself to doing so, every Christian can become an encourager.

* **Encouragement is applied love. – Thus – Love is the key**

C. In examining the anatomy of an encourager we have observed :

1. The Christian must develop the *heart* of an encourager. (**specific mindset**)
 - a. He thinks in terms of encouraging others.
 - b. He makes being encouraging a part of the way he defines himself.
2. The Christian must develop the *eyes* of an encourager.
 - a. He is watchful for opportunities to encourage others. (**Eyes focused outward**)
 - b. They see the good in people and their potential – not defaults and past errors.
3. The Christian must develop the *ears* of an encourager.
 - a. Be self-confident enough to truly listen to others ... not always focused on self.
 - b. Encouragers have ears attuned to hear the silent or indirect cries for help.

D. Our previous lesson focused on the Christian's encouraging lips.

1. God requires that His followers speak only words that encourage, lift up, edify.
 - a. **Eph. 4:28-** Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but **only** such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
 - b. **Col. 4: 5-6** Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. **6** Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

2. In addition to edifying, our words must be :
 - a. Gracious ... unmerited favor
 - b. Fulfill needs (**healing**) .. **Prov. 16: 24- Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.**
 - c. Carefully considered ... valued as an opportunity to serve and glorify God.
3. It's just as important to choose one's words when talking to outsiders as brethren.

TRANSITION :

Though words are of vital importance, words alone leave the job incomplete. The encourager's words must be backed up by his actions, by his HANDS.

I. The same heart that motivates encouraging words must also foster similar actions.

- A. Jesus correlated actions with faithfulness.
 1. **Matt. 25: 40-** 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'
 2. Receiving carries with it the responsibility to give.
Matt. 10: 8- Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. (Cf ... **Eph. 4: 28 .. earn to share**)
- B. The N.T. writers taught that faithfulness is correlated to ones giving actions.
 1. **Texts = James 2: 15-17** ... Good wishes don't fill empty stomachs.
 2. **I John 3: 16-18** ... One who does not share his earthly possessions does not love. One who does not love, doesn't love God so he cannot be saved.
- C. The encourager's greatest accomplishment is to be able to give himself away in one small deed after another.

II. The encourager reaps benefits from good deeds. (Principle: sowing & reaping)

- A. Encouragers build friendships.
 1. New friends enrich the life of the encourager.
 2. Relationships are built with the capital of encouragement.
 - a. One must make deposits into a relationship before making withdrawals.
 - b. The encourager will never be in danger of over drawing his relationship account.

B. Encouraging deeds can be exciting and joyful.

1. One who seeks to uplift others has no time to be bored. (**New experiences**)
2. Seeking new ways to serve others gives an avenue for one's creativity.

C. Deeds of encouragement bring a harvest of good to one's own life.

1. Of course, one does not do good motivated by a desire to receive. (*not meritorious*)
2. Good works pay dividends both now and eternally.

- a. The dividends are in direct proportion to the amount invested.

II Cor. 9:6 - Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

- b. The same standard of measurement will be used to pay dividends as was invested.

Luke 6:38 - Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure — pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

(*Invest Pennies, receive pennies ; Invest dollars receive dollars ; pesos, etc*)

- c. The dividends are paid in the same currency as the investment.

Gal. 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

(*Plant corn = harvest corn, Can't sow in one field and harvest in another.*)

3. The law of sowing and reaping is unbreakable.

Those who encourage bountifully will be blessed bountifully.

D. Encouragement is contagious.

1. Those who are encouraged naturally encourage others.

(**This is the theme of an insurance co. commercial -re- responsible behavior**)

2. Christians are constantly encouraged by the sacrifice of Jesus 2000 years ago.

E. Encouraging others brings contentment to the encourager.

1. We're born with an inherent desire to make a positive difference to the lives of others.
2. It's hard to think about your own problems while helping others with their problems.

* **Pitty parties tend to be lonely affairs.**

3. Thus, when I'm down, I look for someone else that I can lift up.

III. Giving and doing tangible acts of encouragement to others is :

A. ... is a privilege.

1. The self-centered person never achieves true success in life.
2. The bible sites many examples of users : (**self-centered**)
 - a. Ahab (*Jezebel*) killed Naboth for his vineyard. (**I King 21**)
 - b. Absalom betrayed David in an attempt to usurp him on the throne. (**II Sam. 13-20**)
 - c. Ananias and Saphira lied to the Holy Spirit seeking fame in the church. (**Acts 5**)
3. The bible also sets forth many examples of faithful servants ... encouragers :
 - a. Abraham gave the best to his nephew, Lot. (**Gen. 13**)
 - b. Nehemiah gave up a comfortable and secure life to reconstruct Jerusalem. (**Neh.**)
 - c. The Apostle Paul gave up fame and fortune to serve gentiles. (**Acts 9**)
4. No one admires users , but the givers endear themselves to most.

B. ... is a duty.

1. Luke summarized the ministry of Jesus as He “**went around doing good.**” **Acts 10:38**
2. Christians are created by God **TO** do specific good works.
Eph. 2: 10- For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, ...
3. Christians must be ready to do good works.
 - a. **II Tim. 2: 12- Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.**
 - b. **Titus 3: 1 - Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,**
4. Christians can only be fruitful to God if they engage in good works and helping.
Titus 3: 14 - Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

C. ... is an investment in eternity.

1. Christianity is laying up treasures in Heaven. (**Matt. 6: 20 ; Luke 18: 22**)
 - a. Even a foolish farmer knows he will harvest where he plants.
Gal. 6: 8- For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
 - b. One who has faith lays his treasure up in Heaven, those with merely belief here.
2. Encouraging others is one of the safest investments a person can make.
 - a. The stock market is up & down ... even the value of cash is eroded by inflations.
 - b. The real estate market has crashed. (*All tangibles can be stolen and destroyed.*)

IV. Even tiny seeds can grow into large plants and multiply. (dill spreads)**A. Many wait for some grand gesture.**

1. Sometimes the grand gesture is an expression of a guilty conscience.
 - a. Trying to make up for neglect
 - b. Cover over unfaithfulness (**When my neighbor got a new mistress, he ...**)
2. Sometimes waiting or saving for a grand gesture is an excuse for doing nothing.
* **The smallest effort is better than the greatest excuse.**
3. Other times, people wait for a grand gesture because they don't know any better.

B. What seems small to man may be great in the eyes of God.

1. Remember the widow's two mites. (**Luke 21: 1-4**)
2. Little things often mean a lot to the recipients. (**for the same reason as to God**)
3. A pattern of small acts of encouragement reflect a loving heart. (**mindset**)
* **Several of you think in terms of doing good. (Expand it to include outsiders.)**

C. Encouragement is an individual activity.

1. It can be done as a group, but is most meaningful when it flows from heart to heart.
2. Actions are most often more encouraging than gifts.
 - a. A hug at the right time or just setting holding the hands of the brokenhearted.
 - b. Visiting the shut-in, reading to those who can't. (**Our rest home service**)
 - c. Doing yard work for those who can't ... mow, rank leaves, trim hedges, etc.
 - d. Taking one who can't drive out. (**To appointments, but also just because.**)
3. Gifts need not be expensive. (**Jesus noted "a cup of cold water."**)
 - a. A pattern of consideration is more meaningful than an expensive annual gift.
 - b. The flowers can be from your own garden. (**I plant to share my vegetables.**)
 - c. Cooking a meal show love, but does not cost much.
 - d. Taking someone out for coffee and a piece of pie ... maybe ice cream.

CONCLUSION :**A. No evil intent is required to inflict pain.**

1. Negativism grows quietly like a fungus on one's soul.
2. Those who diligently seek to be right, must also be diligent not be judgmental.

B. To love and to encourage are part-and-parcel of the same thing.

1. Jesus Himself taught us that love is the most important aspect of Christianity. **Matt 22**
2. He also taught us that love is the hallmark of Christianity. **John 13:34-35**
3. One always seeks to build up those whom he loves. (**encouraging IS loving**)

C. When loving encouragement becomes the condition of the members hearts, the church WILL grow.

1. Encouragers remain faithful and cause others to do so as well. (**no attrition**)
2. Those who truly care about others cannot interact with them without warning them of the judgment to come.
3. When the members of a church have the heart of encouragers, outsiders will be drawn to them and will be influenced by them.

D. We've seen that every part of the anatomy of an encourager functions to encouragement.

1. Mind / heart ... He thinks in terms of encouragement. (**It's his nature.**)
2. Eyes and ears ... He is constantly alert for opportunities to encourage.
3. Lips ... He is generous and gracious with sincere words of encouragement.
4. Hands and feet ... He realizes that encouragement requires action as well as words.

CHALLENGE :

Let each one of us :

- A. Become more aware of the affect we have on others.
- B. Commit ourselves to become even more encouraging both in word and in deeds.
 - * **The church is a support group for recovering sinners.**
In it we are all sponsors of others.

INVITATION :

You can encourage God by turning from serving self (sin) and committing your life to Him.