



Paul & Barnabas

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Acts 13, 14



Barnabas is a wonderful example for us. He lived his life depending on the Holy Spirit, so he bore much spiritual fruit. His actions were generous and his words were full of grace. His love and support of all the believers helped grow the kingdom of God on earth.

Day #1: What's in a Name?

Do you have a nickname? Do you know anyone with a nickname? Many times, a nickname gives a description of the person. Nicknames can be good names, or bad names.

President Abraham Lincoln was called "Honest Abe" because it was said that he could never lie. Runner Wilma Rudolph, the first American woman to win 3 gold medals in one Olympics, was given the nickname of "Skeeter" because her coach said she was as fast as a mosquito. Singer Miley Cyrus was given the nickname "Miley" because she was so smiley as a baby. This week we look a man in the Bible who had a wonderful nickname.

✝ *For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed **Barnabas** (which means "Son of Encouragement").* - Acts 4:36 NLT

We see that his parents named him Joseph, but he was so kind and helpful that those who knew him started calling him by the nickname of Barnabas - Son of Encouragement.

An encourager is a helper. An encourager helps others by giving them what they need or by speaking good words to them. **Encouragers always want others to do well.** In this case, Barnabas wanted the other believers to follow Jesus with all their heart (Acts 11:23-24). Everything he did and said was done to help others to follow Jesus.

* For one day, call each other by nicknames for the good ways you act toward each other. When someone holds the door for you, say, "Thank you, *Kindness.*" When someone helps clean the kitchen, say, "Thank you, *Helpful.*" This will keep you focused on how you treat others. See how many times you hear the nickname "Encourager." (Please don't use negative nicknames - as this would not be encouraging!)

Day #2: Identity

God has a good identity in mind for each person He created. God has a good plan and purpose for each person.

✝ *Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.* - Ephesians 1:4 NLT

Sadly, Satan also has a plan for each person - and it is just the opposite of God's plan (Ephesians 6:11). Satan's name means "accuser" (Zechariah 3:1). He tells bad things about people that are not true. Satan never wants people to fulfill God's plan. He wants what is opposite from what God wants.

God's purpose for Paul was to proclaim the truth of Jesus to the Jews, the non-Jews, and their kings (Acts 9:15). But Satan's plan for Paul was for him to harm the followers of Jesus. When Paul put his trust in Jesus, he immediately stopped following Satan's plan. But many of the believers did not trust that Paul had really changed. Barnabas stepped in to tell the truth about Paul. He helped everyone see that Paul was now in the center of God's plan.

As believers, one of our jobs is to agree with God about His plan for each person. We should agree that God loves every person and wants good things for each of them. You agree with God's plan when you speak encouraging words to someone. You agree with Satan's plan when you speak discouraging words to someone.

* When you are tempted to point out someone's faults, don't. It is a temptation from the devil, the father of lies, to speak unkind words to someone. God promises that He will always give you a way out of temptation. When you are tempted to speak unkind words, ask God for the way out. He will give you kind words of encouragement to speak instead.

Day #3: Build Up

It takes a long time to build a building. It may take well over a year to build a skyscraper in a big city. Every step is carefully planned ahead of time. Then thousands of workers work long days to get the job done. Skilled men and women place every brick,

Day #3 continued:

beam, and screw in just the right place. Each piece must be placed perfectly so that the tower will stand tall for years and years.

All this careful building is done so that the building can fulfill a purpose. We use buildings to live in, work in, learn in, eat in, and even play in.

When the Paul talked about encouragement, he compared it to building:

 *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. - 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Good words are like good, solid bricks that make a person stronger. Encouraging words (especially those from the Bible) help a person see himself the way God sees him. These words will help the person fulfill the purpose God has for him or her (2 Samuel 19:7).

 Take some stackable objects (like blocks or small books) and stack them up like a tower. When you encourage someone, its like you are building that person up to be all God wants him or her to be. He or she will be useful in growing God's kingdom. Now knock down your tower. When you speak unkind, discouraging words, it is just like you are knocking down the person. They will not be able to stand tall and do what God wants them to do.

Do you want to be a builder or a destroyer? Ask God's Spirit to control your words to build, and never destroy.

Day #4: Tongues of Fire

Do you remember what the disciples saw when the Spirit came into them at Pentecost? The Bible says that it looked like "tongues of fire" coming out of the sky. Let's think for a moment about your tongue. It is your tongue that allows you to speak.

Try this experiment: Hold onto your tongue and try to say something. You just can't communicate without your tongue! The Bible says there is great power in our tongues, because words are so powerful.

 *Your tongue has the power of life and death. - Proverbs 18:21a*

Let's look at how some of Jesus' followers allowed the Holy Spirit to control their tongues. After God sent His Holy Spirit to fill the disciples, Peter spoke

Day #4 continued:

the truth about Jesus to thousands of people. God's Holy Spirit gave Barnabas just the right words to encourage all the believers (Isaiah 50:4). And after God's Spirit filled Paul, Paul traveled all over the world to proclaim the incredible news that Jesus was alive, and that He offered new life to everyone.

 If you are a believer, you are filled with the same Spirit as Peter, Barnabas, and Paul! God's Spirit does not change! He is just as powerful in you as He was in them. Allow Him to control your tongue. He will give you the words to encourage people. And He will give you the words to tell others about how to be free from sin, and enter the kingdom of God.

Day #5: Encouraging Actions

Encouraging words are very important, and should we use them often. But there are also other ways to encourage people.

 *Barnabas sold a field he owned. He brought the money from the sale. He put it down at the apostles' feet. - Acts 4:37*

When Barnabas sold his land, he didn't keep the money to buy what he wanted. He gave it to the apostles to share with the other believers. Barnabas wanted to make sure that none of the believers went without anything that they needed. Just imagine what a blessing this was for the believers. It is a great encouragement to take care of someone's needs.

Later in Acts, we see that Barnabas stood by his friend Mark, even though Mark had made a mistake (Acts 15:37-38). Barnabas took Mark with him as he traveled to preach the good news. Barnabas invested his time into Mark. Barnabas' friendship and encouragement helped Mark become what God intended him to be. He was very useful in building God's kingdom (2 Timothy 4:11).

We see this kind of encouragement in action everyday. It is encouragement when your parents help you with your homework. It is encouragement when someone donates food to those in need. It is encouragement when your teacher gives you a hug or a smile.

 What is one way you can encourage someone with your actions? Can you do a chore to help your mom or dad? Can you teach a younger brother or sister to do something? Can you take your neighbor's trashcan in from the curb? Ask God whom He wants you to encourage, and do it this week!