

ENCOURAGEMENT: It's What Friends Do

This is Friends Sunday and I couldn't help but think about the qualities of a friend which are easily found in Barnabus: The Son of Encouragement.

This is a Godly Trait! Jesus told his disciples at one point, "I no longer call you servants, but I call you friends". He called them friends because he not only spent quality time with them but he also shared his life with them.

If you are a Christ follower, then learning how to be a Godly Friend to should be on the top of your list: Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Godly Friends

1) Sacrifice for Others

Acts 4:36-37 NIV Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), **37** sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

- a) This was at least one of the acts that earned Barnabas his name, He sold a property that belonged to him and gave the money to the church so they could care for those who were suddenly hungry and some who were homeless.
- b) Personal Sacrifice: That's putting teeth into your encouragement.
- c) A genuine friend helps out even when it comes at great personal cost.

A friend loves at all times Proverbs 17:17 NIV "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

2) Seek the Best in Others

In Acts Chapter 9 we meet up with Barnabas again. A man named Saul had experienced a radical conversion, this man who once had persecuted and executed Christians had now become a Christian himself, but he was having a little trouble gaining acceptance among his former enemies.

Acts 9:26-27 NIV When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took him and brought

him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

- a) Saul the former terrorist, was being shunned by the church, but Barnabas, the encourager, takes him by the hand and brings him to the leaders and says let me tell you about the change in my brother Saul.
- b) A true friend sees good in us that others can't. They encourage others by saying, "I believe in you"

3) Influence Others Spiritually

In Acts chapter 11 News has come to the Church leaders that revival has broken out in Antioch-- people are becoming Christians by the thousands.

The Apostles know just the guy to send down there to encourage the new believers... guess who they sent!

Acts 11:22-24 News of this [revival] reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

- a) Barnabas encourages the new believers in their faith, he was a strong spiritual example.
- b) A Godly friend brings the spiritual aspect into daily life.

4) Work for the Success of Others

Acts 11:25-26 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

- a) Saul had been out of the picture for about 9 years but Barnabas needed help in leading the new church at Antioch and he goes looking for Saul and he trains him to be a church leader.

At the end of the year at Antioch the pair head out on a missionary journey and the Scripture refers to them as Barnabas & Saul, but at some point along the way Saul gets a name change and from then on it's Paul & Barnabas. Barnabas has trained Saul so well that he surpasses him in leadership, and Barnabas cheers him on.

- b) Godly friends are not envious of others success they live for it! They are thrilled when they are able to encourage some success in others.

5) Help Others Up When They Fall.

Acts 15:36-39 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

- a) Barnabas again sees potential in someone despite a past failure.
- b) Rather than labeling him as a quitter, Barnabas gives him another chance.

We learn later that even Paul himself decides that Barnabas was right about Mark. In his second letter to Timothy Paul wrote, "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry." 2 Tim 2:11

Conclusion: God is the God of second chances!

The story of Barnabas is pretty cool, he was a great friend. But there's one person in the Bible who demonstrates friendship in a way that surpasses Barnabas.

I am talking about Jesus. Remember what he told his disciples: Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Jesus demonstrated His love by Sacrificing Himself for us on a cross.

Romans 5:6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.