

STUDY 7

Encouraging Others

ACTS 4:32-37; 9:26-28; 11:22-26

One night during a particularly low time in my life, I lay on my bed crying and asking God if he knew or cared about the situation that was overwhelming me. Within minutes the phone rang. A friend from the other side of the country, who had never called me before, asked how I was. She had felt led to call right then, not knowing how down I was. Her encouraging words meant far more to me than a mere long-distance phone call from a friend. They reassured me that God did indeed know and care about what was happening in my life.

Everyone needs encouragement—and some of us need it more than others! Encouragement cheers us on, gives us hope, inspires confidence, and renews our strength in difficult circumstances. This study shows us that encouraging and supporting others through our words is a privilege, and the responsibility of every Christian.

1. What words have encouraged you recently? What made them special?

READ ACTS 4:32-37.

2. What attitudes and actions characterized the early church in Jerusalem?

3. What do you learn about Barnabas (Joseph) from this passage?

READ ACTS 9:26-28.

4. What role did Barnabas play in Saul's (Paul's) life when he first went to Jerusalem?

5. In what ways do you think Barnabas encouraged Paul?

How did it further God's purposes for Paul's life?

READ ACTS 11:22-26.

6. List the details described in this passage about the church at Antioch. (See also 11:19-21.)

7. Why do you think the church at Jerusalem chose Barnabas to go to Antioch (verses 22-24)?

8. What did Barnabas encourage the new believers in Antioch to do (verses 23)?
9. What words would you use to encourage someone to remain true to the Lord in spite of difficult circumstances?
10. After Barnabas saw the need in Antioch, he sought out Saul's help (verses 25-26). In what ways do you think Saul (Paul) benefited from spending a year with a man like Barnabas?

Life Changes

11. Who has been a Barnabas in your life? What words has he or she used that have been an encouragement to you?

Glorifying God

12. Brainstorm practical ways in which you can offer words of encouragement to others (write an encouraging note, make a phone call, affirm a person's character, give a gentle prod, etc.). Which of these will you choose to do this week? For whom?