

# Gather and Encourage

Has anyone ever heard of the ministry the Navigators? It's an international discipleship ministry that started back in the 1930s. The man that started this ministry was Dawson Trotman. About 50 years into this ministry he was boating with some people at Schroon Lake in NY.

The boat hit a wave and two people shot out of the boat, one was Dawson, the other was a little girl. Dawson grabbed the girl and held her head above water as they waited for the boat to rescue them. The girl survived but Dawson did not, he drowned in the process of saving the girl.

Time Magazine wrote an article about it saying: "He lived to save others. His death was just the way he would have planned it." His obituary said: "Dawson Trotman, always lifting someone up."

Those are the words he is remembered by. He truly left a legacy. I don't know about you but that encourages me! I want to be remembered like that. We can be encouraged by the strangest things sometimes, even in someone's death because of how they lived.

Today I'm talking about encouragement. And at the end of this message. We are going to take a few moments to encourage one another. I want you to be thinking about it. If God puts something on your heart, be obedient, share it.

It may be a specific word for a specific person, it may be for the church, it may be a testimony of something God did years ago or something He did yesterday. Sometimes we forget that one of the greatest forms of encouragement is a testimony. It gives people hope, lifts them up because they see that if God can do it for someone else, He can do it for them!

At camp we had one young man share about addiction, depression, and cutting himself. He pulled up his sleeves and showed everyone the scars. He talked about how God freed him of all of that during his time at teen challenge. The next night at the altar call a sweet young girl came up because she too had been depressed and cutting, she wanted this freedom that she heard of the night before. What if that young man hadn't shared? Be ready to share today.

## **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)**

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,  
25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The word "encourage" in the Greek is parakaleo meaning "to call to one's side, to comfort, to console, to strengthen." Basically, to put courage in. The book of Hebrews encourages us to encourage one another. Someone wrote, "Encouragement is the kind of expression that helps

someone want to be a better Christian, even when life is rough... To encourage is to inspire another with courage.”

**John 14:16 (AMP)**

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthenener, Standby), to be with you forever—

This same Greek word for “encourage” is the one used for the name “Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Counselor” speaking of the Holy Spirit. We typically think of the work of the Holy Spirit as signs and wonders. But, when we encourage one another, we show that the Spirit really lives within us. Encouragement is one of the best indicators that the Spirit is working in and through a church!

The word “encourage” is in the present tense. Don’t wait for others to encourage you. Take the initiative. We must encourage even if others won’t. Note that we are to “encourage one another”. That means that it is not only for leaders of people with the gift of encouragement, but for every one of us.

**Hebrews 3:12-13 (NIV)**

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

When a person is discouraged, when we fail to encourage, sin can deceive and harden his heart to the point that it becomes sinful and unbelieving, leading the person to turn his back from God. Someone wrote, “People live by encouragement. Without it they die. Slowly... Sadly... Bitterly.”

Back in Hebrews 10, v24 says, “let us consider...” It means “to observe attentively, fix one’s eyes or mind upon.” We are to focus on encouraging one another. It is never accidental but intentional.

The verse continues, “let us consider how we may spur one another on...” To spur means “to stir up, provoke, stimulate or incite someone to do something.” In other words, to create a thirst. A thirst for what? “toward love and good deeds.” That’s how we measure encouragement. It is not a fuzzy feeling, feelings are nothing more than feelings.” If someone becomes a more loving person or a servant to God and people, then we know that we really encouraged them

v25 says, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” We usually use this verse to remind people to be faithful in attending church services.

But why? “Let us not give up meeting together” and “let us encourage one another”. That means that, even if we attend church services, if we fail to encourage others, we are not actually doing a big part of what we are here to do.

I think all that we do at church is important, that’s why we do them. But you can worship, pray, and read the Word without other people, you actually should, just as you should together. But have you tried encouragement by yourself? I may work for a moment, but it doesn’t give hope or spur you on to love and good deeds for the long run....

There’s a great example of a person of encouragement in the Word.

**Acts 4:34-37 (NIV)**

34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

36 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.

The book of Acts singled out Barnabas among those who sold their properties to help others. The apostles nicknamed him “Son of Encouragement” or “one who encourages others.” It was just any Christian who nicknamed him, it was the apostles themselves, the men of God that knew him best....

Have you ever thought, “If I would get a nickname for who I am or what I am doing, what would be it? If my life would be reduced to a name, what would be it?” Would it be Barnabas or Judas or something else?

Note that Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith”. Remember what I said a while ago that encouragement is a sure sign that the Spirit works in and through you?

Right after after giving the example of Barnabas at the end of Acts 4, we see the error of Ananias and his wife Sapphira in chapter 5. Peter described Ananias as one whose heart Satan filled. Acts had set a contrast between Barnabas and Ananias. Satan controlled Ananias. But the Spirit controlled Barnabas. This gives us a clue as to why he lived up to his nickname “Encourager.” The Holy Spirit (Helper, Comforter, Advocate, Counselor) was in control of his life.

Who is in control of your life?

Then we find Barnabas in Acts 9 sticking out his neck for Paul the apostle. Paul just became a believer himself. But he persecuted Christians before.

### **Acts 9:26-27 (NIV)**

26 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.

Barnabas, the encourager, supported Paul when no one else would like to believe him. I wonder, "What could have happened to Paul if Barnabas did not sponsor him?"

Later on, Barnabas gave Paul his first ministry break. When God opened a door in Antioch, the early church sent Barnabas there. Barnabas could have taken the Antioch work for himself. Yet he took time, money and effort to search for Paul in Tarsus "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."

His investment for Paul paid off. Note that, on his own, Barnabas brought "a great number of people" to the Lord. But, with Paul on his team, they "taught great numbers of people." Their ministry was so effective that "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

Now, when God sent the team on their first missionary trip, Barnabas took with them his cousin John Mark as their helper. He ended up bailing on them...

Some time later Paul wanted to do a follow-up. Again true to his encouraging form, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark a second chance. To an encourager, everyone deserves a second chance "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."

Sadly, "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company." This was the last time Barnabas' name appeared in Acts. The focus zoomed in on Paul from here till the end of the book. Barnabas left a prominent partner and chose to stand by a person dubbed as a "failure" or a "quitter."

Many years later, we see Paul commending John Mark: "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)"

While awaiting his execution, Paul asked Timothy to bring with him John Mark. When a person is facing death, he likes to surround himself with close relatives and dear friends. In Paul's own words, "[Mark] is helpful to me in my ministry." The encouraging efforts of Barnabas paid off.

I share all of this to show the influence and impact that Barnabas and his encouragement had on some people that are pretty key to our walk as Christians. What if he hadn't included Paul and vouched for him after his conversion? Paul went on to write 13 epistles.

What if he hadn't stuck with Mark after his failure and labeled him a quitter? Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. Even though his name is not in it too often, almost half of the New Testament was impacted by this encourager, Barnabas, even if he did not write a single letter. We need more encouragers like him. Would you be a Barnabas to others?

Earlier I shared how Dawson Trotman was labeled as a person who always lifted people up. At his funeral, Billy Graham said this of Trotman's life: "I think Dawson Trotman had personally touched more lives than anybody that I have ever known." You too can touch other people's lives.

Charles Swindoll wrote, "I know of no one more needed, more valuable, more Christ-like than the individual who is committed to the ministry of encouragement."