



*Encouragers
of Young Women
Lesson 06*

The Ministry of Encouragement

by Debbie Pruden

*And His mercy is upon generation after
generation toward those who fear Him.*

Luke 1:50

Introduction

I am in the family lines of the clan MacDonald. They came from the northern Isles of Scotland. MacDonald means son of Donald. In times past this surname would have given you a general knowledge of who I was and most importantly some of the family traits you might see in me; outwardly you may notice that I am bowlegged! But what we want to look at today is something that represents someone by their actions, for example: the MacDonalds are typically loyal.



God in His Word never tells us to be something and leaves us to ourselves, to come up with what that looks like. Titus 2 is surely a mandate that tells us to be an encourager to younger women. So let's look at someone whom the Bible records as an encourager.

Barnabas, "Son of encouragement"

He was born Joseph and was from the family line of the Levites, a priestly line well taught in the scriptures. From the island of Cyprus where we know many of the early Christians had gone. Acts 4:36 tells us he was given the name Barnabas by the believers because his strongest characteristics were more in line with this name.

Can we say he was a well-taught early member of the church, not unlike the senior ladies in our church.

Our first encounter with him is in Acts 4:36-37 where he sold some land and gave some money to the church. **He was aware of others needs and was generous** in helping to meet those needs.

Acts 9:26-27 Tells us he stood up for Paul and got him **involved** in the local group of believers. When he first attempts this there is great resistance. He is unmoved and persuades them to include Paul. Barnabas **understood a saved life is a New life**. He was **not deterred** by popular opinion because he had **spent time** with Paul and had **discerned** his changed character. He was active in wanting to build the church through the lives of the believers he was in contact with.

Next we see him in Acts 11:22-24 where we learn that there were many new believers in Antioch and they needed someone to go to them and help them. Who is chosen to **go and help** these young believers? Barnabas. Isn't it wonderful in the church to have those seasoned believers who are willing to go and just teach good things and encourage. It says, "He was **rejoicing** in the grace of God and encouraging them to remain true to the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith."

In verses 29-30, the church was in need of more funds. Getting those funds to them presented a number of potential problems. They needed someone **trustworthy** and Barnabas along with his co-worker Paul fit the description. They finished this task and returned with John Mark, who was Barnabas' cousin. The three of them were set apart by the Holy Spirit to set out on the first missionary trip. At this point it is probably not Paul in charge but Barnabas. He saw how the Lord was working in Paul's life and quietly took the back seat.

Later there was conflict with Paul concerning the younger less experienced John Mark. Because of his actions Paul felt strongly that he should not be included in the work of the Lord. Barnabas took up the task of **mentoring** this younger man. Can we see ourselves on either side of this debate? Barnabas was a **peacemaker**. He did not hold a grudge against Paul for having the opposite view but kept on going. He was **forgiving**. Barnabas must have done a wonderful job mentoring Mark because in II Timothy 4:11 Paul says, "*pick up [John] Mark and bring him with you for he is useful to me for service.*"

The fruit of Barnabas being an encourager has even touched our lives today, because without this faithful encourager we would not likely have any of Paul's letters or the book of Mark [attributed to John Mark].

To be an encourager looks like Barnabas! Don't be discouraged.

*For I am confident
of this one thing,
that He who began
a good work in you
will perfect it
until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6*

Encouragement in Action

Susan Hunt has some wonderful thoughts in her book that can help us to see that this is not the unsurmountable task that it may seem.

When God's people assemble, whether for Sabbath worship, a Bible study, or Christians having lunch together, there should be an atmosphere of encouragement.

The encouragement imperative in Hebrews 10:24 tells us to . . . *consider how we may stimulate one another to love and good works*. To understand how to put this into practice, visualize a cave with people hiding inside. This represents people hiding their spiritual gifts. It is impossible to *stimulate them to love and good works* when they are hiding. But why are they hiding? Usually the assumption is made that these people are not committed to the Lord or to the ministry of the church. Their non-involvement is interpreted a lack of commitment. Of course the commitment level is sometimes a problem. But more often, the problem is not lack of commitment but lack of confidence.

Generally, people are in the cave because that is the safest place to be, or at least, they perceive it to be the safest place. Involvement necessitates vulnerability that is risky. What if I fail? What if I don't meet the expectations of others? What if I'm criticized or rejected? Most of us simply are not willing to take that kind of risk unless we are operating in a safe environment.

God provides safety for His people. We should seek to do the same.

We must make it safer for people to be outside of the cave than it is to be inside the cave. And God tells us how to do this: *“let us not forsake meeting together . . . but encouraging one another”* (Hebrews 10:25). Encouraging relationships can make it safe for people to come out of the cave and to use their spiritual gifts *“for the common good”* (1 Corinthians 12:7).

As the threads of lives are knit together, they become so interwoven that an environment of security is created. When fear is removed, there is freedom to serve. The security of the relationship becomes a safer place than the aloneness of the cave. The light of encouragement instills the courage and confidence a woman needs to come out of the cave. Then she can be equipped to use her spiritual gifts *“for the common good,”* and the church is enriched.



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