

**Session Five - CROSSROADS: The Way of Encouragement April 10th (Palm Sunday) Bill Cahusac****Reflect back**

- Share stories about forgiveness, or debts being cancelled, to encourage one another.
- What particularly resonated with you from today's talk?

**Review the teaching**

Acts 4v32-27

The etymology of "Encouragement" suggests making strong and heartening; putting courage into people. Our culture is self-centred so encouraging is counter-culture and costly.

Barnabas is a character who keeps showing up in Acts. He is Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus and a man of means (he sold a tract of land giving proceeds to the church) and was cousin to John Mark. The Early Church nicknamed him "Barnabas" which means Son of Encouragement and Comfort (Greek) and Son of Prophet (Aramaic). Note that 1Cor 14v3 says prophecy is for strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

At the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas encouraged them to accept Paul after his conversion (Acts 9). The church was nervous and afraid but Barnabas took risks to be Paul's advocate. He looked beyond the reputation of Paul the persecutor and saw that God was at work.

In Antioch (Acts 11v19-30) Barnabas disciplined the non-Jews and was himself filled with the Holy Spirit. He was seen as being trustworthy and carried money back to Jerusalem. In Acts 13v2 He and Paul were commissioned for missionary service and later he was unafraid of the difficult conversation when John Mark and Paul fell out (Acts 15v36-39). He stayed with John Mark and later the relationship with Paul was restored (2 Tim 4v11).

So, what can we learn from Barnabas the Encourager?

1. Be on the lookout for those in whom God is working (might be unexpected). Paul was a persecutor but became a missionary. Barnabas saw the potential.
2. Champion others. Barnabas supported Paul and John Mark. Big up others, not yourself.
3. Take the opportunity to tell others what they mean to us - it has a powerful impact. Note that psychologist Rick Hansen says it takes 5 positive statements to neutralise one negative bias. So, be specific in being positive and take 20 seconds to say it. Say it, send a card and if you receive one, keep it as a future reminder.
4. Be bridge builders not wall builders. What opportunities do we have? Don't cancel people, give them the benefit of the doubt. It takes time and needs emotional intelligence.
5. Be the one who gives others the benefit of the doubt - they have been having a bad day.
6. Know when to step back and let others have the limelight. Learn to play the second fiddle.

When people notice you following these principles and ask "Why?" have your reasons ready - Jesus calls us to love our neighbours.

Try your best to live by encouraging others. Remember: Encouragement is the oxygen to the soul.

**Realise the value**

- Bill asked us to consider which of the 6 points above we could do. Share your answer with the Collective and be intentional to be accountable to each other next week.
- How can we develop a lifestyle of encouraging others?
- Try working in pairs speaking encouragement to each other that lasts more than 20 seconds.
- How does this make you each feel?
- What might we say when those around us see us being intentionally encouraging?