

## **The Power of Encouragement**

### **Acts 11:19-30**

#### **A. Encouragers Include Those Others Exclude (Acts 11:19-24)**

“So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”

#### **B. Encouragers See Potential Where Others See Only Problems (Acts 11:25-26)**

“And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

#### **C. Encouragers Motivate Where Others Only Nag (Acts 11:27-30)**

“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”

**For further thought and discussion:**

**Getting Started**

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?
2. Who has encouraged you recently? What did they do? How did it affect you? Do you think of yourself as an encouraging person?

**Going Deeper**

3. Please read Acts 11:19-24. What do these verses tell you about the first Christians? What differences do you see between them and Christians today? Up to this point in church history, the Christians have only preached to their fellow Jews. What additional barriers would you imagine these first cross-cultural missionaries faced? Why does the church in Jerusalem send Barnabas to Antioch? What do you observe about Barnabas from these verses? What do you learn about encouragement from his example? Are you by nature an includer or an excluder? How can you follow Barnabas' example?
4. Please read Acts 11:25-26. What new problems and challenges would you imagine the new Gentile church would face which the Jewish Christian churches did not? Why does Barnabas go to search for Saul? Why might some believers advise him against making this search? What does this reveal to you about Barnabas? Who has opened doors for you? What were the results of Barnabas giving Saul a chance to teach at Antioch? Is there anyone whose potential you need to encourage?
5. Please read Acts 11:27-30 and compare with Acts 4:36-37. Which of the two (Saul or Barnabas) seems to have had a greater influence on the church at Antioch? What do you learn about encouragement from these verses? Why are encouragers more motivational than discouragers? What lessons do you draw from this passage for parents? Bosses? Friends?
6. What similarities do you see between Barnabas and Jesus?

**Application**

What is one thing you will apply from this discussion?