

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Praise Him, Your Love Never Fails, All for Love, Amazing Love, We Believe

WELCOME

Looking back at the past week, what experiences did you have that turned out to be a funny experience or a more sobering reminder of how truth really matters in our lives?

WORD

ACTS 11:19–30

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ 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; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. ²⁵ And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

In **Acts 10**, we saw how Peter shared the truth that matters most — the gospel — for the first time, to a gentile (Cornelius) and his household. Meanwhile, the rest of the scattered believers from Jerusalem made their way to other parts of the Roman empire being witnesses for Christ wherever they went.

However, they only shared the gospel to their fellow Jews (**v.19**). But thankfully, there were some believers who began sharing about Jesus to the Greeks also (**v.20**). Aren't we the same today? We love to stick together with those who are like us, we only talk about Jesus with those we feel comfortable with, or worse, we only talk about Christ among fellow believers!

Now Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to see what God was doing among the gentiles who heard the gospel in the multi-cultural city of Antioch. This cross-cultural gospel sharing pleased God such that a large number of gentiles believed in Jesus (**v. 21**). Barnabas rejoiced when he saw God's grace at work among the non-Jews who turned to Christ and he encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (**v.22-23**).

But is it easy to encourage others? If we are honest, we know that it is difficult to be an encourager. We can be quite self-centered and therefore not natural for us to encourage others especially when we feel we need encouragement ourselves.

So why was Barnabas sent to encourage the church in Antioch? In **Acts 4:36**, we learn that Barnabas means "Son of Encouragement" and was the name given by the apostles to a Cyprian Levite man named Joseph. This man was generous (**v.37**) and he also encouraged Saul by coming alongside him in ministry as they served together for a year in Antioch (**Acts 9:26-27**). At that point in Saul's life, nobody else among the believers wanted to associate with him, only Barnabas went out of his way to welcome him into God's family.

Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. He is able to encourage others because he is filled with the Holy Spirit! How about us? Are we focused more on ourselves and our needs, or do we see other people and their need for encouragement? When we are Spirit-filled and remain faithful to the simple message of the gospel

WORD (cont'd)

(Galatians 2:20-3:5), we too can encourage others to be true to the Lord with all their hearts by...

- Focusing on God and others
- Being generous
- Caring for the unwanted
- Spending time with people
- Encouraging others to serve and be generous

Remember that the Christian life is a life lived **by faith**—it **begins** by faith, it **continues** by faith. The Christian life is lived by faith **all the way**.

The key to encouraging others to be **faithful** is the **gospel**, without it, the encouragement that we can give is temporary at best. But because of the gospel, we can encourage others to be faithful to the Lord with their whole hearts because we know that no matter how difficult our life on earth can be, heaven is our ultimate destiny because that is where Jesus is for eternity. Indeed, we can only encourage others towards faithfulness in light of the truth that matters most—the **gospel of Jesus Christ**.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, how much of an encourager are you to your family? What makes it a challenge for you to encourage others?
2. When people look at your life, will they say that you are a “good person, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”? What needs to change so that you can be like Barnabas and encourage others to be faithful to the Lord?
3. Think of people closest to you who need encouragement right now. What will you do in the next 24 hours to encourage them?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for the people God has put in your life that you know need encouragement that comes from the simple truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Think of those who you may have avoided sharing Christ with because they are different from you. Share the gospel to them, and as they respond to Jesus, encourage them to be faithful to him with all their hearts.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends