

The Team of a Leader

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Strength in Weakness: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Paul Series

Acts 9, 11, 15

Remember Leaders:

We all need community to be healthy, growing disciples of Jesus, which is why your small group is so vital at Vineyard Columbus. While we can experience amazing worship and solid biblical teaching at our weekend services, there is only one place where we can safely let others into our struggles and fears—one place where people who really know us can challenge us and exhort us—and that is in small group. So don't try to re-create what happens during our weekend services (only on a much, much smaller basis) because that is NOT what your small group is all about. It's about community in Jesus. Knowing others and being known; sharing and dialoguing back and forth. Aim for balancing discussion and teaching; more sharing than answering; and more listening than telling. And always remember, that where two or more are gathered, Jesus is there!

Sermon Summary

This week's sermon was about our need to lead *with others and not alone!* What we see in the life of the apostle Paul, as well as with other leaders throughout scripture is that great leaders had *teams*. Jesus had the twelve disciples. David had his mighty men. Elijah and Elisha were a team together. The biblical model for leadership is to lead with others, never alone! The apostle Paul had two main teammates: Barnabas and Timothy. Let's consider who these two men were and how they contributed to Paul's leadership.

Main Points:

Barnabas is known in the New Testament as "the encourager." (see Acts 4:36) To encourage is to cheer someone on. An encourager is someone who is in your corner and *for you*. *We all* need someone like that in our lives! What we see in the life of Barnabas is that at every crucial juncture in the life of the early church and in Paul's ministry, he uses his gift of encouragement to move the Kingdom forward. There are four different groups of people that we see Barnabas encouraging:

- THE FEARFUL – Acts 9:26-28 – Barnabas encouraged the Jerusalem church to embrace the newly converted Saul when they were fearful.
- THE FAITHFUL – Acts 11:19-24 – Barnabas encouraged some evangelistic gentiles who preached the gospel in Antioch, where a thriving church grew up and became an important center for Christian missions in the first century.

- THE FUTURE STARS – Acts 11: 25-26 – Barnabas included Saul (Paul) in his work at Antioch which no doubt contributed to Paul’s growth as a leader as well as that church’s success.
- THE FAILURES – Acts 15:36-41 – Barnabas chose to team up with John Mark even though Paul did not believe him to be reliable. We learn that in the end, John Mark becomes a close associate of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13) and is reunited in ministry with the apostle Paul (Col.4:10 & 2 Tim.4:11).

TIMOTHY was Paul’s other key “teammate” and their relationship was a mentoring one. Teams are not only made up of colleagues and equals, but also those we may be “bringing along” in ministry. Paul’s relationship with Timothy was both one of modeling leadership, spiritual fathering and mutual dependence.

Link to the Sermon

We all need encouragement—throughout our lives, at certain times more than at other times, but we all need it! To encourage someone according to the dictionary, is *to inspire with courage, spirit or hope; to hearten; to spur on; stimulate; to give help or support to*. Not only do we all need encouragement, we all express and experience encouragement differently. What is encouraging to one person may not mean anything to another.

Take a moment in the group to share thoughts and experiences about encouragement. Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

- Think of a time when you were down, and someone did or said something that you found really encouraging. What did they do or say, and why was it so encouraging to you?
- When a friend is discouraged, what do you usually think of doing to cheer them up?
- Have you ever experienced the *opposite* of encouragement—someone was trying to cheer you on, but what they did only further *discouraged* you? What made that experience so discouraging to you?

This week’s Bible study

We are once again going to look at the book of Hebrews. Scholars disagree about the author of Hebrews, since the writer never clearly identifies himself or herself in the manuscript. There are some, however, (the first one being Tertullian, church leader who lived in the 2nd and 3rd centuries) who believe the author is Barnabas. He was a Levite and therefore particularly concerned about the temple rituals and sacrifices—major themes throughout Hebrews. But more importantly for us in this study, the book of Hebrews is full of encouragement. In fact, at the close of Hebrews (13:22) we read this: *Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter*. In the Greek, the word translated “exhortation” is the same word used for “encouragement.”

We will be looking at a few different passages from Hebrews to consider how these can encourage us today as followers of Jesus.

Hebrews 4:14-16 *This passage describes Jesus as our great "high priest." The high priest served as a mediator between God (who is holy) and people (who are sinful). In Judaism, only the high priest was permitted into the presence of God (the Holy of Holies in the temple) where he would go once a year, offering sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the people. In the holy of holies was the mercy seat where the blood of sacrificed animals was poured to cover the sins of the people.*

- How is Jesus similar to the Jewish high priest and how is He *better*?
- What is most *encouraging* to you about Jesus and why?

Hebrews 6:16-20; 7:17-25 *Melchizedek is both a king and a priest from the Old Testament (see Gen. 14:18-20). He is considered a pre-figuration of Christ.*

- How is Jesus like Melchizedek?
- What are some specific encouragements listed in these two passages? Which is most encouraging to you and why?

Hebrews 10:19-25 *The author again uses vivid images from the Old Testament of the temple, sacrifices and priests to make a point about our relationship with God through Jesus. "Therefore" links this passage with all that went before.*

- Because of everything that Christ has done for us, what can we now do that we couldn't do before? What does this mean to you personally?
- What role should we play in one another's lives?
- Share an example of how someone "spurred" you on or encouraged you? *To spur means to urge on, to incite to action, growth or development.*

Connecting to us

One take-away from these passages is that we can be greatly encouraged in Jesus no matter what is going on in our lives because of all He has done and continues to do for us.

- List specific truths you learned in today's study that truly encourage you and explain why they are so encouraging.

Living it out

Another take-away is that we (like Barnabas) should strive to be encouragers within our church family.

- List things you can begin to do or say right now to be an encouragement to another person. Which things are easy for you to do and which are more difficult. Why is that?

Ministry Time

Allow time at the end to welcome the Holy Spirit and wait on Him for direction. We really want people to experience the presence of God personally and small group is the perfect context for this to happen. Model for your group risk taking and a willingness to "look foolish!" Remember that God *often* comes in power when we are weak!