



**(SLIDE #1) ENCOURAGERS
HARDENED BY DECEIT!**

- I. (Slide #2) Encouragers Are Such A Blessing In The Church!**
- A. One Of The Greatest Blessings In The Church -- Encouragers!

 - B. One Of The Greatest Needs In Most Congregations -- MORE Encouragers!

 - C. When I Mention The Word “Encourager,” What Biblical People Immediately Come To Your Mind?
 - 1. **(Slide #3) Barnabas!**
 - a. His name originally was Joseph.
 - b. Because of his heart and blessedness to his brethren, the Apostles called him Barnabas meaning “son of encouragement.” What a great epithet!
 - c. He was known for his willingness to assist, to build up, and to support brethren!

 - 2. He had a benevolent, merciful, generous heart!
 - a. Ac. 4:36,37 “And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet.”
 - b. When brethren were hurting, this man was eager to assist!
 - c. He had a sacrificial heart; he was willing to sell possessions to assist those in need.

 - 3. He defended the integrity of those who made drastic changes spiritually.
 - a. In Ac. 9, vicious, terroristic Saul was on the way to Damascus to arrest Christians, throw them into jail, and have them executed.
 - b. The Lord spoke to him, blinded him, sent him into town, and sent Ananias to proclaim the Gospel to him and to call him to become a Christian!
 - c. Saul willingly submitted to the Lord who had spoken to him, humbled him, and convicted him.
 - d. He was immediately baptized! Ac. 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4
 - e. As soon as he was baptized, people of Damascus determined to kill him; the brethren had to help him escape by letting him down from a window and over the wall of the city.

- f. Years later when Paul and Barnabas went back to Jerusalem, Paul longed to join himself (place membership or be united with) with the Christians in Jerusalem.
 - g. However, they knew of Paul and his reputation; they knew what he had done to Christians; they knew about his mission to Damascus; they did not trust him or his conversion at all!
 - h. Barnabas stepped in, defended Paul for his genuine conversion, and convinced the brethren to accept Paul into fellowship!
 - i. Ac. 9:26-30 “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. ²⁹And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. ³⁰When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.”
4. He, along with Paul strongly supported the Gentiles’ conversion and urged the Jerusalem elders to stop the Judaizing brethren who refused to accept the Gentiles’ conversion.
- a. Paul and Barnabas taught and converted many Gentiles on the First Missionary Journey!
 - b. There were also Gentile Christians in the Church in Antioch.
 - c. Judaizing brethren tried to force the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, claiming that they were not truly God’s people (were not saved) unless they were circumcised in the flesh!
 - d. Paul and Barnabas strongly defended the Gentile brethren and valiantly opposed the Judaizers.
 - e. Ac. 15:1,2 “And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ ²Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”
 - f. Ac. 15:12 “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.”
 - g. After the elders and Apostles in Jerusalem stepped forward to stop the Judaizers, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch.
 - h. Ac. 15:35 “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”
5. He believed in those who fell; he wanted them to have a second chance; he helped restore their faith and confidence.

- a. Ac. 15:36-40 “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing.’ ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.”
 - b. For whatever reason, John Mark got discouraged, left, and returned home from the First Missionary Journey.
 - c. When Paul and Barnabas discussed a second journey, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them; Paul adamantly disagreed and refused to consider it.
 - d. Because Barnabas believed in John Mark, he separated from Paul, took John Mark with him, and did mission work on the island of Cyprus.
6. Here was an encourager who” helped people in the Church, helped get people INTO the Church, defended those who WERE in the Church, and believed in and exhorted those who were discouraged or who failed miserably in the Church! WHAT AN ENCOURAGER!

D. **(Slide #4)** Encouragers Of Friends:

1. Jn. 11:19 “And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.”
2. Jesus empathized with them and comforted them too! Of course He did MUCH more -- He raised Lazarus from the dead!

E. **(Slide #5)** Other Examples Of Encouragers In The Church.

1. Paul:
 - a. Paul encouraged the Macedonians! Ac. 20:2 “Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece”
 - b. He wanted brethren to encourage each other because of their love for each other! Col. 2:1-3 “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
2. The Thessalonians:

- a. I Thess. 5:11 “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”
- b. I Thess. 5:14 “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

F. (Slide #6) God-Provided Comfort!

- 1. The God of comfort encourages us! II Cor. 1:3,4 “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 2. The revealed Scriptures encourage us. Rom. 15:4 “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

G. (Slide #7) Why Encouragers Are SUCH A BLESSING In The Church:

- 1. They guide brethren to God and His comfort!
- 2. They sacrifice and assist those who are hurting.
- 3. They help incorporate new Christians and new members into the Church!
- 4. They rebuke those who try to discourage, refuse to accept, or mistreat new Christians or new members of the congregation!
- 5. They comfort and lift up the struggling!
- 6. They motivate those struggling with temptation and sin.
- 7. They inspire the young to preparation for service in the Kingdom!
- 8. They urge members to step up to areas of service -- elders, deacons, Bible Class teachers, compassion and help for all areas of Church work!
- 9. They support and defend leaders of the Church -- elders, preachers, deacons, et.al.
- 10. They try to restore the fallen. The word from “Rescue The Perishing” beautifully express this sentiment: “Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, feelings lie buried that grace can restore. Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness, chords that were broken will vibrate once more.”

II. (Slide #8) Christians Hardened By Deceit!

A. Encouragers -- WHAT A BLESSING!

B. (Slide #9) BUT, Encouragers Can Become Discouraged!

1. (Slide #10) Heb. 3:12,13 “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘*Today*,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
2. Deceitfulness of sin can discourage and harden brethren, even encouragers!
3. Personal struggles, pressure from others, and attacks from others can dishearten encouragers.

C. (Slide #11) Personal Struggles:

1. (▶) It may be the deceit of riches (focus upon riches instead of the blessing you can be to others).
 - a. Mt. 13:22 “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”
 - b. I Tim. 6:9,10 “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
2. (▶) It may be the pleasures of sin that seem to give joy for a season (the encourager loses his focus upon what brings the TRUE, LASTING joy)! Heb. 11:25
3. (▶) Lust can cause an encourager to lose his focus and leave his mission!
 - a. Pr. 5:2-14 “For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth *is* smoother than oil; ⁴But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. ⁶Lest you ponder *her* path of life-- Her ways are unstable; You do not know *them*. ⁷Therefore hear me now, *my* children, And do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸Remove your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house, ⁹Lest you give your honor to others, And your years to the cruel *one*; ¹⁰Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors *go* to the house of a foreigner; ¹¹And you mourn at last, When your flesh and your body are consumed, ¹²And say: ‘How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! ¹³I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! ¹⁴I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation.’”

- b. Gal. 5:16 “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”
 - c. I Thess. 4:3-5 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;”
4. BEWARE! Heb. 3:12 “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;”

D. (Slide #12) Pressure From Others:

1. (▶) The people in the text of Heb. 3:12,13 were being pressured by their non-Christian family and friends.
 - a. They were pressuring the Hebrew Christians to leave the Church, to leave Christ, and to leave their brethren!
 - b. They saw the Law of Moses as THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION; they saw Christianity as an upstart and impotent religion!
 - c. Christians today face pressure from family and friends who do not believe the Truth, who castigate the Church as a cult, and who ridicule loyalty to the Word of God!
2. (▶) Christians feel pressure from denomination teachers and members.
 - a. They long for acceptance.
 - b. Many believe in ecumenical fellowship; when we do not extend that, we are castigated.
 - c. They pervert (change) true worship as ordained by God; they ridicule those who seek to worship as God authorized as “old fashioned” and “narrow minded!”
3. (Slide #13) Christians feel pressure from atheists and agnostics who ridicule Christianity.
4. (▶) Christians feel pressure from those who ridicule holiness and morality.
5. We must be loyal to God, the Lord, and the Church!
 - a. We cannot leave Christ, HE IS THE SON OF GOD! Heb. 1:5
 - b. We cannot worship angels, created beings; we serve the Divine Son of God! Heb. 1,2
 - c. We cannot serve Moses; he was a prophet; Jesus is a Divine Mediator! Heb. 3,4
 - d. We cannot serve the Law of Moses; Aaron the High Priest made animal sacrifices that could not take away sin; Jesus offered His Blood; It totally cleanses sin! Heb. 5-10
 - e. We do not live under the Law of Moses that demanded perfection; we serve Christ; we rely upon His Blood and His forgiveness! Heb. 11-13
 - f. We cannot alter worship. Jn. 4:24

- g. We cannot condone immoral living. Those who practice immorality face the wrath of God and cannot go to Heaven! Col. 3:6; Gal. 5:21
6. How should Christians react to pressure from others?
 - a. Like Joseph did: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Gen. 39:9
 - b. **(Slide #14)** Heb. 12:1,2 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

E. **(Slide #15)** Attacks From Brethren:

1. Sadly, some encouragers give up because of being attacked and lied about by jealous, mean-spirited, evil-hearted brethren!
2. Some turn against Christians and viciously attack them.
 - a. Gal. 5:15 “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”
 - b. Diotrephes: “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.” III Jn. 9,10
 - c. I Tim. 5:19 “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.”
3. Some become jealous and want positions of power or influence; thus they attack others in an attempt to exalt themselves. The “Super Apostles” at Corinth attacked Paul and tried to turn the hearts of the Corinthian brethren against Paul. II Corinthians
4. Imagine how Moses felt!
 - a. When Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel leave Egypt, Pharaoh made life harder for the Israelites. The people complained about Moses, “you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.” Ex. 5:21
 - b. They complained against him for water and food! Ex. 15:24; Ex. 16:2,3; Nu. 20:4
 - c. Miriam and Aaron, his sister and brother, criticized him for the wife that he married; they also accused him of assuming too much authority. Nu. 12

- d. 250 leaders allied against him with Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On accusing him of assuming too much authority. God destroyed them all!
Nu. 16
 - 5. If you attack and destroy an encourager and cause him/her to cease their encouragement, God will hold YOU responsible!
- F. The Call Of Scripture:
- 1. Jn. 13:34, 35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - 2. Eph. 4:29 “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” [ESV -- “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

(Slide #16) Conclusion:

- A. Encouragers -- What A Blessing!
- B. Seek To Be One!
- C. Encouragers -- Let Nothing And No One Deter You From Your Gift And From Your Ministry To Others!!!
- D. Just Remember Paul’s Precious Charge And Promise: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
Gal. 6:9
 - 1. Don’t EVER give up!
 - 2. Keep being an encourager; God will surely bless you!!!!