



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Giving To God Series, Lesson 30

Lesson Title: Give a Gift of Words –
Encouragement

Take Home Point: Give a gift of words – give
encouragement.

Warm-Up:

Imagine that you have reared your children to responsible adulthood, perhaps even assisting other children through programs such as Big Brother/Big Sister. (This may already be true for you, but if not, imagine!) You know you didn't do a perfect job, but you now have this store of understanding and knowledge about what it takes. One day you get a phone call; it's the mayor, who says, "We want to offer new parents education in how to raise their children, and we want you to be one of our mentoring teachers. You can provide just the encouragement they need." How do you respond? "Well, Mayor, I appreciate the offer but no thank you. I know I could do it, but I just like reflecting on what I did and the experience I have." No, you answer the call because you believe it will help your community, and your world, be a better place.

Read: Acts 4:36-37, 11:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:10-11

Observation (What happened?):

For what is Barnabas known according to today's reading?

According to the verses in 1 Thessalonians, what is the result of encouragement?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What do you think it means that Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit and faith?

What does it mean to "encourage?"

Insight:

So what does it mean to encourage? Dictionary definitions of "encourage" are "to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence" or "to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc." To encourage is to help restore or increase the courage, spirit, and confidence of someone in their life's journey. This takes on special meaning for the people of God living in an alien, and sometimes hostile, world. We need to inspire and assist each other in resisting temptation, knowing and loving God, and completing the job he has planned for each one of us. God doesn't intend for us to stand alone. We are part of the community of faith so we can encourage and be encouraged. How? Today's reading gives some ideas. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul tells us to encourage one another by speaking about the knowledge of Christ's sure return. In 2 Timothy and Titus we are told to do it with patience and careful instruction of sound truth. Each of us needs to know and exercise our spiritual gifts given to build up God's church. We gather together, pray for each other, give to each other, lovingly correct each other, and rejoice in each other's successes. In God's strength, we get up each time we fall down. Just to see that happen is an encouragement.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

Who can you encourage this week? Pray about it and do it.

What encouragement do you need? Are you willing to accept it from someone?

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