

The Lost Art of Encouragement

In a world filled with information overload and busy lives, encouragement has quietly become a lost art. Yet in the Bible, it is one of the most powerful tools Christians can use. When we think of encouragement, a Bible Character that comes to mind is Barnabas, the “*son of encouragement*” (Acts 4:36). His life shows us that encouragement is not a small gesture; it is a necessary spiritual work. He was a “*good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith*” (Acts 11:24). One of the most commendable things Barnabas did was, he sold land he owned and gave the money to the apostles for the aid of those in need (Acts 4:37).

Barnabas encouraged others by standing up for what is right when others were hesitant. He stood beside Saul as he was trying to join himself to the church in Jerusalem and all the disciples were afraid of him (Acts 9:26–27). Barnabas also helped John Mark get a second chance when Paul was ready to move on without him in (Acts 15:36–39). Barnabas showed a willingness to lift others up, and his actions played a key role in the work of the church. Barnabas was sent by the church in Jerusalem to encourage the brethren at Antioch. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he “*was glad, and encouraged them all, that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord*” (Acts 11:23).

Today, our words and actions can have that same impact. A simple note, a sincere compliment, a prayer for someone, a quiet “I’m glad you’re here,” or even a word of encouragement on a difficult day may seem small, but there is immense value in these small acts. Encouragement is powerful because it strengthens weary hearts, renews motivation, and reminds others they are not alone. The church needs people today that will encourage others by teaching sound doctrine, by living moral lives, and by their enthusiasm in doing the will of God. The church needs people who enjoy helping others and instructing their children about God. The church also needs the older members to teach those who are younger about how important and gratifying it is to be a child of God. The church needs younger Christians that are unafraid to stand against immorality and ungodliness in the world today. We all need encouragement to keep on keeping on!

Hebrews 3:13 tells us to “*exhort one another daily.*” That means encouragement is not optional, it is part of who we should be as God’s people. We need Christians to build us up and encourage us on the journey as we work toward heaven. Barnabas is a notable example of one who was an encouragement in many ways. We do not have to sell land to give to the poor, or take someone on a preaching trip like Barnabas, but there are small ways that we can absolutely help others. Are you being an encouragement to others? Are you looking for ways to develop the attitude of an encourager? If not, why not?

- by Josh McCord

God’s Grace: Always Unmerited, But Not Always Unconditional

One of the most marvelous themes in all the Bible is the grace of God. Scripture affirms repeatedly that God’s grace is **undeserved**, **unearned**, and **unmerited**. Paul declares, “By grace you have been saved through faith... not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). No man can stand before God and boast that he has somehow obligated the Almighty by his righteousness and thus must be ushered into Heaven. As sinners, we stand in need of grace we could never earn (Romans 3:23–24).

Yet, while God’s grace is always unmerited, it is **not always unconditional**. This is a point often overlooked in modern religious thinking. Some imagine that grace is poured out indiscriminately, without regard to man’s response. But the Bible shows that observing God’s conditions are connected with receiving His blessings. Grace remains free - but it must be **received** on God’s terms.

Consider Noah. Genesis 6:8 states, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” That grace was clearly undeserved - Noah was not sinless. But he stood in contrast to the men of the world whose “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (6:5). Noah, on the other hand, was “a just man, and blameless in his generations” (6:9). Still, however, God’s gracious provision of salvation through the ark required Noah’s obedient response. “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did” (6:22). Noah did not *earn* God’s

grace, but his actions before and during the flood positioned him to receive it.

The New Testament presents the same balance. James writes, “He gives more grace,” but immediately adds, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). The humble are not earning grace, but their disposition and actions open the door for God to bestow it “more abundantly.”

This principle appears again in 2 Peter 1:2: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Notice the phrase “**be multiplied**”—indicating that God’s grace can increase in the life of the believer. Peter immediately calls Christians to supply diligence, faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, and steadfastness (vv. 5–7). As we grow in these qualities, we enjoy God’s grace in fuller measure.

We must therefore avoid two extremes:

- 1) **Thinking we can earn God’s grace** — We cannot;
- 2) **Assuming God always gives grace without conditions** — He does not.

Grace remains the free gift of a loving God, but it is a gift received through humble obedience (Hebrews 5:9).

- by Greg Gwin