

COACH

PREPARE MODULE #4

COMPETENCY: Encourage someone in a way that shapes his or her soul.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To be challenged and inspired by Barnabas, the son of encouragement.
 2. To practice sincere, specific, and strengths-focused ways to encourage others.
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ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Reflect on Proverbs 16:24 and on the article on effects of encouragement on the brain, answering the questions below.

Assignment 2: Read and respond to the biblical case study: “Barnabas: An Encouraging Early Church Leader” adapted from Robin Gallher Branch, and answer the questions below.

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/barnabas-an-encouraging-early-church-leader/> AND [Barnabas-an-encouraging-early-church-leader-2](#)

Assignment 3: Read the article, “The Anatomy of Encouragement” by Mac Lake (@maclakeonline.com), and answer the questions below.

<http://maclakeonline.com/the-anatomy-of-encouragement/>

ASSIGNMENT 1

Proverbs 16:24 (NASB)

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Read article on the effect of encouraging words on the brain: [click here](#).

QUESTIONS:

1. How would you rate yourself as an encourager? Why?
(1 = Poor / 3 = Average / 5 = A model for others to learn from)

2. Solomon indicates that words can provide “healing to the bones.” What impact have encouraging words had on you?

3. Considering the findings referred to in the article, what might team members look like/accomplish if their team leader were to create a culture of encouragement? What might a team member look like/accomplish within a culture of criticism?

ASSIGNMENT 2

Biblical Case Study - "Barnabas: An Encouraging Early Church Leader", adapted from Robin Gallher Branch

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/barnabas-an-encouraging-early-church-leader/>
[AND Barnabas-an-encouraging-early-church-leader-2](#)

What Barnabas Did

Acts presents the church leader Barnabas as a model of integrity and character. Calling him a good man (Acts 11:24), a prophet and teacher (13:1), an apostle (14:14) and one through whom God worked miracles (15:12), Acts loads him with accolades. Acts recounts the times Barnabus faced persecution (13:45; 14:19) and risked his life for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (15:26). Barnabas believed Saul truly had been converted (9:27), saw the potential of his cousin John Mark (12:25), and championed them both at different times (11:25-26; 15:36-41). 1 Corinthians 9:6 affirms Barnabus' character by noting he worked while serving congregations in order not to burden them. The apostles nicknamed him Barnabas, Son of Encouragement (4:36), and he lived up to his namesake!

According to early traditions, Barnabas was taught by Gamaliel and became a follower of Jesus. Among his first converts was Mary, his relative and John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). Barnabas accompanied Jesus during his travels in Galilee, and Jesus chose him as one of the 70 apostles. Evidently, he tried to convert Saul, also Gamaliel's pupil, but Saul rejected his teaching and chose instead to persecute the new believers.

Acts introduces Barnabas as Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, with a story about money and giving (Acts 4:36-37). In this first mention of Barnabas, Luke, traditionally regarded as the writer of both Luke and Acts, recounts his generosity: Barnabas sells a field and places the money at the apostles' feet. This public gesture and his humbleness stand in sharp contrast to the subsequent example regarding money: the conspiring, lying, self-serving attitude of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). Their actions cost them their lives.

Who Barnabas Was

A noticeable trait of Barnabas is that he seeks out and assists others. The Biblical text highlights this twice with Saul/Paul (9:26-28; 11:25-26); once concerning the vibrant church in Antioch, Syria (11:19-30) and once in connection with his younger relative, John Mark (15:36-41). Often these other individuals and groups are believers in Jesus who, for whatever reason, run a bit against the grain of mainstream thought and action. Instead of ostracizing them, Barnabas not only deliberately encounters them, but also listens to them and welcomes them.

First, Barnabas befriends Saul. Acts introduces Saul as a persecutor of believers in what was then known as the Way (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:2). Saul obtains letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to officials in Damascus synagogues; authorizing him to bind new believers and bring them to Jerusalem. On the road to Damascus, he has a literally blinding conversion experience with the risen Lord Jesus, becomes a believer himself and starts preaching that Jesus is the Son of God in the Damascus synagogues (9:1-20)!

Saul's sudden change of character and bold preaching leads the Jews to conspire to kill him. Saul travels to Jerusalem after being lowered from the walls of Damascus in a basket to escape the city by night (9:21-26). The disciples in Jerusalem fearfully avoid him, not believing he really is a believer (9:26). Luke writes: "But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus" (9:27).

This verse merits scrutiny, for it illustrates leadership in action. Barnabas seeks out Saul, and thus Barnabas exhibits personal courage, for he risks his life and reputation. Barnabas brings Saul to the apostles. His ethical attitude of listening, testing what he hears Saul say, and then acting with courage and nobility is consistent in what is known about him.

Sometime later, the Jerusalem Council sends Barnabas to Antioch, Syria, to investigate something new: believing Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) worshiping Jesus together! Believing Jews had been scattered as a result of persecution, with some settling in their new exiled homes (Acts 11:19–30). These scattered believers evidently talked to their neighbors, many of them Greeks, telling them news of the risen Lord Jesus (11:20). Luke writes that “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord” (11:21).

Luke portrays Barnabas’s mission as fact-finding rather than as hostile. When Barnabas arrives in Antioch, he displays the same characteristics he exhibited in earlier stories: he acts openly, listens, and makes ethical decisions. The text says that when he “saw the grace of God, he rejoiced” (Acts 11:23). Typical of a man of honorable character, Barnabas’s mind looks at the facts: these people—some of them uncircumcised Gentiles - really are new converts! Barnabas sees that they, like he and other Jewish converts, believed in this radical new faith; he sees this as evidence of the work and grace of God. He tells the Antioch believers “to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion” (11:23).

Barnabas pastors the church, but its demands are too many for one. So, he seeks out Saul—yet again—and journeys to Tarsus to find him (Acts 11:25–26). Barnabas’s action shows his humility and discernment. The text indicates that Barnabas’s overriding concerns were the needs of the people and the furtherance of the gospel. Yet he must have realized that Saul’s skill in debate and Saul’s incredible mind might overshadow his own qualities. Luke, however, gives no indication of jealousy on Barnabas’s part, only an indication of his desire to promote the name of the Lord Jesus.

Barnabas offers the younger man a job: co-pastoring the dynamic Antioch believers. Saul accepts. The young church grows even more under their joint leadership (Acts 11:26). It must have been a glorious and fruitful time for both congregation and teachers. Most likely, this time shaped much of Saul/ Paul’s theology.

When the Antioch church fasts and prays, the Holy Spirit tells the church to “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). This becomes what scholars term Paul’s first missionary journey. Saul’s name is changed to Paul on Cyprus midway through the journey’s account (13:9); probably the name change reflects the emphasis of his life from here on: his outreach to the Roman world. John Mark, Barnabas’s kinsman, accompanies them as their helper but leaves them in Perga and returns to Jerusalem (13:13–14:20). Paul and Barnabas continue preaching in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. During an exciting journey that includes bold preaching and miraculous signs and wonders (14:3), the two establish churches and leave behind a recognized system of elders for governing (14:23).

QUESTIONS:

1. What insight, principle, or idea was helpful/challenging to you from Barnabas' life?
2. What thought could be modified to be useful in your ministry context today?
3. What encouraged you about how Barnabas resolved the dilemmas he faced?
4. Barnabas cared for the soul of the believers in Antioch, for Paul's soul, and for John Mark's. What step will you take to care for the soul of someone specific under your care in the coming days?

ASSIGNMENT 3

“The Anatomy of Encouragement” by Mac Lake (@maclakeonline.com) <http://maclakeonline.com/the-anatomy-of-encouragement/>

Proverbs 10:11

The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life.

We’ve all had that moment when we were impressed with someone’s performance and felt the urge to give them a word of encouragement. Then, as we open our mouth the only thing that comes out is, “Hey you did a great job tonight” or “Thanks for your leadership, that was good today.” While I’m sure they appreciate the praise, think of how much more powerful it could be if we simply put some thought and intention into our encouragement.

Encouragement is powerful and has the ability to lift a spirit, shape self-esteem or galvanize an individual’s resolve to continue in the face of difficulty. So, think about it, do your encouraging words have power or are they just ineffectual comments? Years ago, Larry Crabb wrote an entire book titled Encouragement: The Key to Caring. A whole book on encouragement! There’s a lot we can learn about this simple yet influential leadership skill.

Perhaps the key to putting punch to our praise is looking at the anatomy of effective encouragement. While there is much more to it, here are three simple ingredients to get you started.

Sincere – Before speaking words of encouragement, check your motives and make sure you’re doing it to lift up the other individual, not to gain something for yourself. Solomon warns us in Proverbs 26:28, “a flattering mouth works ruin.” The Hebrew word for “ruin” comes from a root word meaning “to push, drive away or cast down.” If we’re not careful, insincere words can have the opposite effect we desire, pushing people away rather than building them up. I was having lunch with a young man one day who continued to sing my praises throughout the whole hour. While I’m always up for a dose of encouragement, I found it strange because he had never met me. His words were pleasant, yet I found myself pushed away from him rather than drawn to him. Encouragement is always best served with a spirit of sincerity.

Specific – If you want your words of praise to have more punch, then be specific with your encouragement. Notice the specifics of what people do well and consider how those things have impacted you personally. Performance is good for a reason, and if we look close enough, we can find little nuances that made it special. Many evenings my wife and I watch The Food Network, and I’m always fascinated at how much detailed feedback the judges give about the look, taste and flavors of each dish. They’re able to praise or critique each chef with great detail because they’ve acquired a sensitive palate that enables them to taste flavors the average person doesn’t notice. In the same way we must look for and praise the specific detail of an individual’s work. That takes encouragement to a very deep and meaningful level. So instead of saying, “Hey you did a good job,” you can say, “When you led the small group discussion tonight, you really asked insightful questions that challenged my thinking in new ways. You have a real gift for making people think. I appreciate you using that gift to add value to my spiritual walk.” Specific encouragement is meaningful encouragement.

Strength Focused – God has gifted each of us in very specific ways. Each day we use and develop those strengths. Over time as those strengths develop, they become obvious to others. Paul had been around young Timothy so much that he’d become very familiar with Timothy’s strengths. And then in a very crucial time in Timothy’s ministry Paul told him, “Fan into flame the gifts God has

given you.” By giving someone encouragement centered on their particular strength, we are in essence helping them fan the flame of their strengths. Giving someone sincere, specific encouragement that is focused on their unique strengths helps them learn something new about themselves and deepens their wisdom about using that particular strength. I’ve always said that encouragement is one of the most overlooked leadership development tools available to us.

Encouragement is one of those small investments we can make daily that will bring a huge return. Solomon observed, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” (Prov. 25:11) The right word, spoken the right way, at the right time, can impact lives in ways we may never know. So, what are you waiting for...give an intentional word of encouragement today!

QUESTIONS:

1. The author gives three ways to provide encouragement. Which are you the best at? Which do you need to improve in the most?
2. Why is it difficult for some leaders to give this type of encouragement?
3. In this module, what strength was affirmed? What is an area of weakness that was brought to your attention?
4. Who do you know that best exemplifies the principles in this article? What makes them such a great encourager?

LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAYS: