

## “The Ministry of Encouragement”

Pastor Tim Allen

Encouragement is an important ministry in the church and it is often overlooked. We tend to dismiss this ministry as unimportant because we think too little of the idea of encouragement. We think it’s simply “making someone feel better.” And of course, that kind of encouragement is good, but it doesn’t reach the depths of what biblical encouragement is and does. Biblical Encouragement is something quite different; it’s about standing alongside a Christian brother or sister to strengthen them in their faith. If we think of encouragement in these terms, we might begin to see how vital that ministry is, especially in the face of hardship, crisis, and increasing persecution.

### ***DISCUSS***

Read **Acts 9:26-31** and discuss with the group a statement or concept that stood out to you or impacted you in the sermon entitled “**The Ministry of Encouragement.**”

### ***DIG IN***

#### **1. Barnabas: Son of Encouragement**

**Read Acts 4:36-37:** What do we learn about Barnabas here?

Why would Joseph be nicknamed “son of encouragement” (Barnabas)? What does that tell us about his nature?

The word “encouragement” comes from the Greek word, *parakaleo*, which literally means, “One who is called alongside another.” In what ways might that type of person be an encouragement to another?

The same word used for “encouragement” is used to describe the Holy Spirit (read John 14:16-17), who is described by Jesus as “Helper” or “Comforter.” In what ways is encouragement the work of the Holy Spirit?

What are some marks of being an encourager (see 1 Corinthians 13:7; Philippians 4:2-3)?

#### **2. The Ministry of Encouragement**

In what ways did Barnabas act as an intercessor between Saul (Paul) and the other disciples?

**Read Acts 9:31:** In what ways was the church strengthened by Barnabas’ ministry?

**Read Hebrews 10:24-25:** In what ways can the church carry on the ministry of encouragement? In what ways is simply being present in the gathering be an encouragement to one another?

### ***DO***

What lessons do you learn from these verses that you will take with you throughout the coming week?