

“BROTHER ENCOURAGEMENT”

Acts 4:34-36

Simone Clarke is a 39 y.o. epileptic who wanted to run in the 2012 London Marathon. She suffers about 4 seizures a day; needed someone willing to train and run with her. Her friend, Tally Hall, agreed to run with her and help her if she had a seizure while running. At mile 8 she had her first seizure. Tally caught her and got her safely to the ground. She was completely unconscious for 30 seconds. And then, she woke, got up, and started running again. Over the next 18 miles, Simone had 19 more seizures, each time collapsing and losing consciousness for 30 seconds or more. Each time, Tally caught her, eased her to the ground, and protected her until she regained consciousness. And each time, Tally helped Simone up, and they continued. 'By the time we got to 15 miles,' Simone said afterward, 'I was in tears because I was so annoyed we had lost the pace. But by that stage I had already had lots of (seizures), and I was still standing, so I thought, stuff it, I'm just going to finish it.' Simone and Tally crossed the finish line in 6½ hours. Impressive! But would she have finished without her friend? No. Our scrip: A man called Brother Encouragement.

I. DESTRUCTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A. There are personality types that do not make good disciples/men of God

1. **The self-absorbed:** A man whose vision is turned inward – only thinking of themselves

a. One who is unaware of the needs of others: *Lam 1:12* "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?"

1. The needs of others simply don't register: a. Who is new: b. Who is hurting c. Who is missing

b. One who looks at others in terms of personal cost:

1. I see the need – but this will inconvenience me/getting involved will cost me

a. *Luke 10:31-32* And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

2. **The competitive:** Someone who views ministry as a way of proving worth

a. So they want to get ahead of others who may get attention or opportunities

1. If they are being blessed/used/praised – then I won't get a chance

b. So their answer is to compete

1. Refuse to help anyone else 2. Make your competitor look bad: Badmouth/point out mistakes

B. This doesn't work well in ministry

1. **People can tell the difference:** They instinctively are repulsed by selfish ladder-climbers

2. **God gets involved:** He gets the ultimate vote!

a. He refuses to bless selfish ministry b. He actively works against: *He resists the proud*

II. THE SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT

A. Acts is the church at it's best – we see what enables God to move powerfully

1. Our scrip speaks of a man named Joseph

a. *Acts 4:36* Joseph... whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)

1. Identifying mark of his life: Not something he did – who he was/what he was known for

B. Look at what causes him to be known as an encourager

1. **A focus on others:** His vision was always directed at others, not himself

a. *Acts 4:37* sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

1. People from other cities/nations who were struggling financially

b. More than money – in everything! Awareness of others: Their needs/their struggles

2. **An ability to encourage other people:**

a. *Acts 11:23* When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

1. Made their decisions easier – and caused them to want to do more

3. **A willingness for someone else to gain attention**

a. *Acts 11:25-26* Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.

1. Bringing Saul into the ministry meant he would get less attention

4. **A heart for the hurting:** Mark had made mistakes and gotten off track

a. *Acts 15:37* And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

1. Didn't pile on to make himself look good 2. He didn't give up on him

a. Enabled him to recover and find usefulness in God: *Have you read the book of Mark? Thank Barnabas!*

III. BLESSING AND CHALLENGE

A. God gets involved with Barnabas disciples

1. **God sees and blesses this heart:** *Acts 13:2* As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

a. *Acts 11:24* For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

1. The Holy Ghost dimension and people added were no doubt connected to his heart

B. Barnabas gives us a challenge

1. What would you be known for right now? 2. What do you want to be known for?