



You Need an Encourager

July 4, 2021

Acts 9:23-28

Connect:

- Happy Independence Day! How did you (*or how will you*) celebrate this year?
- Name someone who always seemed to come through for you at just the right time with a word of encouragement. How did their encouragement propel you forward with renewed energy and strength?

Engage

- Read *Acts 9:23-28*. This early church account shows the daily risks of the movement. Discuss how that must have felt and each person's role in this specific story. On this Independence Day, we celebrate the freedom to practice the religion of our choice. What strengthened the community in those early days? Do we take for granted the ease by which we can publically live our faith today? How?
- Share a definition of *encouragement* in your own words.
- The word *encouragement* comes from the French word *Coeur*: It means to put "*heart*" into someone. Does this differ from your own definition? How does it add to or enhance your understanding?
- If the unofficial plural form of Barnabas is "*Barnabi*", Len Sweet names several versions of Barnabi in your life – from the stranger (Good Samaritan), to a Big Brother Barnabas, a Praying Barnabas to even your Funny Bone Barnabas. Encouragement comes in various forms. How are you most encouraged by others? What style of encouragement are you best at sharing with others?
- A story told in the message followed a man and his family who decided they wanted (*needed?*) to live into a better story. The thought was that until we are challenged or invited into a better story, we will settle for something less inspired or whatever comes easiest. As the Church, are we inviting people into a better story? If so, how? If not, why?

Next Steps:

- You may easily identify the Barnabas in your life. They are a positive presence and always leave you feeling inspired after time with them, even in the difficult times. Take time this week to thank your Barnabas for their encouragement.
- Choose at least one person in your life to offer a special dose of encouragement this week. Call, write, or text them something you see in their life that is making a difference in the world. So often, we lose sight that what we are doing with our lives matters to others. Your word will be a great and welcomed support.

Pray:

- "*Thank you, God, for sending people into our life stories that encourage us to persevere through the challenging times and celebrate the joyful ones. Encouragement is a gift. Help us receive encouragement graciously from others and help us to be such an encouragement to those we encounter as well. Amen.*"