



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Three back-to-back commands appear toward the end of the letter to the Hebrews. It is a message for all believers, regardless of our location or situation: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NLT). If you have been looking for a timely “statement for life,” consider that one.

It is impossible to measure the worth of mutual encouragement. Whether spoken or written, a few encouraging words can make an enormous difference in the outcome of a single event or, in fact, someone’s entire life. Let’s focus our attention on a man named Joseph, whose life was known for such thoughtfulness. Amazingly, his nickname, Barnabas, became far better known than his given name, as it announced his commitment to encouraging others.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Chuck Swindoll uses four Bible study methods every time he prepares a message:

- *Observation: What do you see?*
- *Interpretation: What does it mean?*
- *Correlation: How does it compare?*
- *Application: What difference does it make?*



Observation Tip

A pen or pencil and a journal will *revolutionize* your Bible study. There’s just not room enough in your Bible’s margins for all the richness you can observe when you study the Word. Taking notes is essential because 1) it helps to cement your comprehension of a passage; 2) you can look back at your notes

Quotable

*Remember this:
No matter how high
you may climb in
life, no matter how
great the promotion
or important the
title, it is always
appropriate that
you take time to
encourage.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



later, add to them, and reflect on them; and 3) you can draw! For example, you may want to create a chart to compare and contrast Barnabas' authentic generosity in Acts 4:32–37 with the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira in 5:1–11.

In the process of observing the text, you can create diagrams, charts, and brainstorm bubbles. You are not limited to just words on a page.



Random Acts of Encouragement

Everyday life provides plenty of opportunities to apply the principles found in Acts 4:32–37 regarding Barnabas' encouragement. In fact, Chuck Swindoll mentions several opportunities in his sermon: in teaching, coaching, parenting, marriage, work, pastoring . . . there are an abundance of opportunities to practice encouragement, and you're never too young, old, rich, or poor to start.

Chuck said, "You can't beat a flock into joy and happiness. You don't beat sheep. You lead sheep. You encourage them." Let's delve into that now. The following example shows us how to apply the principles of the passage to a specific group.

Teaching Children to Be Little Encouragers

In the beginning of his message, Chuck emphasized that encouraging others is a command—an imperative. What a gift we give to the children in our lives when we endeavor to plant the seeds of encouragement in their hearts. Here are some lessons to share with children regarding encouragement:

- Designate special savings for kids to store up funds. Help the children to contribute any change they find to the special savings. Every six months, donate the funds to people in need (Acts 4:34, 37).
- Teach children to have "kind eyes": on the playground, during Sunday school, in the lunchroom, during team sports. Encourage your kids to look out for the boys and girls who are eating alone or who are getting picked on. Let children know that they can invite a lonely child to their table to eat or strike up a conversation with a child who looks like he or she may be vulnerable to bullying (9:26–27).
- Model selflessness to children by responding in joyful enthusiasm to their good news. Nurture them to celebrate the successes and gifts of their siblings (11:23).
- Mentor your children. Take them to deliver meals to people. Practice compassion through volunteering with kids (some suggestions for volunteering: an animal shelter, camps for kids with disabilities, a community farm) (12:15).



Write down any additional advice for teaching encouragement to children that you garnered from the passage:

Think of another group of people for whom you could teach/preach/write a study of Barnabas' example of encouragement. You can choose from Chuck's list or find your own category. Then write down the group you've thought of.

Conduct a word search on "Barnabas" in the book of Acts. Jot down notes of what you observe (What does it say?) from each passage. Pay attention to other characters, settings, and, finally, Barnabas' actions.

Now focus on interpreting your observations (What does it mean?). What did you learn about Barnabas from your observations?



Can you think of any present-day anecdotes that would help your audience connect Barnabas' gifts of encouragement with their own lives? Write your illustration ideas down here:

What other Scriptures would help to illuminate the topic of encouragement? For example, find passages that talk about generosity in giving, forgiving people and giving them second chances, or the power of teamwork and mentorship. (You'll notice that whenever Chuck Swindoll preaches, he *correlates* one Bible passage with another. Correlation is when you compare Scripture with Scripture in order to amplify your understanding of a given passage. When you answer this question, you're correlating!)

Finally, write down the applications you want to teach your audience. Pray for God to help you humbly serve your audience in your application points. Be specific.

Chuck's Application: Many Ways to Encourage

Becoming an encouragement to others does not require a lot of time, money, possessions, training, or even great intelligence. You do not need to be a certain age before you have earned the right to reach out, come alongside others, and elevate their spirits to greater heights. What you do need is the willingness to place yourself in someone else's shoes, imagine how they must feel, and then step up.



Here are the ways to encourage that Chuck observed from the life of Joseph/Barnabas:

- *Financial encouragement:* Think of opportunities to give financially to a need. When you become aware of a genuine need, help out!
- *Endorsement encouragement:* Is there someone you could vouch for? Could your words help correct wrong thinking or prejudice? Speak up!
- *Servant-hearted unselfish encouragement:* Give others the chance to share in the privilege of ministering to others. Unselfishly ask another to take your place.
- *Second-chance encouragement:* Do you know someone who has failed or fallen in the past, who is now repentant? Your reassurance could help this person get back on his or her feet.

This is an application you can add to your life right away! Make a game plan to commit random acts of encouragement:



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, with responsibility comes sacrifice. Help us to bear our responsibilities with spotless character and unwavering devotion to whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute. May our character grow from time regularly spent with You. May our lives herald the excellence and praise that only comes from You. We give You all the glory. Amen.



WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Encouraging Others

Acts 4:32–37

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

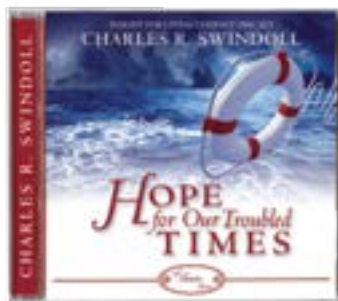
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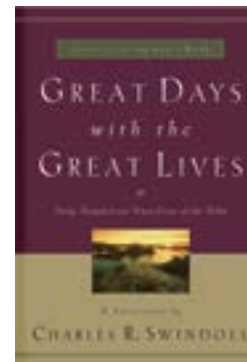
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For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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