

HOW TO GIVE IT AWAY
Faith and Self Esteem
Part 4
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Fourth Sunday night of looking at the theme of “Faith and Self Esteem.” We’re trying to take biblical concepts of faith and transfer them to teaching on self-esteem. Our messages have dealt with “Faith and Self Esteem, How to Lose it, How to Get it, How to Keep it.” Tonight we look at the theme, “How to Give it Away.”

Don’t expect to be able to give it away if you haven’t gone through the first three teachings. It’s only people who begin to have a sense of who we are in Christ and a sense of confidence who are then able to transmit that. Maybe that’s not the right place to start in the series – How to Give it Away - without taking a moment to back up to How We Get It and How We Keep It.

I probably struggled more with this message than with any of the others. Scriptures present faith, the overwhelming majority of scripture teaching on faith has less to say perhaps about sustaining faith and transmitting it to others. Especially there’s not a lot in scripture that deals with giving us a role model of a person who over a long period of time demonstrates the consistent kind of faith that is really transmitted to others. The Lord himself of course is the chief role model.

As I went through the New Testament there was another person who leaped out at me, who was called in the scripture “a man of faith.” He’s also called “a man full of the Holy Spirit.” He’s called a good man. His name is Barnabus. I want to look at the book of Acts and a phrase in Galatians and a phrase in Corinthians to construct a model of a person’s life who is giving away faith and self esteem to other.

I think it’s vital that we do have good role models because faith like self-esteem is better caught than taught. You can have all the guidebooks in the world on building faith but get around a person of faith and you’ll see how it works. Get around a person who transmits self esteem and you’ll see best how it works.

To underline the importance of that I site an experience out of my first year of teaching at Evangel College. In 1965 I had gone back to Evangel College, my alma mater, to be on the faculty. I found myself three quarters of the way into the year, a newly married person and yet I was very, very despondent about the institution and my future as a teacher there. One period of time in particular I began to evaluate the people I was spending the most time with other than my bride. I discovered the people I was taking coffee breaks with, having lunch with, spending time in my house with, and going out and doing special things with were all a group of negative people. They were down on the establishment. They were down on the Assemblies of God. They were down on the administration. They were down on the church.

It wasn’t very long before I became a super critic. I could see the wrong in everything and the right in few things. I had to face the choice of whether or not I wanted to stick with something, which was so bad. Reputedly so bad.

I thank God for revealing this to me. I wasn’t smart enough to see it on my own. The reason why I was becoming so negative is that I hung around negative people. Either those people’s negative orientation had to change or I had to change people that I hung around with.

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Barnabus is the kind of a person that when you come across him in scripture you want to hang around him. He's up on people and he's up on what God is doing.

This week as I was pouring over the instances of Barnabus' life I rediscovered his importance. Something I really hadn't seen before. We owe to Barnabus the apostle Paul. It is Barnabus who takes Paul and introduces him to the Jerusalem saints when nobody else will believe Paul's testimony. It is Barnabus who leaves the safe, secure, teaching position at Antioch and goes north up to Saul of Tarsus to get a more qualified rabbi than himself – Saul of Tarsus. It is Barnabus who takes the initiative on the first missionary journey and brings Paul with him. I seriously doubt that we would have Saul of Tarsus for the church if it had not been for Barnabus. I know we would not have had John Mark for the church had it not been for Barnabus. Because John Mark was picked up by Barnabus when Paul said the guy's a failure and I wash my hands of him and I'm not going to have anything to do with him again.

When you add those two people together – Saul of Tarsus and John Mark – and remember that Luke and Matthew's gospels were somewhat literally dependent upon the gospel of Mark you recognize that over 50% easy of the New Testament written by John Mark and by Paul and also the people like Luke and Matthew who took some of what John said that wouldn't have been without Barnabus.

Barnabus played a critical role in these people's lives salvaging them for the kingdom of God. Both of these people, Saul of Tarsus and John Mark, were written off. Other people regarded them as discards or as people not worth spending leadership investment time with. But because there was this encourager, Barnabus, these people were saved for the church and for God.

That's not Barnabus' only reason for being the man of giving faith and giving self-esteem. It's Barnabus who is the bridge person to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church. When the church was all Jewish and looking suspiciously at non-Jews it was Barnabus who bridged the gap at Antioch. And it was Barnabus at the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 stood up and defended the inclusion of the gentiles and spoke that well respected voice to his Jewish brethren that made it palatable for the gentiles to be seen as included in the church. Otherwise we'd have started the apostolic age with two denominations right off the bat. Barnabus was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was full of faith.

Therefore I want to extrapolate from his life and discover the qualities in his life that are transferable that can make me and can make you the kind of person who finds the Sauls and the John Marks in our acquaintances and our family and communicates this building of life and building of self esteem to them.

What are the characteristics that make up a giving person in self-esteem?

1. An esteem builder in others is inevitably a giving person. A generous person.

When you see Barnabus introduced on the pages of scripture the first mention you have of him is in Acts 4:36-37. He isn't known at that moment of the early days of the church by the name Barnabus. His name is Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus. The island to the west of Israel. He simply is introduced by the fact that he came having sold a piece of property he gave the

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proceeds to the fund for the care of the needy in the Jerusalem church. First introduction to him is when he makes a financial gift.

That triggered something in me. I began monitoring the people in my life who have done the most to build my self-esteem. On the other hand the people that were near to me in my formative years who did the least to build my self-esteem. The people who did the least were the stingiest financially. The people who did the most were the most generous. The people who did the least were the kind of people in family who were always looking for What's in it for me? At Christmas time – what are you going to give me for Christmas? The people who did the most were the people who were going out beyond themselves to do something.

There are two kinds of people in life – the givers and the takers. Givers tend to be full of transmitting qualities that build confidence in other people. Giving has more dimension to it than money although I think the way people handle money is often a tip off as to their spirit toward others. Things always testify to spiritual realities and how we handle things is telling us a great deal about our inner nature.

But there is additional giving. Like the giving of hugs. The giving of touch. The giving of strokes. The giving of compliments. For those of us who have children, these are so critical that we do this.

Sometimes the person may consider themselves a giver and a generous person but not be a self-esteem builder and the reason why is that they do it for the satisfaction they get out of it. They're giving is not related to the needs of another but the giving becomes because that's where they like to spend their time and their particular way of getting a kick out of life is to do something for somebody and even get the reputation of being a giver. That's distinct from being a true giver. A true giver attempts to identify the need and the liking in someone else and gives to that and addresses that.

I think we also need to realize that people can give in order to build self-esteem. If I give to you, you'll like me. Therefore the trait of giving things itself may not always be a tip off to a self-esteem builder if they're doing it to work their way into somebody saying, I like you you're wonderful.

But I suppose if I were saying to myself and saying to you about how to build self-esteem in your children and how to build it in your family, how to build it in others, I would start I guess where Barnabus starts. Being identified as a generous person, a generous person in heart. One who can let go of things and get into people and spend time and care and minister in practical ways.

2. The second quality in Barnabus that is a tip off to a person who is a self-esteem builder is that such a person like Barnabus believes the best about a person.

Barnabus' second mention in the text of the book of Acts is in 9:27 when Saul of Tarsus gets converted. He leaves Antioch and comes down to Jerusalem and tells his story to some of the brethren. The text of Acts says they did not believe him. They would not have anything to do with him. They thought it was either a ruse to get into the church or maybe they weren't forgiving him the violence he had done to their friends.

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It's said of Barnabus that he took Saul and introduced him to the other apostles. Alone of the people in any kind of position of responsibility in Jerusalem Barnabus believed Saul. That's a very suggestive kind of verse. We know at that particular time in Acts that the apostles were still in Jerusalem. A lot of them were still there. And Barnabus was not in the top pecking order of the church. So they had to go down a little ways before they found a man who would believe in Saul. Barnabus could have looked at all the negatives and felt that Saul was out to do a trick or something like this. But he came to believe in him and believe his testimony.

We lock people into small boxes when we buy the idea that they cannot change. It's as though when we reach the idea that a person is at a fixed state in life it's as though we're shaping them to the size of their box and they can never grow out of that box. Barnabus is a person who will not let people stay in the boxes they are in.

The opposite of a person who believes in others is an individual who doesn't trust people. Who says, "People are out to get you. Or you'll get burned. Never trust anyone." Love believes all things. Faith believes all things. God calls us to do that with our children. We all recognize that there are negative qualities and positive qualities that are there. The self esteem builders are the ones who keep drawing out the positive qualities and reinforcing that and saying to a child, "You may not be the world's best person at mathematics but you sure do recess well!"

3. A third quality of an esteem builder in others is someone who sees the opportunities rather than the obstacles.

Acts 11:22-24 tells us about that incidence in Barnabus' life and the situation is very dynamic in the book of Acts because it involves what is happening in the town in Syria called Antioch three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. The time period when the gospel gets to Antioch was immediately prior to Jewish believers sharing with non-Jewish believers about the gospel. Some believers had gone to Antioch and had preached the word to those who spoke Hebrew. But then Acts 11 tells us that some Greek speaking Jews came from Cyprus and from Cyrene and they preached to the Greeks. They also spoke to the Greeks that were at Antioch. And if you're going to reach Greeks you've got to speak Greek.

There are different ways of experiencing and appropriating Christ. The problem with the Jews in Jerusalem was if you don't do it exactly their way you're not in the faith. I've seen older Christians hanging on to tradition and unwilling to let go and let go shape new traditions. Let the younger generation in on the action.

Barnabus was the kind of person when he went to Antioch. The Jerusalem church had a conference: "What are we going to do? There are people at Antioch that are coming to Christ. The men aren't getting circumcised. And they're not eating kosher food. There are people in the church saying it's ok to eat a baloney sandwich. And they're eating ham and deviled eggs. And they're drinking milk with eggs and meat. And they're not wearing the prayer shawls. What are we going to do? They are even advocating no one needs to go to the temple and offer sacrifice. And yet they're saying they believe in Jesus. What are we going to do? If they believe in Jesus we shouldn't be separate from them. But on the other hand if they believe in Jesus maybe they should be like us. We'd better get somebody up there to check it out!"

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The smartest decision that church ever made in Jerusalem was to appoint Barnabus to go check it out. There are some people you can put on a committee that will kill a thing dead in the water before it ever gets started. If it's a new idea you know in advance, they're against it!

If they had appointed one of the Judaizers in the church – the extreme legalists – they'd have gone to Antioch and I can see them sitting down at the first meal with these gentile believers and being shocked. "How can you eat a baloney sandwich?" You say they'd never do that. *Oh yes they would!* Galatians 2 says that when the Christians at Antioch had begun to have table fellowship with people like Barnabus and Peter and they weren't observing the dietary kosher habits that certain brethren from James the presiding elder at Jerusalem came. The people that were having the table fellowship withdrew because they didn't like the pressure the legalists were putting against them. They were making the gentiles feel like third class citizens. Maybe not even in the kingdom of God.

Fortunately for the church at Antioch both Barnabus from Jerusalem came up and when he looked at what was happening the scripture says he was glad and encouraged them in the faith. He was a person going to that place could have looked at all that was wrong and maybe some of the immaturity of some of the gentile believers which we know was ripe throughout the first century church. Or he could have seen what was right. He could have focused on the opportunities or the obstacles. When he arrived the scripture says he was glad and encouraged them.

There is an importance to praise people, to say to someone in building self esteem How wonderful what's happened. Maybe you know the things that need to be corrected and in due time they should be corrected because confrontation is also part of the gospel. But how good it is to praise.

A self-esteem builder in others is not a person who has a negative critical orientation to life. They do not go around in life trying to straighten people out. That's not their mission. They go around trying to build people up. There are people who might be called hundred percent perfectionist syndrome people. Things could be 99% right but it's the one percent that they'll spend 99% of their time trying to correct.

I'm that way! Every T has to be crossed and every I dotted. The perfectionist person winds up putting people down rather than building them up. I think if we're going to be people who build one another up we've got to recognize that we ourselves have been accepted by God and he accepted us before we became perfect. If we're going to build it in others we've got to give them the same latitude and pour the same oil of grace out upon their lives – I know you're not perfect, but I love you and I believe in you and I care for you anyway.

4. The fourth great quality in an esteem builder is someone who is secure within themselves.

How do I know Barnabus was this way? I know he was this way because when he comes to Antioch and spends some time with the Antioch church, Acts 11, he realizes that there is someone who is a more astute teacher than himself. What he does is goes Cilicia, to Tarsus the capital of Cilicia to find the man Saul, the rabbi whom he had met years before in Jerusalem. Instinctively he realizes that there is one man who knows the Hebrew world and the Greek world and can bring them together. Bring the gospel in a way that is more powerful than he can.

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I look at Barnabus' preaching as an exhortative kind of preaching. I see Barnabus as a guy who stood up and told great stories and motivated people and encouraged them. I see Paul as the person who came in and laid the bread and the meat and the potatoes right out there, systematically in teaching, developing and apologetic where people could get a hold of it and have roots for their faith. Barnabus knew that he wasn't that kind of a preacher. So he did what no pastor I've ever known has done. He walked 150 miles to get somebody who would not be his associate but someone who would be his superior when he brought him on.

He was secure enough to put somebody else up ahead. Not only that when they began their first missionary journey, if you read the text of Acts closely, in the first 5 times in the book of Acts where Barnabus and Paul's name is mentioned together, Barnabus is always first. Barnabus is first until they begin their first missionary journey. When they leave Antioch it's Barnabus and Paul, when they arrive at the eastern edge of Cyprus to begin their journey it's Barnabus and Paul but by the time they've gone 150 miles through the island to the western side it has become Paul and his company. I know some people that would have pulled out – "I was leading this team when we started but now I'm just one of the company. Didn't even get my name mentioned. From then on in the text of Acts whenever Barnabus and Paul are away from Antioch or away from Jerusalem the order is always Paul and Barnabus. When they come back home where people recognize Barnabus as a leader then it's Barnabus in front. That, by the way, says something about the accuracy of Luke the historian. But Barnabus was strong enough to put somebody else up ahead. Secure enough within himself not to be threatened by someone.

I think that's so important in building esteem in the church among brothers and sisters in the Lord because we need to encourage one another. We say, "If we encourage one another may be they'll become more known in their service to Christ than we." Wonderful if that happens!

5. A fifth quality of a person who gives self-esteem to others is an individual who comes back from a mistake.

Barnabus was not a perfect person. Any self-esteem builder is not a perfect person. Gal 2:13 describing this matter of table fellowship between Gentiles and Jews says that when these brethren came from James in Jerusalem and criticized people who were eating with the Gentiles ultimately even Barnabus himself withdrew from table fellowship. What's striking is that Paul in writing Galatians seems so amazed that the falling away even reached Barnabus. But Barnabus came back from that rebuke that Paul gave him and continued to serve the church usefully.

6. Barnabus also, sixth quality of his life, was a person of worship and of prayer.

Acts 13:2 finds him worshipping and at prayer. You might say to me, what in the world does this have to do with building self esteem in someone? We all would like about four or five concrete steps that we could immediately turn on to build something in someone else. But life is not quite that easy. Life is a matrix of input. We don't just suddenly turn on self-esteem, the four characteristics that are needed to build self-esteem. We are who we are as a whole entity, as a whole individual. There are other dynamics, which feed upon those dimensions in our life which build faith and build esteem in others. Part of the rootage of every spiritual person that

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builds esteem in others is person who finds their place worshipping the Lord. Finds their strength in Christ.

It is in worship and prayer that the Holy Spirit can breathe new vision into our life. That's what happens to Barnabus when he's worshipping and praying. Before they had that prayer meeting in Acts 13:1-2 no body had ever dreamed of taking a missionary journey to people who weren't Christians. That was written off. It takes a sense of wanting to give somebody something that will initiate a trip like that. It is giving the gospel that becomes a model for giving self-esteem in our message tonight. It originated because some people were willing to spend some time getting God's vision of people they didn't have a vision of.

7. A seventh wonderful quality of Barnabus that is a matrix of his life is that he keeps moving on through discouragement.

The first missionary journey he was on with Paul was accompanied by great discouragement. They were chased from town to town but they continued to go on in their walk. Scriptures says in Acts 13:50-52 that they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit right after getting kicked out of a place. When they got to the end of the towns that they visited instead of just peeling out and going to a safe place they turn right around and come back to every place they had visited. They would persevere through disappointment, through discouragement, through hardship. A person of faith keeps going in spite of obstacles. A person who builds self-esteem keeps moving on in their work with another person. That's most needed when the people that we are with don't seem to be changing. Barnabus is a person who won't give up but keeps moving, keeps believing, keeps knocking on doors.

8. Another tremendous quality in a person who has self-esteem and gives it to others is that such a person supports others when they are under attack.

Immediately arises to the defense of someone and is sensitive when that person is under criticism. Acts 15:2 & 12 finds Barnabus doing that very thing at the Jerusalem counsel when the gentiles are being criticized and there are some who want to run them out of the church. Barnabus stands up and defends them because he believes in them. Not to defend them and to be silent is to do the wrong thing. We ought to keep an open attitude toward supporting people when they are down.

9. A ninth quality in Barnabus is a giver of faith and self-esteem to others is that he was ready to give a person a second chance. And I think a third and fourth chance.

Someone's faith and ego and their sense of self is not build in a moment's time. It's built over a process of time. Such an occasion occurs in Acts 15:36-41 where Barnabus and Paul break up over the issue of whether John Mark should go on the second missionary journey. Had I been the apostle Paul at that particular point I think Paul was right. John Mark was chicken. He had flaked out on the first missionary journey when things got bad and gone home to mama in Jerusalem. He was not the guy to take on a dangerous trip. Paul didn't believe in the guy at all. But Barnabus believed in him. It helped that they were cousins maybe. Barnabus took John mark to a less threatening situation, to the island of Cyprus where there was already a Christian community and he wouldn't face beatings that Paul would have faced in Philippi. John Mark wouldn't have been able to stand that beating in the Philippi jail that Paul and Silas had. Silas

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was a stronger character at that moment in his life than John Mark. God knew what he was doing when he let these two people disagree over John Mark.

So Barnabus takes John Mark to the island of Cyprus where he has a chance to rehabilitate and recuperate and gather strength and grow in his Christian faith. Paul will later pay the ultimate tribute to John Mark when Paul's in prison and says, "Have John Mark come. He is useful to me."

I love it when the body of Christ is wise enough to give people second chance or a third chance. Or wise enough in family to keep picking one another up when we have fallen.

I think we ought to give one another ultimate chances, not just second, third, fourth. But ninety-ninth, hundredth, hundred and first!

In the ritual of the tabernacle and the temple there was at the center of that worship a place called the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies there was an Ark of the Covenant. It was acacia wood, a old covered box. The most precious object that the children of Israel had. What made it precious was that inside that ark were the two tablets of the law that Moses had been given at Sinai. They stood for the fact that God's law was immutable and unchangeable and his righteousness and holiness were unapproachable by man. And only once a year could the high priest come into the holy of holies and that he could only enter if he brought blood. The lid or the cover of this box called the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat. Solid gold. Shaped as two angels or cherubim with their wings touching one another over the tablets of the law. Signifying that when the blood was applied to the Mercy Seat that indeed the mercy was over God's law.

In regard to the nature of God there are these two dual elements. There is his righteousness, his holiness. And on the other hand here is his mercy and his love. They exist in equal proportions. God is righteous and holy and holy and unchangeable and unapproachable. Yet his is loving and tender and kind and gracious. There are times we need emphasis this. They are not one greater than another. They are both distinct attributes of God. But when God wanted to portray for us the relationship of righteousness to mercy he chose to do it by elevating his mercy over his law and saying the mercy seat covers the law. That is sufficient theological justification for us to say to a person "I give you in Christ's name a second chance ... and a third chance..." and on beyond. Because God is a God who loves mercy.

10. I think the last quality I want to mention in Barnabus is the last mention of him in scripture is 1 Corinthians 9:6. A man who gave faith and self-esteem to others is a person who is tender hearted and easily reconcilable.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:6 "Is it only I and Barnabus who must work for a living?" When 1 Corinthians was written it was while Paul was on his third missionary journey and he's at Ephesus. Barnabus had not been with Paul on his second missionary journey. And we're not told he's with him on his third. But this little reference tells us again that Barnabus had rejoined Paul and was working with him. Not just working in the gospel but working at making tents. That suggests time that the rift that was recorded in Acts 15 has been healed in 1 Corinthians 9:6. Barnabus didn't let it get in his craw that Paul hadn't agreed with him. But he had an attitude of tender heartedness toward his brother and was easily reconciled.

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When we forgive one another readily and freely, goodly and tenderly, we're giving out not only the character of God but we're building esteem in people. We're building faith in people. David did the exact opposite thing with his son and it cost him his son. He brought Absalom back from exile but he wouldn't see Absalom. He wouldn't bring him back to his home. He kept him in exile in his own city of Jerusalem for two years and Absalom revolted because his father would not give him restoral and reconciliation and it totally messed up Absalom's head.

When you're in that kind of relate you cannot make the other person change. You need God's help to understand that if that other person doesn't do that for you, there's the body of Christ that will and there's God himself who will speak to you words of encouragement and comfort and cheer. What you have caught from your past doesn't need to be passed on to the next generation.

Be merciful toward one another and tenderhearted toward one another.

All of these ten qualities are not all directly related in a one to one relationship with faith and self esteem. But I believe that these ten qualities together make up the composite of the person who finds himself or herself placing confidence, giving confidence to others. No one can make someone else have self-esteem. Ultimately the person himself must embrace that. There is a sense in which we can never give it away if a person won't receive it. But we can be encouragers and we can be helpers.

Let's seek to be a giving person. Let's seek to see the best in a person. Let's seek to see the opportunities rather than the obstacles. Let's seek to be secure within ourselves. Let's be people of worship and of prayer. Let's keep moving through discouragement. Let's support others under attack. Let's be ready to give a second chance and let's remain tenderhearted toward one another.

Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word, which searches us, searches our heart. Lord, maybe you've directed us to Barnabus this evening for some very special reasons. There is someone you're calling us to be an encourager. To be a helper. Maybe we found it too easy to criticize them and be down upon them and see all the warts in their life. We need to stand back and say, Lord, what do you see in their life? What can I identify with? What can I encourage? I realize that my words and my actions can tear so much down. How can I be a constructor rather than a destructor? Give us faith for the significant others in our life. Give us faith in the body of Christ. Give us faith in one another. Help us to believe that the young people in this church are going to be the finest young people the kingdom of God has ever known. The finest lay people. The finest pastors. The finest missionaries. Help us to see that and believe that and begin to pray that into being. Help us to believe that our families are going to express all that you want for the family and that each of our lives personally are going to be exactly tailor made to what the spirit seeks. Help us to build one another up in the faith. We ask it through Christ our Lord. Amen.