

From this Corner  
By Larry Baird

## “SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT”

When reading the Bible I like to look for little things sprinkled among the big. I found one the other day. In Acts 4:36 it refers to a man by the name of Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas. Then there is a parenthetical statement that says “which means Son of Encouragement.” As I read that verse, it occurred to me that I would like to be known as a “Son of Encouragement.” For one thing, it sounds a lot better than “Son of Discouragement.”

Those who have been people of encouragement in my life are bright shining stars in the galaxy of characters God has placed along the way. Let me share a case in point. I was called to the ordained ministry at a very early age. In my youthful naiveté, I thought that was it. If God called me to be a pastor, I was going to be a pastor. At the time, however, I was oblivious to the qualifications required. As I moved closer to high school graduation, I became aware that much education would be required. I will spare you the details, but the upshot of it is that the degree of education seemed out of the question. I can remember the despair that settled on my heart and in my soul. How was it that God could be so clear and then abandon me in the process?

As Paul Harvey would say, “you know the rest of the story.” What you may not know is my brother also entered a profession requiring graduate work. None of this, however, may have happened if the Bishop had not appointed a “Son of Encouragement” to our church. The Rev. Howard Warriner had, and I suspect still has a passion for seeing that people become all they can be. As soon as he heard of the situation, he moved in with an encouraging word. Everybody who needed an encouraging word was indeed “encouraged.” My brother and I were encouraged, my parents were encouraged, our church was encouraged, and people who had financial means were encouraged. It seemed then and still does now, that the whole world was encouraged. Soon my brother and I were on our way. Anything that seemed a barrier fell down as though Joshua had marched about sending them tumbling out of the way.

How sad that I often see people in our churches who are “sons or daughters of discouragement.” I have witnessed that they can be terribly destructive. They can damage vision, cripple mission, and spread mushroom clouds of despair across otherwise hopeful scenarios. On top of it, they seem personally miserable. Perhaps they had no “son or daughter of encouragement” in their life.

Sometimes it is true that we need to face hard realities that are not pleasant, but too often, there is an inordinate amount of discouragement. I believe that Christians should be the last people to be discouraged or become agents of discouragement. Hebrews 6:18b says, “we are heirs of the promise of Jesus Christ.” We are those who ought to embrace “... the hope offered to us and be greatly encouraged.”

As I take this public moment to thank Pastor Warriner, I hope you will consider becoming a “daughter or son of encouragement.” God blesses the work of those who encourage.