

## ***Discipleship – Summer 2012 – Week beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> July***

### **Home group / study notes: God has been meeting us**

*Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. Don't rush the discussions in order to 'finish' the study, and make sure you allow time for prayer ministry.*

*The young people designed and led parts of the service on Sunday and looked back over their sessions in Sunday Club, All Age Worship and Messy Church since Easter. It seems good for adult church members to do the something similar.*

In the last three months, what circumstances have changed in your life? How has God met with you (or how has he let you stumble on, perhaps...)? Are there things you have not really brought to God or left with him? Are there any things you are pretty sure God wanted you to deal with which you have not yet done?

*Some of these you might want to share in a group by way of encouragement; other things you might just want to incorporate in prayer later.*

**Read** James 5:13-20 Notice how God is to be meeting us in all kinds of situations and through a variety of means. How effectively do we put these verses into practice? How could we do better as a church?

Let's look at one person whom God met in the weeks after the first resurrection:

**Read** Acts 4: 32-36 Encouragement by practical action

How do we *encourage* by practical giving? The word for 'encouragement' is closely related to that used to describe the Holy Spirit – *paraklesis* / *parakletos* – meaning one who draws alongside.

Acts 9:26-31 Encouragement of individuals

After his conversion Saul went back to Jerusalem. Imagine how the Christians there would feel! Can you imagine any modern-day equivalents? Barnabas here draws alongside an individual to give courage and reassurance. Without him we may not have had Paul's ministry and mission. Who could you draw alongside, encourage? You may not see the fruits...

Acts 11:19-23 Encouragement of a church

Peter had explained his first Gentile experience – at the house of Cornelius – to the Jerusalem church. Why did they send Barnabas? Who were encouraged here? (*Perhaps even more surprising remembering Barnabas' own background in 4:36*)

Acts 11:24 Notice how these things just follow quite naturally in an unforced way. *Good – full of Holy Spirit – many brought to the Lord.* How is this still true today? (Or the converse, people being put off the Lord!) When you pray tonight, pray for that natural sequence to come about through you.

Acts 11:25-30 More practical encouragement and trustworthiness – think about all the ways described here.

Acts 15:36-41 Does being an encourager always mean things will go smoothly? Think of the fruit of the Spirit: how can we show the flavours yet not be 'doormats'? Whom did Barnabas want to encourage here? *Without Barnabas we may not have Mark's gospel!*

**Pray** over things which have emerged this evening, and for one another, to encourage.

In an age where criticism is the norm, is God saying anything to share about being encouragers? Say one (true!) good thing about everyone else in the group and finish with the Grace.