



## World Christian Fellowship

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### We all need an encourager like Barnabas!

**Acts 4:36-37**, *And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup>having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Barnabas was an early disciple in the New Testament church. He was a Levite from Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, about 60 miles off the coast of Israel.

Barnabas later visited the island of Cyprus on the first missionary journey with the Apostle Paul, and again on a second journey with Mark.

The given name of Barnabas was “Joses” (**Acts 4:36**).

When Barnabas became a Christian, he sold his land and gave the money to the Jerusalem Apostles.

Early in the history of the church, he went to Antioch to check on the growth of the Christians there, and then on to Tarsus.

From there, he brought Saul (later named “Paul”), back to Antioch to help with the church in that city (the third largest in the Mediterranean world). Because of his good reputation, Barnabas was able to calm the fears which the believers at Jerusalem had about Saul (**Acts 9:27**).

Barnabas and Paul (along with John Mark) were commissioned to make a missionary journey to Cyprus and the provinces of Asia Minor (**Acts 13:1-4**).

Later, after a difference of opinion regarding whether or not to take Mark with them on a second journey, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways (**Acts 15:36-41**).

Barnabas possessed exceptional spiritual qualities. He had an unshakable confidence in God.

The lesson from various parts of the Book of Acts will focus on some of the key activities in the life and experience of Barnabas.

- 1. Generous giver.**
- 2. Faithful friend.**
- 3. Committed Partnership.**
- 4. Forgiving brother.**

## 1. Generous Giver (Acts 4:36-37)

His name was Joses, but the apostles called him “Barnabas,” which was an Aramaic expression meaning “son of encouragement.”

**Acts 4:37**, *And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,*

Barnabas owned some land. Since the tribe of Levi was not to have a land inheritance, it seems surprising that Joses (a Levite) owned property.

Apparently, the law regarding land inheritances was not always observed. The text says that Barnabas sold a field which he owned and gave the proceeds to the Apostles at Jerusalem.

Barnabas had some financial resources. He was not married and had no children.

He sold his field and must have asked himself, “How much shall I give to the poor?”

He decided not to give merely ten percent or even fifty percent, but the original language indicates that he gave it all to aid the poor in Jerusalem.

Barnabas was a generous giver.

The church at Jerusalem was growing rapidly and believers were being added to the church daily. Because thousands of visitors were in Jerusalem at the time, there was need for material help in caring for the multitudes of people.

Barnabas had land, and he decided to sell it, and give the total amount of money to the Apostles to be used as needed.

Barnabas was a generous giver, and willing to give financially to help meet the needs of the early church. This was an indication of his love for the Lord, and his faith in the people who made up the church.

The generosity of Barnabas was surely a source of encouragement for the folks who were part of the early church.

As you listening to the message what are you holding from the Lord.

**1 Corinthians 4:7**, *For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now*

*if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

Your talents,  
Time,  
Money,  
Possession.

## **2. Faithful Friend (Acts 9:26-27)**

Paul was converted on his way to Damascus. After his dramatic conversion and baptism, he stayed on in Damascus and preached Christ in the synagogues there.

**Acts 9:20**, *Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*

Several of the Jews, however, “took counsel to kill him”.

**Acts 9:23**, *Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.*

Paul escaped from Damascus.

When Saul was safely delivered from Damascus, he returned to Jerusalem.

**Acts 9:26**, *And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.*

Paul after his arrival to Jerusalem, he attempted “to join the disciples” there. He apparently tried to make amends for his former hatred and persecution by bearing witness for Christ.

But the Jerusalem believers were filled with scepticism and fear. They knew what he had done to the church not too long before breathing out threats of murder against new believers.

The Jerusalem disciples were afraid of Saul and were not willing to believe that he was a true follower of Christ.

However, bighearted Barnabas “took” Saul and “brought him to the apostles”.

**Acts 9:27**, *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*

After Barnabas had testified in behalf of Saul, and explained the change that had taken place in his life, Saul was able to move about freely in the Christian circles at Jerusalem.

**Acts 9:28**, *So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.*

It was Barnabas who brought Saul to Peter and James and the other leaders of the Jerusalem church, and enabled Saul to be accepted by the church there.

Saul began contending for the faith among Greek-speaking Jews.

**Acts 9:29-30**, *And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. <sup>30</sup>When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.*

But it wasn't long until the brethren shipped him home to Tarsus, where he remained for seven or eight years.

Until he was brought back to Antioch to help with the work of the church there.

We observe then that Barnabas was not only a man to be trusted with money, but he also was a faithful friend who took the risk of associating with Saul of Tarsus, in those early days soon after Saul's conversion.

Barnabas was an encourager of Saul, who later became a dynamic leader in the early church.

There are times people do not need your money, material things just an encouraging word of a good and faithful friend who could encourage them to move forward in their life with Christ.

### **3. Committed Partnership (Acts 11:22-26)**

Some Christians who were “scattered” because of persecution went north to Antioch (the third largest city in the Roman Empire, next to Rome and Alexandria), and preached the Gospel to the Jews living in that city.

**Acts 11:19-21**, *Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. <sup>20</sup>But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup>And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.*

The “hand of the Lord was with them” and what was happening at Antioch “reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem”.

The leaders of the church at Jerusalem were concerned about whether evangelizing Gentiles was a proper thing to do.

So, they sent Barnabas “to go as far as Antioch.”

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he was so blessed by what he saw that he encouraged them to keep pressing on in the faith.

Barnabas was so fully consecrated to the Lord that he rejoiced to see anyone (even Gentiles) accepting Christ as their Saviour. Barnabas “exhorted” (encouraged) the people at Antioch to stay true to the Lord.

**Acts 11:23**, *When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.*

When Barnabas came to Antioch and saw the evidence of the grace of God, and he was glad.

The verb “encouraged” (exhorted) is in the imperfect tense, which means that he repeatedly encouraged them to persevere in their loyalty to God.

When Barnabas encouraged the people at Antioch to remain true to the Lord with all your hearts.

The description of Barnabas (in verse 24) is about as noble a portrayal as could be made of any human being.

**Acts 11:24**, *For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.*

The three characteristics named here about Barnabas have become the major points in many a funeral sermon. A preacher is always happy when he can say those things about a member of his church who has been promoted to the eternal world.

He was a good man.

He was generous.

He was tender-hearted.

A man of proven character and high moral standards. Barnabas was an honourable, respectable, and morally sound man.

He was full of the Holy Spirit. He had experienced an endowment of power for witnessing and service. He was not driven by personal ambition and selfish desires. He was willing to work and let others get the credit.

He was overflowing with faith, had strong convictions and a settled confidence in the reliability of God's Word. He believed

that God is able to transform persons who come to the Lord Jesus in faith and repentance.

As the church continued to grow, and many believers were being added to the Body, additional help was needed in the teaching ministry of the church. The task at Antioch was getting too great for Barnabas, and so he went to Tarsus (125 miles northwest of Antioch).

**Acts 11:25-26**, *Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. <sup>26</sup>And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

Any leader who realizes his limitations and is willing to bring in an associate to help to shows the marks of wisdom and of an unselfish spirit.

For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul taught the people at Antioch. As a result the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Earlier in the book of Acts they had been called

- “brethren” (Acts 1:16),
- “disciples” (Acts 6:1),
- “saints” (Acts 9:13), and

➤ “believers” (Acts 10:45).

Now they were called “Christians,” probably because the believers were frequently talking about One whom they called “the Christ.”

The term may also have been used because the conduct and attitudes of the believers reminded their neighbours of what they had heard about Christ.

The term “Christian” occurs only twice again in the entire New Testament.

Agrippa said to Paul.

**Acts 26:28**, *Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”*

Apostle Peter wrote.

**1 Peter 4:16**, *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*

It seems that the word “Christian” was used primarily by outsiders, not so much by the believers themselves.

Antioch was led by the Spirit to commission Barnabas and Saul to carry the message of the Gospel into the farther reaches of the Empire.

Barnabas came from Cyprus, and so that's where they went first. He had friends, and probably relatives who lived on the island and he wanted them to hear the Gospel. They took John Mark with them, but when they got to the region of Pamphylia, Mark decided to turn around and go home.

#### **4. Forgiving Brother (Acts 15:36-41)**

Paul suggested to Barnabas that they re-visit the churches which they had established on the first missionary journey.

**Acts 15:36**, *Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."*

Paul was concerned about the welfare of the new believers, and he wanted to check up on their progress.

Barnabas heartily approved of the idea, but he wanted to take Mark along with them.

**Acts 15:37**, *Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.*

Paul thought that was not a good idea since Mark had gone along with them on the first missionary journey, and then gave up and quit when they came to the rugged mountain regions on the southern coast of Turkey.

**Acts 15:38**, *But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.*

Paul was inclined to be firm, while Barnabas preferred to be tender, and the difference of opinion caused a split between the two spiritual giants.

- Barnabas thought that Mark had learned his lesson, and that he should have another chance.
- Paul insisted that they needed a reliable person who could stand up under persecution and hardship.

Possibly one of the two could have given in, but Barnabas would not give up support for his nephew (his sister's son), and Paul would not give up his convictions (about Mark's lack of dedication).

The two went their separate ways.

In this case, that step turned out to be a blessing, because now two teams were evangelizing.

- Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia (**V 41**).
- Barnabas and Mark went back to Cyprus (**V 39**).

Barnabas chose to encourage Mark, a young man who didn't have many friends. Barnabas must have said to himself, "John Mark needs me; if I don't help him now, he may never amount to anything."

Barnabas took Mark with him, and they went back to re-visit churches that had been established on the earlier missionary journey. Tradition says that Barnabas stayed on the island of Cyprus until his death.

It is important to note that there were no nasty fights or bitter feelings between Paul and Barnabas.

Paul later spoke very kindly about Barnabas.

**1 Corinthians 9:6**, *Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?*

Paul also was convinced that Mark became a mature disciple of Jesus, and wrote to Timothy, encouraging him to come visit him in prison.

**2 Timothy 4:11**, *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*

Barnabas truly deserves the highest commendation for his generous Christian spirit, and for his contribution toward the ongoing life and ministry of the early church.

Had it not been for the unselfish concern of Barnabas, Paul might never have been accepted in the Jerusalem church, and Mark may have decided to give up serving the Lord.

Instead, both men persevered, and more than half of the New Testament was written by them thirteen epistles written by Paul, and one Gospel written by Mark.

We will remember Barnabas as a man disposed to kindness. He was a man with a warm heart and an open hand.

Barnabas was a faithful friend, a committed encourager, a forgiving brother, and one who gave generously to help the poor.

**Proverbs 19:17**, *He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.*

**Dr. Howard Kelly story of glass of milk.**

“Paid in full with one glass of milk.”

Barnabas, in our lesson today, deserves a spot with other noted New Testament saints.

A disciple of Jesus on the level with Paul and John, and Peter and James.

Each generation needs more saints like Barnabas!

**Will you be a Barnabas to someone today?**