

Barnabas: Son of Encouragement

By Allan Thompson

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles...” (Acts 9:27 NIV).

(Read Acts 9:20–30 and 11:19–26)

What was the result of Saul’s first preaching? (Acts 9:21–25)

What was the result of Saul’s second round of sermons? (Acts 9:29)

To whom did the new Christians preach? (Acts 11:19)

Who preached to the Greeks at Antioch? (Acts 11:20)

What were three characteristics of Barnabas? (Acts 11:24)

Before his conversion, Saul had ordered the stoning and imprisonment of Christians to suppress their heretical beliefs. Now, he was equally passionate to preach those same beliefs. The Jews of Damascus and subsequent locales of his preaching felt betrayed. Saul was a “traitor.” Barnabas showed courage equal to Saul’s by standing up for and speaking out about him. We can only assume they met secretly at first because Barnabas knew details of Saul’s last few days (Acts 9:27).

Barnabas was acting out of conviction but in character. His very name means “Son of Encouragement.”

The first mention of Barnabas (Acts 4:36–37) tells us he was wealthy (had land), generous (sold the field and donated the money to the church), and a respected Jew (a Levite). Barnabas was a nickname given by the apostles; his real name was Joseph.

His whole life was a preparation for this moment when he used his influence and leverage to gain an audience for Saul. Instead of focusing on a man’s past, he was

focused on Saul's future. Barnabas realized that their greatest earthly enemy could now become their strongest partner for evangelization.

What does the phrase “proving that Jesus was the Christ” mean? (Acts 9:22)

What verses of Scripture and what lines of thinking would you use to convince someone that the claims of Jesus about His messiahship were true?

Have you ever been called upon to mediate between two disagreeing parties or people? Yes No

Barnabas took a huge risk of being rejected by both the Jews and his Christian brothers. Why would he do this?

Barnabas encouraged the believers in Antioch and their numbers grew under his leadership.

The Christians sent Saul to his hometown. Why? (Acts 9:29–30)

What was the latest major victory experienced by your church in winning the enemies of Christ over to the kingdom of God?

Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), an important island of trade. There he met men and women from every country adjoining the Mediterranean Sea. He learned to appreciate instead of fear cultures different from his own. His countrymen also understood this and took the gospel to the Greeks (Acts 11:20). They were “coloring outside the lines,” stepping out of accepted boundaries. It took daring and courage to preach to a group unfamiliar with the Old Testament, who spoke different languages and held completely different values.

But in some ways, it was also easier to preach the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection to them, because they did not have any preconceived notions about Him.

Barnabas was sent to investigate the genuineness of the decisions being made in Antioch. He was sent because the church leaders knew he had experience with other cultures since he thought like the other men from Cyprus and since he had no personal pride. He encouraged the believers in Antioch (living up to his name again) and their numbers grew under his leadership. But he knew he had found a wonderful environment where the preaching of the gospel would best flourish under the leadership of Saul. And Barnabas gladly brought him to help out.

Identify a cultural, racial, or social group in your community that is not effectively being reached with the gospel.

What kind of person would be needed to best reach this group for Christ?

Are you willing to become that kind of person? Yes No

Think about what racial, cultural, and social groups you are best equipped to reach because of your background and your life experiences. The groups you want to reach for Jesus in the future could determine what college you attend, what major you choose, where you will work, what you will do for a living, and even who or if you will marry.

How could you discover what groups of people you are specially suited to reach for Christ?

What additional skills are you willing to acquire to become a better communicator of the gospel?