



Barnabas: Being a Son of Encouragement

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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Introduction:

The Bible describes him as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (**Acts 11:24**). He was a great servant and a great encourager to others. In fact, the nickname he was given by the apostles meant “son of encouragement” (**Acts 4:36**). How would you like to be renamed with such a positive outlook? Wouldn't it be great to be so helpful and encouraging that folks simply called you, “encourager”? Certainly, if we want to be like Barnabas, perhaps we should spend some time with him. What would he teach us if we were to do so? What lessons would he pass on to us? Obviously, we can't actually talk to Barnabas. However, I believe as we read about him in the New Testament, we can learn some of the lessons he would pass on to us if he had the opportunity. Note six lessons Barnabas teaches us.

Discussion:

- I. “Your brethren are more important than your possessions.”
 - A. In **Acts 4:36-37**, Barnabas sold a tract of land and laid the entirety of his proceeds at the apostle's feet to help needy brethren. What causes a person to let go of one of his best financial investments? Love and a true perspective of what is valuable. Barnabas valued his brethren more than he valued his possessions.
 - B. Remember Jesus' words in **Luke 12:15**, “...for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (ESV). We do not know how wealthy Barnabas was, but he certainly grasped the concept Paul taught in **I Timothy 6:17-19**. He did not put his trust in his wealth, but in God. Therefore, he was able to use the blessings from God to serve others and store up treasures in heaven. Barnabas would tell us that our brethren are more important than our stuff.
- II. “Don't get upset when you don't get picked.”
 - A. By the time we read to **Acts 6:1-7**, we have already been introduced to Barnabas and his servant mentality (**Acts 4:36-37**). Here was a man who was a great Christian. In fact, **Acts 11:24** claimed he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, a statement parallel to the qualifications for overseeing the work done with the widows in **Acts 6:3**. Yet, when the Jerusalem congregation picked seven good men, full of the Spirit and wisdom to lead the work of providing for the widows, his name is not on the list. Barnabas, however, would go on to do great service, being sent from Jerusalem to Antioch when the gospel reached that city and a church was established.
 - B. How many stories have we heard of men who leave congregations because they were overlooked in the search for elders or deacons? How many get upset when they were not selected to be a teacher? Not Barnabas. Barnabas simply continued doing what he could do. When the time came that his specific skills were needed for a specific task, he was ready to get to work and head to Antioch (**Acts 11:22**). Barnabas would tell us not to get upset when we do not get picked even when we are qualified. Do what you can and when you are picked, do your duty.
- III. “Go where you are needed.”
 - A. In **Acts 11:19-21**, the gospel arrived in Syrian Antioch and many believed. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about it, they wanted someone to go and strengthen the church there. Barnabas, the son of encouragement, was sent. This was not a small trip. He was not sent for a week-long gospel meeting. This was a lifelong change. Then in **Acts 13:2-3**, the Holy Spirit selected Barnabas to travel with Paul all over the known world establishing churches, another huge change.
 - B. Think about the sacrifice that called for. Barnabas was not attached to this world. He was looking forward to eternity. Therefore, he was able to pack up and go where he was needed, where he could be used the most, where he could provide the most encouragement. By the way, for Barnabas, being where he could be used the most did not necessarily mean going where he could lead public prayers or lead singing most frequently. He went where there was hard work needed and he did the hard work—publicly and privately. Barnabas would tell us to go where we are needed.
- IV. “Empower others.”
 - A. In **Acts 11:22-23**, the apostles sent Barnabas to strengthen and aid the new Christians in Antioch. One of the greatest contributions Barnabas made in the congregation there was bringing Saul from Tarsus (**Acts 11:25-26**). Barnabas was not interested in what would make him look the best. Therefore, he did not try to accomplish every-

thing all on his own. Instead, he was interested in what was best for the brethren and for Christ's church. He was able to see that the congregation needed someone in addition to himself and he went and got him.

- B. Don't forget the past between Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas had been the one who brought Saul to the apostles in **Acts 9:26-28** and vouched for him. Barnabas was interested in giving others opportunity to grow. He did not do that by taking a backseat but by developing them. The greatest story of his success is Saul. Barnabas's initial confidence in Saul paid off as he went on to surpass Barnabas in teaching and strengthening churches. Barnabas would tell us to invest our time in others, give them a chance, and empower them.

V. "Be patient with others."

- A. Along with the above point, Barnabas would teach us to be patient with each other. In **Acts 13:5**, John Mark traveled with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. However, in **Acts 13:13**, John left them. We do not know exactly why. However, it must not have been on good terms with Paul. When Paul asked Barnabas to travel with him again, Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another opportunity, but Paul refused. Their disagreement was so sharp that they went on separate journeys with other men (**Acts 15:36-41**).
- B. Barnabas's patience with John Mark paid off. Even Paul eventually came to see John Mark as valuable (**II Timothy 4:11**). Additionally, according to most conservative students of the Scripture, John Mark ended up writing the gospel of Mark. Perhaps Paul did not always remember or perfectly follow his own teaching on patience (**II Timothy 4:1-2**), but Barnabas understood and practiced patience very well. Perhaps Paul was simply passing on what he had learned from Barnabas when he wrote to Timothy and us about patience. Barnabas would encourage us to be patient with our brethren.

VI. "Do what is right, no matter what anyone else thinks of it."

- A. I am sure that Barnabas would talk to us about one of his greatest mistakes, recorded in **Galatians 2:12-13**. Despite Barnabas's great work as a servant of brethren, there was a time when he went astray and acted with prejudice. While in Antioch, despite having been one of the first teachers who came to encourage the Gentile Christians, when Peter began to hold himself aloof from Gentiles, Barnabas followed his hypocrisy. I imagine Barnabas regretted those days for the rest of his life.
- B. Because Peter was concerned what the Jews from James would think, he changed his behavior. Because Barnabas was so concerned what Peter would think, he changed his. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, we need to do what is right. No matter what anyone else is saying, we need to stick with God's way. We need to learn that it's really none of our business what anyone else thinks of us. The only one that matters is God.
- C. This may seem to be completely different from the rest of the points Barnabas would teach us. But didn't this principle govern everything else Barnabas did? Ananias and Sapphira sold property based on what they thought others would think of it. Not Barnabas. Barnabas was clearly not bent out of shape based on what others thought of him when they appointed seven men to care for widows. He was willing to bring Saul to Antioch because he wasn't focused on trying to make himself look good to others. Not to mention, he put his neck on the line for Saul no matter what anyone else thought of him. He was patient with John Mark despite what Paul thought of it. Barnabas wasn't perfect. He made mistakes and **Galatians 2:12-13** is one of them. It was the exception that proved the rule for Barnabas. Do what is right, no matter what anyone else thinks of it.

Conclusion:

We all need encouragement. That means we all need encouragers. I know I have chosen some of my best friends because of the encouragement they give me and the help it provides to keep me on track in serving the Lord. I want to be that same kind of encourager. I want to be a son of encouragement. Do you? Then let's learn to be disciples like Barnabas. Let's learn the lessons he shares in his life.