

# BARNABAS: THE SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT

ORDINARY PEOPLE IN GOD'S EXTRAORDINARY WORK [ACTS, PART 2] · ACTS 4:36-37; 9:26-28; 11:22-30; 12:25-13:3 · NOVEMBER 23, 2025 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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*"Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:36-37)*

## Who Is Barnabas?

- Jewish but from the diaspora areas, specifically Cyprus
- An early follower of Jesus as Messiah in Jerusalem
- Respected servant, leader, pastor and missionary
- His name: son of encouragement, son of exhortation

## Barnabas the Generous

- The movement of generosity in the church (Acts 4:32-35)
- Barnabas' encouraging example (Acts 4:36-37)

## Barnabas the Advocate

- The conversion of Paul from persecutor to follower of Jesus (Acts 9:1-20)
- Barnabas advocates for Paul, bringing Paul to the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 9:26-31)

## Barnabas the Encourager

- The growth of the church in Antioch and Barnabas sent to pastor (Acts 11:19-24)
- Barnabas invites Paul to join him in this work, and they become emissaries back to Jerusalem with a financial gift (Acts 11:24-26)

## Barnabas the Exhorter

- Paul and Barnabas are sent out from Antioch as preachers in the Mediterranean (Acts 12:25-13:3)
- Barnabas and Paul have conflict because of Barnabas' cousin, John Mark, which leads to a parting of the ways, even as they both continue gospel work (Acts 15:36-41)

## Learning from Barnabas

- Living in response to God's leading
- Living with God-birthed integrity and goodness
- Living congruent with who God has made us to be

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is one of the most influential "unfamous" people you know?
2. This week we conclude our sermon series, "Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Work," the second part of our journey through Acts. Today we explore the story of Barnabas through various portions of Scripture from Acts. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through His word.
3. We first meet Barnabas in Acts 4:32:37. Read that Scripture aloud. What do you notice about Barnabas in light of the exciting things happening in the early church?
4. We next encounter Barnabas after the persecution resulting from Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7), the amazing conversion of Saul/Paul (Acts 9), and Peter's preaching to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house (Acts 10). Read Acts 11:19-30. What do you learn about Barnabas' character and gifting from these verses?
5. Who is someone, like Barnabas with Paul, who has quietly influenced your journey with God in big ways? What have they done?
6. Barnabas and Paul are eventually sent from Antioch to proclaim the good news throughout the Mediterranean. Read Acts 14:1-20 to get a flavor of their journeys. Even though Paul begins to come to the fore, what do you notice about Barnabas from these stories?
7. Eventually, Paul and Barnabas come into conflict. Read about that in Acts 15:36-41 (with background in 13:5, 13). What was the source of the conflict and what was the end result? How do you think Paul and Barnabas' personalities and priorities in ministry led to the conflict they experienced? What can we learn from that for our lives?
8. When conflict happens, what do you think it looks like to let God bring good things out of it?
9. What is one thing you sense God calling to your attention personally through this week's study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and consider sharing your thoughts with someone this week.

## DIG DEEPER:

### Exploring Faith

- Is there someone you have gravitated towards in your searching that could be a "Barnabas" type helping you in your exploring?

(continued on reverse)