

Barnabas, the Encourager

Last month Time Magazine revealed the 100 Most Influential People of 2017. Have you ever wondered who would make the list of the 100 most influential people in the first century New Testament church? Probably names like Peter, Paul, and John would top the list. I want to suggest a name that I would place among the top five most influential people in the first century church. His name was Joses, but the apostles renamed him **Barnabas**, the Son of Encouragement.

As a preacher I have looked up to several biblical role models like Jesus and Paul who influenced and motivated me to **become** a preacher. However, I have more recently looked to **Barnabas** as a role model to **maintain** my ministry. Let me explain why. Last year Richard Perrault asked me a soul searching question. Since I became physically unable to do what I used to do as a preacher, Richard asked me what I believed my role or purpose in the church is now. Without hesitation, I replied that I want to be the best **Barnabas** that I can be. I want to encourage others to achieve more of their God-given potential and become all that they can be. I want to help others to do what I am no longer able to do myself. When I die, I hope people will remember me as an **encourager**. If nothing else, I hope people will say that I encouraged them.

Barnabas is one of my favorite Bible people because we **all** can be a **Barnabas**. We may not preach like Peter, make clothes for people like Dorcas, cook like Martha, or write letters like Paul, but we can all encourage one another. The ability to encourage others is not dependant on age, gender, education, social status, or skills training.

As you know, in February I began teaching a Bible class here on Wednesday evenings from the book of Acts to help us become more like the first century New Testament church. I recently preached a couple of sermons about the apostle Paul to help us realize what the early church experienced. **Today**, our message is based on **Barnabas** in order to motivate us to **encourage** one another as commanded in the first century church of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to "**Encourage** one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." The word encourage is used over 30 times in the Bible.

Now let's learn seven important ways how **Barnabas** encouraged others so that we can do likewise.

The first thing that we learn about Barnabas is that he was a generous man who freely gave of his possessions to help and encourage others.

Because of the fast growth of the new church in Jerusalem after Pentecost many of the new members from out of town were in need of help.

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

In order for the church to do God's work, we are commanded to give generously and cheerfully according to **1 Corinthians 16:2** and **2 Corinthians 9:5-7**. A good example of that is when someone who was out of work and barely surviving was greatly encouraged as the church here and several of our members gave money to help. That is what the church does.

Second, we notice that Barnabas was a forgiving person who believed in giving second chances to others. He spoke up on behalf of others to defend them when others kept silent. After the vicious persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, was converted and baptized in Damascus and began preaching, many of the brethren did not trust him.

Acts 9:26 27 tells us "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. 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." When people repent, we need to accept them and give them a chance to redeem themselves and start over. Some of the most effective preachers I know lived a very sinful life before they were converted. When new people come into our congregation, we need to make them feel welcome and included in our fellowship to help them get off to a good start in their new congregation. Those are ways that we can all encourage people.

Third, we note that the apostles trusted Barnabas to check on the progress of the growing church beyond Jerusalem.

Acts 11:21-24 says "²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them (who preached about the Lord Jesus in Antioch) and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

²² Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out **Barnabas** to go as far as Antioch.

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.

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."

What was true then is true now. When we encourage one another to continue with the Lord, a great many people will be added to the Lord right here at Northeast. I have seen it happen here in the last few years.

Fourth, we observe that Barnabas did not try to hog all the glory for himself. Barnabas was a team player. Barnabas had the wisdom to know when he needed others to help him. He recruited someone who would become better known than him.

Acts 11:25-26 - "²⁵ Then **Barnabas** departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

²⁶ 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."

Fifth, Barnabas was trusted to deliver church assistance from Antioch to Jerusalem.

Acts 11:27-30 - "²⁷ And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹ Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.

³⁰ This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of **Barnabas** and Saul."

Acts 12:25 - "And **Barnabas** and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark."

Sixth, Barnabas was selected to go with Saul on what became known as the apostle Paul's first missionary journey and they had great success.

Acts 13:1-3 - "¹ Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: **Barnabas**, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me **Barnabas** and Saul for the work to which I have called them. ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

Barnabas is named about a dozen times in Acts chapters 13, 14, and 15 which is about as many times as the apostle Paul. He was an equal partner with Paul and they boldly preached Christ.

Acts 13:7 - "who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for **Barnabas** and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."

Acts 13:43 - "Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and **Barnabas**, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

Acts 13:46 - "Then Paul and **Barnabas** grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

Acts 13:50 - "But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and **Barnabas**, and expelled them from their region."

Acts 14:12 - "And **Barnabas** they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."

Acts 14:14 - "But when the apostles **Barnabas** and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out"

Acts 14:20 - "However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with **Barnabas** to Derbe."

Acts 15:2 - "Therefore, when Paul and **Barnabas** had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and **Barnabas** and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question."

Acts 15:12 - "Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to **Barnabas** and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles."

Acts 15:22 - "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and **Barnabas**, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren."

Acts 15:25 - "it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved **Barnabas** and Paul,"

Seventh, we can learn from Barnabas and Paul how to handle a contentious disagreement.

On their first missionary journey together, John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, went with them, but along the way John Mark decided to return to his home town of Jerusalem (**Acts 13:13**). Later on when planning their second trip, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, but Paul strongly protested so that a sharp contention arose between Barnabas and Paul. They could not reach an agreement so they split up. Let's read about it in:

Acts 15:35-40 - ³⁵ Paul and **Barnabas** also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

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."

³⁷ Now **Barnabas** was determined to take with them John called Mark.

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.

³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so **Barnabas** took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

Let's notice some important things about disagreements in the church.

Disagreements do not always involve doctrine. Often disagreements in the church are based on personalities, opinions, and matters of judgment. There will always be times when good brethren disagree in matters of opinion. It does not matter so much **who** is right in matters of opinion. The Bible does not even say whether Barnabas or Paul was right. What matters is that we do not allow disagreements to destroy the work of the Lord or discourage His people. The important thing is to keep focused on doing the will of Christ.

Let us notice how they handled this personal dispute that they could not resolve.

1. Barnabas did not get mad and leave the church or go back into Judaism because Paul disagreed with him.
2. They did not stir up people to get the church to take sides in the matter.
3. They did not try to split the church.
4. They did not let their conflict distract them from their respective efforts of preaching the gospel.
5. Barnabas took John Mark encouraging him by giving him a second chance as they went on a mission trip in different direction. And later John Mark wrote the gospel of Mark.
6. Paul chose Silas (which developed another young leader in the church) and they went on what we know as Paul's second missionary journey being commended by the brethren. So twice as much work was accomplished.
7. They did not continue the dispute and write bad things about each other because of this conflict.
8. They did not allow this to permanently destroy the love and respect that they had for each other.
9. In fact, we notice in later writings of Paul that he wrote kind words about Barnabas and John Mark.

In **1 Corinthians 9:6** Paul mentioned that Barnabas was worthy of financial support for his work of proclaiming the gospel. "Or is it only **Barnabas** and I who have no right to refrain from working?"

While a prisoner in Rome, Paul wrote in **Colossians 4:10** - "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of **Barnabas** (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),"

At another time Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 4:11** - "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry."

We need to be more like Barnabas and Paul when we disagree on matters of opinion and judgment in the church. They encouraged others and did not tear down others or each other.

Today in our lesson we have learned seven very important ways that we can become more like Barnabas, but the most important lesson that I hope we all will remember and practice daily is to encourage and build up other people. That is one of the ways that we must become more like the first century New Testament church of Christ.

Before I end my message today I want to extend the invitation from Jesus Christ to come to Him this morning if you are spiritually tired and carrying heavy burdens. If you are not a Christian, you can leave here this morning saved from your sins by the blood of Christ. We would be happy to baptize you for the forgiveness of all your sins and you can become a new person. Jesus also invites those today who are already His children if you are carrying a spiritual burden that you want to share with His church so that we can pray with you. That is why we are going to sing this song of encouragement so that you can come right now as we stand and sing.