

to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (Acts 11:20-2)

- Barnabas was a Levite and the Levites were the priestly class within Judaism. They were thoroughly immersed and trained in the ways of the law. They were the Jews of Jews.
- As a Levite Barnabas has literally to step over generations of ingrained thinking and racial prejudice; to see what is happening in Antioch in a positive way
- On arrival Barnabas 'saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.' (Acts 11:23)
- Barnabas has an open mind for something new that God was doing and because he does the Kingdom grows: 'He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.' (Acts 11:24)
- How often do we miss something new that God is doing because we wrongly assume that the things we grew up with were somehow more especially God's way than the things we do today.

3. Questions to consider at home

3.1 Imagine you are writing a character reference for Barnabas what would you want to share with his new employers?

3.2 What lessons do we learn about giving from Barnabas?

3.3 What does Barnabas see in Saul that others didn't? Are there any modern day equivalents to Saul?

3.4 In the disagreement over John Mark who do you think has the better perspective Paul or Barnabas?

3.5 Who is the person who believed in you when others wanted to write you off? Can you think of anyone who needs your encouragement at the moment who may have been written off by others?

3.6 Can you think of any generational ingrained thinking that is currently holding back the growth of the church? Is God encouraging our church or you to embrace some specific change?

3.7 A close Christian friend says to you one day that she really has no time for these modern worship songs. How might Barnabas respond to her? How would you?

Matthew Street 24th October 2021



The Parish of Peasedown St John

Acts 4:36-37, 9:27-28, Acts 11:19-24, 15:36-40

Encouragement can change a person's life

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. **Talk Passage** – Acts 4:36-37, 9:27-28, Acts 11:19-24, 15:36-40

4:36 *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.*

9:27 *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. 28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.*

11:19 *Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.*

15:36 *Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.*

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- 'Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)' (Acts 4:36). We learn four things about Barnabas from Acts 4 verse 36:
 - Firstly his real name was Joseph.
 - Secondly that he was a Levite. Levites were the priestly class within Judaism. The Levites were thoroughly immersed and trained in the ways of the law and were set apart for a life of sacrifice and service.
 - Thirdly he hailed from Cyprus and
 - Fourthly he was such a special person that the Christians in Jerusalem had a nick name for him which was Barnabas: Son of Encouragement.
- Every group needs an 'encourager' because everyone needs encouragement at one time or another. However the value of encouragement is often missed

because it tends to be private rather than public.

- Barnabas was drawn to people he could encourage and he was a great help to those around him. When Barnabas was exercising his gift of encouraging Christians to grow and exercise their gifts what happened is that those who do not yet know Jesus begin to flock into the Kingdom.
- His actions were crucial to the early church. In a way, we can thank him for all that happens in the Book of Acts. God used his relationship with Paul at one point and John Mark at another to keep these men going when either might have failed.
- Barnabas acts as a model and a encourager to us all to follow his example and to encourage rather than criticise those around us.
- Like all of us, Barnabas had a principal gift of encouragement, but he also demonstrates two other gifts: a gift of generosity and a gift of an open mind.

2.2 Gift of Generosity: Acts 4:36-37

- *'Barnabas sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.'* (Acts 4:37) We learn a fifth fact about Barnabas that he owned land in Cyprus.
- Out of his excess he sells some of his land in order to encourage the ministry of the early church and as he does so he challenges each one of us.
- Everything we have, has come from God.
- How willing are we to give generously back to God some of the riches he has given to each one of us?

2.3 Gift of Encouragement: Acts 9:27-28 & 15:36-40

- Barnabas has a sixth sense when it comes to recognising people's value. He has a knack of seeing what others do not see, or perhaps what others refused to see, because of their prejudice.
- There are two particular occasions where Barnabas' people skills are noted in the development of the early church:

2.3.1 Acts 9:27-28: The Conversion of Saul

- The first part of Acts 9 describes the dramatic conversion of a man called Saul the hated persecutor of the early church.
- It is not hard to imagine that the early Christians would have been a little bit suspicious about the validity of Saul's conversion experience. Was it really genuine or was his conversion just a ruse so that he could get access to the inside of the church?
- Imagine how we might respond if someone who was mercilessly criticising us all of a sudden has a change of heart and wants to join our church family. How would we respond to an obnoxious neighbour who was attempting to sue you over a boundary dispute, and then all of a sudden sends you a dinner invitation. I guess our approach in both cases would be caution.
- That's exactly what happened to Saul. When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.
- Barnabas is the one person in the Jerusalem church who sees beyond fear and scepticism and accepts and encourages Saul across the doorstep of the church for the first time: *'But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He*

told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.' (Acts 9:27-8)

- Barnabas sees in Saul the grace of God at work. We might say that Barnabas' view of God was big enough to save or turn around the vilest of sinners, and he was willing to give Saul a second chance.
- #### 2.3.2 Acts 15:36-40: The disagreement over John Mark
- Barnabas sees something in John Mark that Paul doesn't: *Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.* (Acts 15:36-8) Yes, he has failed. He has really let them down and no doubt Paul has some justification at being angry at him. However, Barnabas also sees the potential for good in John Mark.
 - Barnabas sees beyond failure or mistakes to future and restoration. Barnabas is willing to give John Mark another go. The conflict between Paul and Barnabas is so severe over this issue that they ended up parting company: *'they had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.'* (Acts 15:39-40)
 - So who has the right perspective? In the end I believe it is Barnabas not Paul. At some point further on in Paul's ministry, Paul must have come to this same conclusion because John Mark appears again in three of Paul's letters as one of his trusted companions in Philemon verses 23-4: *'Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.'* Colossians 4:10: *'My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)'* and 2 Timothy 4:11: *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.* Paul describes John Mark as a fellow worker and someone who is helpful to Paul's ministry.
 - In other words Barnabas gives a "failure" a second chance and John Mark goes on to be a giant in the Kingdom of God. After all we have John Mark to thank for Mark's Gospel.
 - Who is the person who believed in you when others wanted to write you off? I suspect all of us can identify a Barnabas or two in our past who gave us a second chance. Maybe it was a parent or a relative or a teacher or a church leader or a close friend. Christianity means second chances.
 - And secondly who are we believing in or investing in today whom others would like to write off?

2.4 Gift of an open mind: Acts 11:19-24

- Something new is happening in Antioch and so who does the early church send to go and check out these "new Christians". They send Barnabas: *Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak*