



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

**WEEK 48
BARNABAS**

NOVEMBER 26-30, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	1 Cor 6-9, Psalm 86	Acts 4:32 – 5:11, Deut 6:18, Ps 86
Tuesday	1 Cor 10-13, Psalm 87	Acts 2:21-29, Heb 10:24-25, Ps 87
Wednesday	1 Cor 14-16, Psalm 88	Acts 11:19-26, Eph 4:11-16, Ps 88
Thursday	2 Cor 1-7, Psalm 89	Acts 12:30 - 13:13, 14:26-28, Ps 89
Friday	2 Cor 8-13, Psalm 90	Acts 15, Psalm 90

READ

Acts 4:32-5:11

Deuteronomy 6:18

Psalms 86

REFLECT

Barnabas' Open Hands

Principle: Christians are to be generous with their time and money with the right motives.

The first five years of the Christian church in Jerusalem were years of establishment. The apostles did not break with Jewish customs or with regular temple worship. They met in one another's homes to "break bread" in Jesus' name, a gathering they called the "love feast." They were in danger of forgetting our Lord's command, recorded in Acts 1:8, to witness also to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. Indeed, it took persecution, following Stephen's martyrdom, to thrust them forth to evangelize Samaria and the other provinces of Palestine. The great keynote to these early days is that the church operated in every way according to the power of the Holy Spirit. They were unified, being of one heart and mind (v.32), sharing everything they had. This was a time of great spiritual growth for the church and as it consisted of fallible men and women, sin will threaten the integrity of the church. We will witness the Holy Spirit's power in its purpose to guide believers in all righteousness.

We are introduced to Joseph, called Barnabas, through his giving to the church in Jerusalem. He was born of Jewish parents in Cyprus and was a Levite. His aunt was Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12), so Mark was his cousin (Col 4:10). We aren't told about his conversion experience, but he came to Jerusalem to be involved in the church there. Wherever you find a good man or woman filled with the Spirit and with faith, you will see the Lord work in remarkable ways. Barnabas could

open the ways for others (especially the Apostle Paul) because he himself was an "open man" before the Lord. The outward actions of Joseph led the apostles to change his name to Barnabas meaning, "Son of Encouragement."

Whenever the Holy Spirit is at work (generosity), the Devil starts to manufacture counterfeits. Ananias and Sapphira possessed counterfeit motives in their giving to the church. Luke placed these two side by side in his record, suggesting this couple saw what Barnabas did and decided to imitate it. In a very public way they pretended that they could do it better than Barnabas. When they sold their property, they could have kept all the money or brought whatever portions they wanted to bring, but they gave the impression that, like Barnabas, they had brought the full price. Ananias and Sapphira both lied to the Spirit about their contribution, and both of them died for their sin.

RESPOND

Jesus taught, "Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be." In one of his pastoral letters, Paul wrote, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." How do you feel about your possessions? What treasures are you storing in heaven? What is different about your life because you belong to church? What does the incident of Ananias and Sapphira teach you about God? In what ways are you holding back from God? Have you been completely honest with other people this week? Can you think of someone you know who has encouraged you in your faith?

PRAY

Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, that I may honor you. With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever, for your love for me is very great. Psalm 86:11-13

- C.M.

READ

Acts 9:21-29

Hebrews 10:24-25

Psalms 87

REFLECT

Barnabas and Open Arms

Principle: God faithfully provides encouragers to walk alongside His struggling servants.

Behind many outstanding men and women in history are individuals best described as “hinge people.” They are persons who open doors for others and get them moving on the road to achievement. They also have open arms to steady the walk of someone struggling with baggage of the past. To understand the importance of Barnabas, we need background on Saul/Paul. Formerly, Saul the Pharisee was determined to put an end to anyone claiming to follow Jesus. After his dramatic conversion and filling with the Holy Spirit, he began to zealously preach in Damascus (v. 20) causing the Jewish leaders to plot his murder (v. 23). He escaped the city in a basket under the cover of darkness (v. 25). Now Saul is in Jerusalem and it was not the Jewish leaders who opposed him but the believers, the church. We read: “He was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple” (v. 26).

That’s understandable; who wouldn’t be afraid of him? He killed their fellow Christians, some of whom may have been their relatives. They thought he was a spy, part of an elaborate hoax designed to trap them and drag them to jail.

Ever felt the sting of that kind of rejection? Have you ever had such a bad track record that people didn’t want to associate with you or welcome you into their fellowship? (Or welcome you back?) People are rejected because of their pasts. Thankfully, in the midst of Saul’s struggle, God faithfully provided someone to come alongside and say,

“Hey, I’m on your team. Let me walk through this with you.” That someone, who was open to restoring and encouraging a struggling brother in Christ, was Barnabas. How did Barnabas know Saul needed his help? We don’t know. He seemed ready to step up and defend Saul. Barnabas offered encouragement to someone in need – the underdog, the rejected, the one who’s fallen and is full of shame and humiliation.

This also speaks further of Barnabas’ character. He was trusted; people listened to him. Luke recounts that Barnabas “brought him to the disciples and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that he had talked to him and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus” (v.27). Barnabas had developed the skill of looking and listening for the Lord; senses he used to seek out and build up the body of Christ one individual at a time.

What was the apostles’ response to Barnabas’ testimony? Saul was accepted! This was full acceptance as the Bible goes on to tell us that Saul “was constantly with them in Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord” (v. 28).

RESPOND

Do you know someone who is struggling with rejection? Struggling with the stigma of a past sin? What could you do to walk alongside and encourage them this week? Read and practice Hebrews 10:24-25. Do you struggle with a critical, fault-finding spirit? Jesus taught, “Stop judging others and you will not be judged . . . Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged” (Mt. 7:1-2).

PRAY

Lord, You are our strength and salvation. Help us to have open arms that accept and steady those around us who are struggling with rejection. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as we see the Day approaching.

READ

Acts 11:19-26

Ephesians 4:11-16

Psalm 88

REFLECT

Barnabas and Open Doors

Principle: God gives different spiritual gifts to His servants for His purpose and His glory.

The late Leonard Bernstein, composer and famous conductor of the New York Philharmonic, was asked once what he thought was the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play. He answered, “Second fiddle!” As we have examined the lives of great individuals in the Bible, we have discovered many second fiddlers (Jonathan for David, Aaron for Moses). These are support people whose talents and gifts are best used to open the “way” for others to achieve success or have a significant impact in others lives. Barnabas was such a man, content to play second fiddle to the apostle Paul. Playing second fiddle does not in any way mean “inferior” or less gifted. Paul teaches in Ephesians that our gifts are to prepare God’s people for service so that the body of Christ, the church, is built up (Eph 4:11-12). Barnabas’ gift of encouragement is instrumental in preparing God’s people in Antioch for service. By God’s grace the Gospel was sent to the Gentiles in Antioch and the news of it reached the church in Jerusalem. The apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate this new “open door” (Acts 9:24). After all, lay Christians, not apostles, had begun the church, and it was made up primarily of Gentiles. When Barnabas arrived, he recognized the grace of God in what was going on and heartily entered the ministry there. Luke recounts that Barnabas encouraged them to all remain “true to the Lord with all their hearts.” Isn’t that a great thing to do for the new

church! Barnabas comes looking to see what God is doing and then, true to form, encourages the work of God and the hearts of these new believers. Luke aptly describes Barnabas, saying, “He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.” As a result of Barnabas using his gift, a “great number of people were brought to the Lord” (Acts 11:24). The Lord reminded Barnabas that Saul’s calling was primarily to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), so he went to Tarsus and enlisted Saul for the work in Antioch (vv. 25-26). Saul joins this growing Gentile church and it is here that the disciples were called Christians for the first time.

Barnabas kept the hinges “oiled” and encouraged Saul in his gifted ministry. In the years that followed, Saul learned to pray for open doors (Col. 4:3).

RESPOND

What are your spiritual gifts? How are you using those spiritual gifts for God’s glory and honor? Where do you see God’s grace at work at Glenkirk? How do you show love and concern for other Christian groups in other places? What specific thing about Barnabas’ actions could you use to encourage others? Communicate an encouragement to our pastoral and regular staff this holiday season (perhaps you can make it a habit).

PRAY

God of Glory, You are above all names and earthly powers. We love You and thank You for Your grace. Help us, Lord, to appreciate the spiritual gifts You have poured out to us. As we seek to reach out to others give us Your words and heart to make a difference for You. Thank You for each pastor and staff person at Glenkirk. Help us to encourage him or her through kind words and deeds...

- C.M.

READ

Acts 12:30-13:13; 14:26-28

Jude 20

Psalm 89

REFLECT

Barnabas and Open Eyes and Ears

Principle: God has the whole world in His sights and aims to use you to get the message out.

Barnabas and Saul have returned from Jerusalem with John Mark to continue their ministry in Antioch. Their mission in Jerusalem was to deliver much needed famine relief (Acts 11:29-30). Imagine the joy they had being amid one of the most remarkable revivals in early church history. The church is growing, lives are being transformed, and an entire culture has come under the influence of the Spirit of God. They are doing just what God had called them to do and it's working.

Barnabas is part of a five-man "dream team" when God steps in and changes everything. Why would God break up something that is going so well? God has a bigger plan: the whole world. "I tell you," said Jesus, "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35). Peter tells us "God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). It was during a time of worshipping together when the Holy Spirit spoke, calling for Barnabas and Saul to be dedicated "for a special work I have for them" (v 2). God is not calling them from a dying church to something better; He is calling them from a flourishing church to something different.

The gospel had begun in Jerusalem, moved into Judea and Samaria, and now was going to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The church at Antioch was in step with the Holy Spirit. We read "so after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their

way" (v 3). No questions asked; no spirit of suspicion; no selfish clinging as if those two men belonged to them. They met with the Lord and made sure His message was clear, and then took prompt action. They released them to God's creative work (calling). John Eldredge, author of *Wild at Heart*, wrote "I want to hurl myself into the creative work of God" (p 199).

The church commissioned them and no doubt gave them money to assist them in their travels. Barnabas took his cousin John Mark along as their aide. Mark was supposed to free up Barnabas and Saul to devote themselves to ministry but unexpectedly he left them and returned to Jerusalem (v 13). Why did he leave? Some think he was homesick, while others think he didn't like to see Paul (his new name, Acts 13:9) taking over the leadership of the mission. What began as "Barnabas and Saul" now became "Paul and his companions" and then "Paul and Barnabas" (Acts 13:13, 42-43, 46). Barnabas does not mind being "second fiddle." Despite the opposition, the first journey is a great success and at the church in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gave a report that glorified the Lord who had "opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

RESPOND

When we have open eyes and ears, we see the open doors and hear the Lord telling us what to do. How do we "hear" from God today? What role does the Holy Spirit have in the church today? What part does fasting and prayer have in your faith life? How could this lesson help you?

PRAY

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself. Psalm 89:1-2

- C.M.

READ

Acts 15
Psalm 90

REFLECT

Barnabas and Open Hearts

Principle: In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity (love).

They say the church is like a box of crayons, some are pretty, some are sharp, some dull, some are broken, some have weird names, but they all have to live in the same box. This chapter in Acts is pivotal for the church and for Barnabas. The church faces a doctrinal crisis that involved salvation by grace and the freedom of the child of God in Christ (Gal 1-2). Barnabas and Paul were back from their mission and teaching in Antioch when the differences between the Jewish Christians and non-Jewish Christians developed into confusion and tension. Barnabas and Paul stood together at Antioch in “sharp debate” against Jewish legalists demanding circumcision and the following of Jewish law. Action was required to prevent division in current churches and promote future ministry. Before His arrest Jesus prayed, “Father, may they be one as we are one... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:11, 21-23). Unity does not mean uniformity; Paul teaches we are to seek unity through a bond of peace (Eph 4:3) not lack of differences.

The council that met in Jerusalem heard the testimony of Barnabas, Paul (vv 4, 12) and Peter (vv 8-9) confirming God’s acceptance of Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit. James added scriptural proof from Amos of God’s acceptance of the Gentiles. The concessionary letter from the council resulted in the affirmation of the gospel of divine grace in addition to safeguarding and encouraging unity among all the churches.

It was only right that Paul and Barnabas revisit the churches they had helped to found. They wanted to silence the Jewish legalists and

encourage new believers. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark along but Paul refused. Paul and Barnabas could agree on doctrinal matters and help bring peace to the churches, but they couldn’t settle their personal disagreements on the management of the missionary team. The heart of the problem was the problem of the heart and both men were at fault. Paul’s major question was, “What can John Mark do for the work?” while Barnabas was asking, “What can the work do for John Mark?” Certainly God is concerned for the workers as **He** is for the work, for **He** wants us all to become like Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). God chose these men to work together as their different spiritual gifts complimented the work as a whole. But on this point, both men are adamant and true to their characters. Barnabas remains the “hinge” man but this time for John Mark.

God is there in all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28) and the divided team now doubles the mission work as they go in different directions. Barnabas and Mark sail southwest, while Paul and Silas travel north on foot.

Anybody can tear things down, but it takes faith and patience to build things up. Barnabas was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith, as he was a “son of encouragement” to the very end.

RESPOND

Believers are to live responsibly, relying on God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. What is at the heart of your ministry? What habit or behavior is God asking you to change to live more responsibly? How has God’s Word helped you make a decision this week? Our focus is to be on Jesus Christ and His work. How has this lesson given you a fresh perspective on how to “agree to disagree” and move forward for God?

PRAY

Lord, teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom. Let us see Your miracles again; let our children see Your glory at work. And may the Lord our God show us His approval and make our efforts successful.

- Carole Mathews

