

Episode: Acts Series No. 5

Narrator: Barnabas

Primary Scriptures: Acts 4

Story Summary: Barnabas brings Paul into the Church, growth of Church outside Judea

Location: Roman Empire; Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, Cyprus

Time: 30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

33 AD (?) Paul becomes a Christian

46 AD Paul's "famine" visit to Jerusalem

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27

Acts 4:36 says that Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus who sold land to help the infant Church. The Bible does not say when Barnabas became a Christian or when he left his home of Cyprus, nor when or how he, as a Levite, came into possession of the land that he sold.

Land was very precious to the Jews, and selling land was an act of great sacrifice. Giving all of the proceeds to the apostles was an act of service, but the new Christians would have seen the act of selling the land itself as even more important than the money exchanged.

The growth of the early Church was possible because its leaders knew and trusted each other. Barnabas was one of these first leaders, chosen by God to vouch for Paul so he could become part of the Church. It was Barnabas who facilitated Paul's relationship with Peter, James, and the other apostles.

Barnabas seems to have been more influential in the Church than Paul for many years. It also seems that Barnabas was Paul's mentor for many years. You can get an inkling of that because Barnabas is always mentioned first when they are together.

More than fifteen years after the start of the Church, the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey, the first of many times there was a concerted effort to convert non-Jews to Christianity. The journey took place in Cyprus and modern-day Turkey. The trip was very successful in spreading the Gospel and starting new churches.

It would be easy to overlook two important events that happened on that trip. First, John Mark started the trip, but abandoned Paul and Barnabas after Cyprus, an event that would be a future source of contention. Second, Paul began to take preeminence over Barnabas. A few years later, these two events would result in Paul and Barnabas taking separate paths.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did very few Jews ever sell their land like Barnabas did?
 2. Why was Barnabas a bit of an outsider to the early Christians? Do we sometimes treat people as outsiders because they don't fit our Christian and local cultures?
 3. Who was more influential in the early church for the first ten or fifteen years, Barnabas or Paul? When did Paul become the leader of the two?
 4. Did you know the leaders of the early Church had such contentious relationships? How does that knowledge alter the way you view the Church today?
 5. Why was the church at Antioch so important?
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1. Were supposed to give it to descendants, may have been prohibited by Old Testament, ancestors may have been buried on the land. 2. He was from Cyprus. 3. Barnabas. On the First Missionary Journey. 4. First major church outside of Jerusalem, first major church with Gentile influence, sent missionaries, home base for Paul's ministry.

Application Questions:

1. God has given you special gifts and talents. Can you name someone that you influence by mentoring them? If so, how could you be a better mentor. If not, how can you start doing so?
2. Although Barnabas had a special gift of encouragement, we can all encourage others. What can you do today to encourage someone? How could you make encouragement a habit?
3. Barnabas showed great humility in letting Paul become the leader of the two. Can you name a time in your life you have had to let someone else take the reins? Is there an instance when you need to be doing so now?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Barnabas found the gospel message so compelling that he upended centuries of tradition to follow it wholeheartedly. What might Jesus be calling you to give up to follow him?
2. How do you use your God-given gifts and talents to influence others? How can you bring others to Christ by using your gifts and talents? Who is the Barnabas-type mentor in your life?
3. How can you be more like Barnabas and encourage those around you today? How can you make encouragement a habit in your life?