

Lessons of the Early New Testament Church

Part 2-Barnabas (Acts 4:34-37) 9.24.17

Acts 4:32-37 (NIV) ³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. ³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, **whom the apostles called Barnabas** (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

- **The early church was so unified that they LOOKED for ways to help each other** (see **Acts 4:32**). Sadly, we have become so selfish as a society that it's refreshing to hear about and see people living **UNSELFISHLY**.

Scripture says that others sold property and gave, but interestingly Luke only mentions Joseph, aka Barnabas. **Who was Joseph the apostles called Barnabas?**

Barnabas' real birth given name was Joseph, but because he was so generous and such an encouragement that the apostles called him Barnabas, which meaning "**Son of Encouragement**".

- If we are honest, we have to admit there are times we all need encouragement.
- Encouragement has a two-fold emphasis: to **COMFORT** or reassure, and to **CHALLENGE** or admonish.
- In **Romans 12:4-8**, we see that **encouragement** is one of the gifts of the Spirit to the church. Yet, **encouragement is something we all must do**.

Ironically, Barnabas was a Levite, who were generally not allowed to own land in Jewish culture. (see **Deuteronomy 18:2** and **1 Chronicles 23:24-32**)

- Even though he was a Levite, he was considered a Hellenist — a name given to a Jew not born in Israel and who didn't speak Aramaic, but spoke Greek.

Scripture says he was from Cyprus, the largest island in the Mediterranean, not far from the Jewish coast. We do not know where he owned land, whether in Cyprus, where he was born, or in Judea, where he now lived, but what is certain is that he *sold it*, not for himself, but for the good of the community.

#1 In the life of Barnabas, we see someone who RADICALLY GAVE.

- There is an encouragement that comes when somebody **GIVES**.

Why don't we radically give?

- **#1 We don't radically give because we generally FEAR giving up CONTROL.**
- **#2 We don't radically give because we generally FEAR our risk we will not be REWARDED.**

- **#3 We don't radically give because we generally FEAR what we have to give will not make a DIFFERENCE.**

God isn't concerned with the amount you got to give, but He's concerned how you give what you got!

- **It's not about the amount or quantity, but it's about ATTITUDE and QUALITY.**

The next time we see Barnabas is in **Acts 9**, when he is associated with a man named Saul who had been terrorizing Jesus' followers and had been in charge of killing countless Jewish Christian believers. One day, when Saul was on a mission to kill more converts, he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and is radically converted into the same Christianity he had sought to destroy (see **Acts 19:1-19**). After his conversion, Saul's name changed to Paul and he became one of the great leaders of the early church.

- Now, in **Acts 9:26-28** we see Paul came to Jerusalem and wanted to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him because **his reputation preceded him**.
- **#2 In the life of Barnabas, we see someone who RADICALLY ACCEPTED.**
- Barnabas was willing to take a risk on Paul **and only as a result** of Barnabas saying that Paul could be trusted, did the disciples embrace him. (see **Acts 9:28**) What would have happened to Paul, the New Testament and this new movement if he had not had Barnabas?

After this, Barnabas disappears again until another **critical moment** in the history of the church. (see **Acts 11:19-26**)

- **#3 In the life of Barnabas, we see someone who RADICALLY ENCOURAGED.**
- Barnabas sees what the grace of God can do with unity and acceptance, and it made him glad and encouraged that Gentiles heard the gospel.
- Barnabas realized he needed somebody to help him teach and disciple these new believers, so he called on Paul to speak to the Gentiles about Christ.

From this point, Barnabas and Paul become the key leaders of the church and the church even decides to send them out as the first missionaries. (see **Acts 13:1-3**)

- And interestingly enough, while on the first missionary journey, the helper that comes with them, John Mark, deserted them before the journey was half over (see **Acts 13:13**). Because of this, on the next journey, Paul wants nothing to do with John Mark, but Barnabas accepts him. (see **Acts 15:36-40**)
- Notice, because of Barnabas' acceptance and encouragement of John Mark, we gained the second Gospel, written by Mark.
- Barnabas never wrote a book that found its way into the Bible, but notice he **ACCEPTED** and **ENCOURAGED** two men who wrote over half of the New Testament.

You may not be the one to influence many, but you might influence the ONE who will influence thousands. @MarkBatterson

Barnabas is one of the founding fathers of Christianity and it all started with his generous giving. **If you want God to do something great through you, START by being an example where you are at!**