





The Life of Barnabas

Who was Barnabas? Where did he live?

Barnabas was a Levite, who was a native of Cyprus, his biological name was Joseph. He was considered an apostle (messenger) of the Lord in the first century. The author of Acts describes Barnabas as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. It is assumed by scholars that Barnabas earned his surname because of his effective teaching and preaching, encouraging others to follow the Lord. Barnabas was a Jew of the diaspora. His priestly family background gave him a special interest in Jerusalem. He probably came to live in the holy city.

When do we first hear about Barnabas? What was he doing?

Barnabas first appears as a property owner named Joseph in the Book of Acts who sold a field and gave the money to the Christian community (Acts 4:36). In this passage it is clear to see that Joseph (Barnabas) was a faithful and committed member of the first church, demonstrated by the selling of his land and giving it to the church to be distributed to those with needs. Joseph (Barnabas) was doing the work of the Lord by teaching as well as living a life that honored the Lord and his church.

When did Barnabas meet Paul? What did he do for Paul?

We first hear of Barnabas meeting Paul in Jerusalem after Paul had fled Damascus out of fear and he would be killed by the Jews, because of his bold teaching of Jesus as the Christ. It is said that Barnabas took him in and then later took him to the other disciples and vouched for Paul and his ministry of the Gospel. Explaining to them how he was persecuted himself and sought after to be killed in Damascus for the same Gospel they were teaching. So we see Barnabas befriending Paul when no one else would, and giving him a chance to show his true heart. We also see the integrity and respect that the other disciples had for Barnabas by the way they listened to him in regards to Paul. Barnabas gave Paul instant credibility with the disciples that allowed him to be encouraged and eventually sent out to share the Gospel.

What was Barnabas' ministry? Where did he go? What did he do?

Barnabas was a Levite, which meant he had some type of dealings with the worship of the church, he also was one who taught and preached the Gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles. Barnabas was in Jerusalem, but was later commissioned by the disciples to go to Antioch, Cyprus and other key centers in Asia minor, to preach the good news of the Gospel. Barnabas preached the Gospel and taught the truth that Jesus was the Christ. We often hear about the boldness of Paul, but Barnabas was just as bold. In some accounts it was Barnabas that took Paul with him to Antioch.



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What happened with Paul and Barnabas? What did Barnabas do with John Mark?

During the first missionary journey that Barnabas and Paul took, we see that they brought along John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas. We also know that John Mark did not continue with them through the whole missionary journey, returning home at some point. When Barnabas and Paul were getting ready for the missionary journey Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark along again, but Paul was opposed to it with most records indicating the desertion or departure that John Mark made on the first missionary journey. No reasons are given in the Bible for his early departure, but some believe he was young, homesick, and not ready spiritually for the demands of the journey. Whatever the case Barnabas showed faith in John Mark and decided to take him and go to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia. Barnabas was very passionate about taking John Mark on the 2nd missionary journey, hence the heated disagreement with Paul. We see a desire in Barnabas to mentor and encourage a young man of God by taking him under his wing and taking a chance on him and his ability to minister. We later see how God honored Barnabas and his faithfulness to John Mark.

Who did Paul request to be brought to him at the end of his ministry, when he needed help?

In the later years of Paul's ministry we see that Paul was in need of a helper in the ministry and requested that they bring John Mark to him and Paul says that Mark is a faithful minister of the Gospel. How could this be that Paul now wants Mark to help him. This is possible because Barnabas took Mark and disciplined him, mentored him and encouraged him in his walk with the Lord. Barnabas took a chance, but made a huge investment in the Kingdom of God, by mentoring John Mark.

What impact did Barnabas have in the Life of Paul and the Life of Mark?

Barnabas had a huge impact on the life of Paul and Mark. We see Barnabas was not afraid of the things that Paul and Mark had done, but was more focused on what they could be doing. Barnabas was a man full of the Holy Spirit and was also well known and like among the disciples. This respect and trust we could assume was because of his integrity, discernment and maturity in the faith. He also preached and taught the truth with boldness, but we can't help but think that he had a compassion for people that was seen by all, and was a huge encourager in the faith. His name which means (son of encouragement) definitely speaks to his reputation among the fellow believers. Barnabas was faithful to the Lord, by coming alongside both Paul and Mark and helping them further their calling of the Lord. Barnabas was used by God to encourage and disciple these two men.



The Mission & Character of Barnabas

The Mission of Barnabas

- 1) Live the Gospel
- 2) Encourage and equip others to live the Gospel
- 3) Proclaim the truth of the Gospel to the lost

The Character of Barnabas

- 1) He was full of the Holy Spirit- Goodness and Kindness
- 2) He was a generous giver to the Kingdom work. He gave of his money and time.
- 3) He was an encourager- he was comforting, consoling.....
- 4) He was a bold proclaimer of the Gospel.
- 5) He was trusted and respected by the church.

Evaluating Your Life

- 1) How many of the character traits listed above are evident in your life?
- 2) Have you ever had a Barnabas in your life? Who? Are they still there?
- 3) Who are you being a Barnabas to? If no one, why not?
- 4) Are you willing to be a Barnabas to someone who needs it, lost or saved?

The Results of Barnabas and his Faithfulness

As we can see Barnabas was one who understood what it meant to live as a true follower of Christ. His life, his attitude and his actions all reflect Christ and his truth. The life of Barnabas should be studied and duplicated by us all, so that Christ will get the glory.