

THE BRIDGE – SUMMER SESSION
11 indispensable relationships you can't live without

Witness 5: Who's Your Barnabas? You Need an Encourager

Barnabas was originally known as Joseph, a respected leader of the church. He was a Levite by birth, a member of the Jewish tribe that functioned as scholars and teachers when they weren't conducting temple duties. Because Joseph's family had moved to Cyprus, he didn't serve in the temple.

Acts 4:36-37 (NIV)

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 9:26-28 (NIV)

²⁶ 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. 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.

Acts 11:22-26 (NIV)

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.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 15:36-41 (NIV)

³⁶Some 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.⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Five Different Types of Barnabas

- The _____ Barnabas makes support a _____, encouraging people they _____.
 - Dedicate at least one day a week to encourage every person you meet that day.
- The _____ Barnabas is _____ to you to challenge you not to compromise your _____.
 - Paul was fixated on Mark's defects while Barnabas was focused on his promise.
 - It is only when the psalmist put it, our "cup runneth over" that we can be creative and bless others.
- The _____ Barnabas is a person willing to _____ for you in _____.
 - Prayer is the most powerful force in the universe. Prayer does amazing things for the person being prayed for.
- The _____ Barnabas is a person who props you up by _____ at you.
 - Humor limits negativity and brings joy. Studies show that people that use humor live longer, healthier lives.
 - Encouragement is a fertilizer, delivering nutrients we need to grow for the long haul.

- The _____ Barnabas is a person who is willing to go through _____ with you.
 - Who will give you their patience?
 - Patience = _____
 - Jesus asked three disciples to stay with him

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you have memories of times when you “lost your first love,” when Jesus was more in the grave than out of it? Is there anyone who comes to mind who helped move you from a full tomb to an empty one? How did that person encourage you?
2. Name names. Name the Barnabas Witnesses who are helping you move from self-consciousness and self-centeredness to self-surrender and other-centricity. Who boosts your moral? When are you most in a Barnabas mode? Least?
3. Augustine said it will take a lifetime for your heart to be stretched wide enough to contain the beauty and blessings of God. The heart is hollow. You decide what to fill it with. What can we fill our hearts with that will allow them to stretch toward God’s beauty and blessings? To what extent are we “full of ourselves” and not God?
4. Do you believe with me that faith and humor are tightly allied? What is one of the running jokes of your life? If you have a spouse, does your relationship have any running jokes? Are you brave enough to bare one of them? Are you brave enough to laugh with God?

** Lesson adapted from “11 indispensable relationships you can’t live without” by Leonard Sweet*