

Following in the Footsteps of Barnabas The Encourager



Barnabas plays a significant supporting role in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts. He was active during the earliest decades of the Christian church.

His birth name was Joseph, but the apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). He was a Levite from Cyprus and an early convert to Christianity.

He was generous when generosity cost him something.

The first thing we hear about Barnabas is that he sold a field and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36-37). It is not coincidental that Luke introduces him this way. Encouragement, for Barnabas, was never merely verbal—it had hands and a wallet. *A modern Christian emulates this by giving in ways that genuinely cost: time when time is short, money when money is tight, attention when attention is scarce. Encouragement that requires no sacrifice tends to ring hollow.*

He saw what others refused to see.

When Saul of Tarsus arrived in Jerusalem after his conversion, the disciples were terrified of him—understandably, given his history of dragging believers from their homes. "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:27). He vouched for the very man everyone else was hiding from. *To walk in his footsteps means becoming the one who advocates for the person others have written off—the difficult new believer, the recovering addict, the prodigal returning home, the former skeptic. It means being willing to put your own reputation behind theirs before they have earned it.*

He developed people who eventually outgrew him.

When the church at Antioch exploded with growth, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul (Acts 11:25-26)—deliberately hunting down the man whose gifts would eventually eclipse his own. Notice the shift in Luke's language: it begins as "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2) and quietly becomes "Paul and his companions" (Acts 13:13). Barnabas had no ego about who held the spotlight. *Emulating him today looks like mentoring young Christians and rejoicing—not flinching—when they surpass you.*

He believed in second chances.

Perhaps his most costly act of encouragement was the one Scripture records as a failure. When John Mark deserted them mid-mission, Paul refused to take him on the next journey. Barnabas insisted (Acts 15:36-41). The disagreement was so sharp they parted ways. Barnabas took Mark and disappeared from Luke's narrative—but the story has a postscript. Years later, Paul writes from prison: "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). And Mark, of course, gives us the second Gospel. Barnabas was right. Modern disciples of Barnabas keep believing in people through their failures, even when more pragmatic voices counsel cutting ties.

He was, simply good.

Luke gives him this remarkable summary: "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24). Goodness is unglamorous. It does not preach as well as charisma or vision. But it is the soil in which encouragement actually grows.

To emulate Barnabas is to accept a largely hidden ministry—one whose fruit ripens, often, in someone else's hands. Hebrews 10:24-25 might be his unwritten motto: "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."



Transformation Through Intentional Discipleship

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