

**Barnabas and the Buddy System**  
**Acts 4:32-37 & Acts 11:19-30/ May 30, 2021**  
**Mark Archibald**

Over the past several weeks we have been covering the book of Acts in our sermons. The book of Acts covers the rise of the early church following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. If I were to ask you who some of the major players in the early church were, who would you mention?

There would certainly be Peter and Paul. Perhaps Philip and Silas would be key because of their involvement early on. Would anyone else come to mind?

Barnabas is easy to miss in the book of Acts, but he is woven throughout the book from the very start. Here's his introduction in Acts 4. He personifies the descriptions of goodness and generosity in the early church.

*<sup>32</sup> All 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. <sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all <sup>34</sup> that there 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 <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.*

*<sup>36</sup> Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), <sup>37</sup> sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.*

Barnabas is deeply invested in the church, in a way that costs him financially. He lives up to his namesake – son of encouragement. His good example and thoroughly transformed life stands in contrast to lives of dishonesty and corruption. In later chapters his life is very intertwined with Paul's.

To give you an idea of the life of Barnabas within the early church, we intercepted a Zoom call between Barnabas and Paul. In their conversation we'll see many of the adventures Barnabas was on, especially as his life relates to Paul's life.

**[Barnabas and Paul Zoom call.]**

*Paul: Why if it isn't my good friend Barnabas! Typical Paul greeting of longing to be with him. Hey, but in the meantime: Zoom will do just fine!*

*Barnabas: Paul, my friend! The man formerly known as Saul. From the big bad persecuter of the church to the helper!*

*Paul: See! See! This is why they call you the encourager!*

*Barnabas: Thanks, friend. But like you say, I count it all loss apart from Jesus!*

*Paul: Remember when I first became a follower of Jesus?*

*Barnabas: I sure do, my friend! No one believed that Saul, the one who was harming Christians, was truly a follower of Jesus. They thought it was a trap! A trick! A ruse!*

*Paul: But not you, my good friend. You took me to the followers of Jesus and defended me. You stood up for me! I will always be grateful for that!*

*Barnabas: Well, **Jesus' power helps us do good things!** It was my honor, friend.*

*Paul: Do you remember that time when we were in Iconium?*

*Barnabas: Ah, yes! Beautiful Iconium. I remember it well. So many Jewish and Greek people heard what we had to say about Jesus. And they decided to follow Jesus, too!*

*Paul: It was amazing! **Jesus' Power helps us do good things!** Some of the religious leaders did NOT like us talking to people about Jesus. They had plans to kill us!*

*Barnabas: We got out of there and on to the next city. We were not going to stop because **Jesus' power helps us do good things!***

*Paul: And THEN we went to Lystra. That was an adventure.*

*Barnabas: That trip did not end up too well for you my friend.*

*Paul: Well, I'm still here! Remember the man who couldn't walk?*

*Barnabas: We were speaking, and he kept looking at us. Then YOU looked at him and said, "Stand up and walk." And he DID!*

*Paul: Jesus' Power helps us do good things! People had not seen anything like this before. They were convinced we were gods! They tried to worship us!*

*Barnabas: We said, no way! **Jesus' power helps us do good things!** But even then the crowd would barely listen. They wanted to worship us!*

*Paul: And then the religious leaders returned. They turned the crowd against us!*

*Baranabas: They threw stones at you and dragged you out of town! They thought you were dead!*

*Paul: But I wasn't! I went back in to town. We would not stop sharing about Jesus! **Jesus' power helps us do good things!***

*Barnabas: Friend, it was good to catch up with you!*

*Paul: You, too, my encouraging brother! **Jesus' power helps us do good things!***

From our “intercepted footage” we find Barnabas deeply embedded in the early church.

Barnabas – the son of encouragement – has encouragement that sticks. He has this reputation not just because he’s a happy, positive guy. He has a reputation as a sincere encourager because he knows the people he is encouraging.

Barnabas is a **trusted** advocate. He not only speaks up for people, you can trust deeply what he has to say about them. Have you ever hired someone based on a close friend’s recommendation? The close friend couldn’t stop talking highly about this potential employee, so much so that you were scared you were going to let this gem of a worker get away! You hire this recommended person and within the first week they’re showing up late and quitting work early. They’re distracted and in some instances unsafe! The employee doesn’t last long, so you go back to the friend that recommended them. “What was that?! The person you recommended was terrible! Why did you speak so highly of them?”

The friend responds, “I know, I just wanted to give them a chance.” You may appreciate the care and concern they have for the person you hired, but you are never taking employment recommendations from that friend again!

Barnabas was not that kind of advocate. Barnabas was a **trusted** advocate. He was an honest advocate.

When the early church is still suspicious of Paul’s switch to Christianity, who defends and advocates for Paul? Barnabas.

When the church in Antioch is growing and expanding, who is sent to inspect that church and its leaders? Barnabas.

And when things are verified to be going well in Antioch, who pulls Paul into partnership in that Antioch ministry? Barnabas.

Barnabas is certainly encouraging. He comes across as a magnetically positive person in the book of Acts. But within that he is discerning. You can trust that he means what he says about people.

When he recommends that he and Paul take John Mark with them on a missionary journey, Paul says “No!” John Mark had been with them on an earlier journey and quit partway through. Paul is not willing to go through that again. But Barnabas belief in John Mark is so great that he is willing to go separate ways from Paul and do something with John Mark instead. This isn’t casual, let’s-hope-for-the-best advocacy. Barnabas sees something specific in John Mark that he is willing to risk an excellent work partnership and deep friendship with Paul over this. Rather than see someone get chewed up and left out by the big church machine, Barnabas sticks his neck out for Mark at personal cost to himself.

When Barnabas spoke highly of someone, the people around him knew those words could be trusted. Barnabas was encouraging without being fluffy. Barnabas was discerning without being a judge-y jerk.

In Barnabas we find an advocate and encourager that builds people up and defends them well because he knows them well.

Do you want to be a Barnabas, a trusted encourager, in the lives of others? Well here’s the Barnabas Buddy System: **The best encouragement is given to others when you know them well.** People tune out generic encouragement. People stand a little bit taller when they know that the encouragement you give them is specific to them.

Here’s where people in our church have experienced the Barnabas Buddy System:

- Someone asking “What’s wrong?” and really listening to the answer.
- Someone crying with you.
- Someone praying with and for you.
- Prayers, phone calls and cards when someone is in recovery or in pain.
- Being pulled aside by a boss or manager to be told they noticed your hard work.
- Flowers picked just-for-you from a co-worker’s own garden.
- Friends that accompany others to difficult doctors’ appointments.
- Parents email at the beginning of September acknowledging the hard work of teachers, saying thank you, and wishing you a good year.
- A friend dropping a six-pack of beer on the doorstep during Easter break because she found her favourite and wanted to share.
- Regular phone messages checking in to see how we are.
- coming home from work to find someone dropped off some treats

- Getting a text from a friend I haven't heard from in a while (usually when it's been a hard day/week)
- Someone introduced me to a new book series.
- Someone chooses to do the dishes for me.
- When I was a young 20-year-old with barely any money someone borrowed my car and returned it with a full tank of gas. Didn't expect it but it totally encouraged me. It was such a simple way to say thank you.

Notice the simplicity of all of these encouraging things. Concerning the spoken praise of a manager, the employee said, "It took him all but 2 minutes, but it meant a lot to be noticed and appreciated like that." Concerning the text from a long-lost-friend, the recipient said, "That has really inspired me to send the message when I think of someone because it just might be coming at a time they really need it."

These are such simple things, yet so impactful especially when happening at just the right time. The encourager did something very specific to the recipient. We can all do things like this. We can all give encouragement specific to the person that we need to encourage.

This specific encouragement reminds us of bigger things – God sees us, too. God cares for us specifically and personally. The God that blesses and the God that sees wants you to pass that on to others. When you encourage, the work of Jesus Christ extends past you to someone else.

We are going to close off this time with two stories of encouragement – one from Carol Heynen and the other from Andy Patterson. These are excellent reminders that God sees us and gives us encouragement specific to us; and that we can turn around and do the same.

**Carol Heynen:** *What comes to mind in regards to encouragement was a time when I was working at Briercrest as a Residence Director. I'd been assigned leadership over the senior women's hall and was heading into the fall feeling unconfident. I was the same age as a number of women living on the hall and I was wondering what gave me any authority to lead them. I ran into the Dean of Students who asked me how I was doing and I expressed my insecurity. He spoke with direct assuredness that I was absolutely qualified to lead them as I was coming with years of experience as an RD. I think it was his tone and the fact that he was not generally frivolous with encouragement that let his words hit my heart and build my confidence. He believed in me and thought the appointment was right.*

**Andy Patterson:** *I was saved during my last year of university in Vancouver. My first job after graduation was in Prince George, B.C. I started attending the First Baptist Church in Prince George. I didn't know anybody there but people were very friendly. One of the big social events for the church was a barbeque/picnic at a local church camp. One of the camp's attractions was a giant tire swing that swung over the edge of the lake. I decided to try it but mis-timed my release and hit my foot hard on the bottom of the lake. Long story short, I broke my ankle badly. People took me to the hospital and I had*

*to stay for a couple of days due to a surgery on my ankle to pin it back together. When I was released, I had to get a taxi to take me to my apartment. It was pretty painful and I really felt alone in my apartment that first night. It was definitely a low time physically and emotionally.*

*The next day a young couple from the church that I didn't really know, gave me a call to see how I was doing. I told them honestly that I wasn't doing so well. They offered to come and pick me up and take me over to their place for a while. I ended up staying several days and it got me over the worst of the recovery time. This was the first time that I had ever had to rely on others for assistance and support. I had always prided myself on being self-sufficient. It was definitely God's provision for me and a great encouragement.*