

Barnabas

[Acts 4:36] Barnabas [Joseph] was a Levite by birth, a member of the Jewish tribe that carried out Temple duties.

But his family moved to Cyprus, so Barnabas did not serve in the Temple of Jerusalem.

The first mention of Barnabas shows his commitment to the early Christian Church. [Acts 4:37]

The name that Joseph was given by the apostles, Barnabas, means “*encourager*”, a person that every group of humans needs at one time or another.

However the value of encouragement is often missed because it tends to be made in private rather than in public.

In fact, people most need encouragement when they feel most alone.

One example of this personal encouragement that Barnabas gave is recorded in Acts 9:22-27.

Saul had persecuted the new Christian Church drastically until he met Jesus on the way to attack the church in Damascus.

News of this persecution followed Saul wherever he went inspite of his conversion.

The Christians in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul but as Barnabas introduced Saul to them they listened to what had happened and then accepted Saul [renamed Paul] into their fellowship.

Barnabas was drawn to people he could encourage.

Another example of this encouragement that Barnabas gave is recorded in Acts 11:19-24.

The Church in Jerusalem heard of the persecution that hit the church after the murder of Stephen, causing many to be scattered far and wide.

These people needed encouraging so they sent Barnabas and as a result many people were brought into the Church by those who had fled because of persecution.

It is delightful to see that wherever Barnabas encouraged Christians, non-Christians flocked to become believers!

Barnabas' actions were crucial to the early Church.

This importance is shown by the way Luke, the writer of Acts, listed Barnabas ahead of Paul as they worked together in various areas. [Acts 11:25-26; Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1-3]

In a way, we can thank Barnabas for most of the New Testament as God used his relationship with Paul and Mark to keep these two men going when either might have failed.

It was Barnabas who encouraged Mark to go with him to Cyprus while Paul took Silas on his next journey. [Acts 15:36-41]

This actually doubled the missionary effort.

Barnabas' patient encouragement was confirmed by Mark's eventual effective ministry. Paul and Mark were later reunited in missionary work. [2 Timothy 4:11]

As Barnabas' life shows, we are rarely in a situation where there isn't someone we can encourage.

Human tendency, however, is to criticise instead.

It may be important at times to point out someone's shortcomings, but before we do have the right to do this, we must build up that person's trust through encouragement.

Are you prepared to encourage those with whom you come in contact today?