

## Minor Characters In Major Roles Lesson 3 – Barnabas

*“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”*

2 Cor 5:17

- Visitors, prayer requests, prayer
- Review Handout #1: “Major Roles for Christians Today.” Emphasize **recognizing**, **developing**, and **using** our Christian characteristics

**Q:** Have you ever accidentally set fire to something?

### Acts and Facts

- “Before becoming a Christian, everyone called me Joe”
- “I saw folks sell land and lay the proceeds at the Apostle’s feet—in fact, I did it myself”
- “I have a cousin named John Mark”
- “I was one of the first people to ever be called a ‘Christian’” (Antioch)
- “I’m a Levite by birth, originally from Cyprus”
- “After becoming a Christian, the Apostles renamed me ‘The Son of Encouragement’”

**Q:** Can you think of someone who really changed your life through their encouragement?

### Some Background on Barnabas

1. First mention of Barnabas <**Read Acts 4:32-36**>
  - a. A Levite born in Cyprus
    - i. Eastern Mediterranean **island**, 50 miles below Asia Minor (Turkey)
    - ii. Cyprus had been **colonized** by **Greeks, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians**, and **Romans**. So Barnabas was **familiar** with several different **cultures**.
2. First mention of Barnabas includes a **character reference** (“*Son of Encouragement*”)
  - a. **Renamed** by the Apostles in Jerusalem.
  - b. In the 1st century, names gave **obvious clues** to a person's **character**. This was especially true of someone who had been **renamed**.
    - i. So, from the **first mention** of him, we're told Barnabas "**gave courage**" to others (encourage also means to "**urge on**" or to "**help and support others**.")
    - ii. Original Greek meaning combines the thought of **encouragement** with that of **consolation**.
3. First mention also includes an **action reference** <**Read Acts 4:37**>
  - a. He must have been somewhat **wealthy**
  - b. He was obviously **generous**

**Q:** Have you ever been introduced to anyone by Hardy Hendon? There’s a brother that knows how to give an introduction!

### Barnabas’ Faith in Action

1. The next mention of Barnabas is in Acts 9, where he pleads Paul's case to the Apostles.

- a. Paul had persecuted Christians with a passion
- b. After his conversion, Paul needed an **advocate** to **legitimize** his new status, since the disciples were **afraid** of Paul <Read Acts 9:26-27>
- c. Barnabas became that advocate (a **type** of Christ)
- d. Barnabas took an **unpopular stand** for Paul. Most of us would have taken a "**wait-and-see**" attitude, but Barnabas looked at people through **Christ's eyes**, and saw what **could be**, not just **what was** or **what is**.
  - i. Reference today's verse (2 Cor 5:17)

**Q:** How can we "stand up" for our Christian brothers and sisters today?

### Barnabas and Antioch Church

1. After the stoning of Stephen, Christians were scattered, and went into **Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch**, but spoke **only to the Jews** (Acts 11:19)
  - a. Antioch is in **Syria**, just east of Cyprus
  - b. Some of those who ended up in Antioch began preaching to **Greeks**
  - c. Acts 11:20 says these preachers were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, and as a result of their work, **many were being converted**
2. When the Jerusalem Church heard of this, they sent **Barnabas** to help! **Why not?** He was from **Cyprus** and would have **fit right in!** Here's an example of God using someone **just as they are**.
3. <Read Acts 11:23-24> Look at **how** Barnabas helped the Antioch Church.
  - a. He **encouraged** them and **rejoiced** with them
  - b. Notice **what** he encouraged them to do—to **remain true** to the Lord!
  - c. See what a good attitude can do! (By good attitude, I mean one **full of the Holy Spirit, faithful, and trusting God** to provide the increase.)
4. But this must have been **easy** for Barnabas, since **God gave him help**—Barnabas was full of the **Holy Spirit**.
  - a. But **wait a minute!** We have that **same Spirit** in us today!
  - b. <Read the following>
    - i. John 14:15-17 (in us **today**)
    - ii. John 14:26 (**teaches** and brings all things to **remembrance**)
    - iii. John 15:26-27 (bears **witness** of Jesus)
    - iv. John 16:13 (**guides** us)
  - c. That's **quite a lot of help!**
5. <Read Acts 11:25-26>
  - a. Barnabas "sizes up the situation" in Antioch—needs more **help**
  - b. Goes to **Tarsus**, brings back **Saul** to help with the work
  - c. They worked with the church for a **year**, teaching many about Jesus

**Q:** Why Saul? How did this make Saul feel?

6. <Read Acts 11:27-30>
  - a. **Prophets** (Agabus, et al.) come and foretell a **famine** in Judea
  - b. A **contribution** is raised and sent to Jerusalem **via Barnabas and Saul**

## Barnabas Encourages John Mark

1. Col 4:10 tells us Barnabas and Mark were **cousins**
2. Acts 12:25 indicates that **Mark** went back to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul after they delivered the contribution
  - a. Barnabas saw **potential** in John Mark
  - b. Again, Barnabas is **growing the church by encouraging its members!**
3. Next, the Holy Spirit sends Barnabas and Saul on the **first missionary journey**
  - a. Mark started from Antioch, but left the group at Pamphylia (journey was just getting started) and went to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13)
4. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on the **second journey**, but because of his earlier "desertion," Paul **forbade** it. Barnabas took Mark to **Cyprus** instead (Acts 15:39)
  - a. This didn't hinder God's work—**two** missionary parties went out from Antioch!

**Q:** Consider the different expectations Barnabas and Paul had of Mark. How did Paul view Mark's Christian role? How did Barnabas?

**Aside:** Barnabas must have made a difference to both Paul and Mark, since later Paul **specifically asks** Timothy to **bring Mark** to him in Rome (2 Tim 4:11)

## Characteristics of Barnabas

1. Friendly
2. Devoted
3. Encouragement to others
4. Trustworthy
5. Selfless
6. Saw potential in others (both in Paul and Mark).

## Application

At the beginning of class I asked you to think of someone who made a lasting impression on you through their encouragement. I would now encourage you (especially if you *couldn't* think of someone who encouraged you) to be an encouragement this week for someone else.

*And here's your chance!* <**Handout names and addresses of those recently baptized**> Take one and put it in your Bible or purse or pocket, and please drop a note of encouragement to one of these new brothers in Christ.

Dec 23, 2001

Dear class members:

Here's a copy of an email I received earlier this week from a good friend and brother in Christ (Jeff Gray, <http://www.vuse.vanderbilt.edu/~jgray>). Please consider dropping these men a short note of encouragement.

Thanks,  
Greg

=== original email follows ===

Thanks for your interest in getting letters out to the guys at Riverbend. As I mentioned, my suggestion would be to have anyone who writes to them use a return address that is in care of your church. I have even started to do this with the new people that I meet with out there.

The first two guys are those who have really grown the most over the past year. They are both coming out of hard core gangs and have renounced the gang life publicly to their former members. Anthony has even helped to teach a few others and has been a great example. Some pictures of their baptisms are available at:

<http://www.brentwoodchurch.com/StudyGroups/Riverbend/riverbend.htm>

The last guy is someone that we are studying with who is really coming along well in his understanding. We are hoping that Linell will soon make the commitment to give his life to Christ.

Demetrius Lancaster #250062  
Turney Center Industrial Prison and Farm  
Route 1  
Only TN 37140

Anthony Page #221136  
R.M.S.I. Unit 6B  
7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd  
Nashville TN 37209-1048

Linnell Richmond #310848  
R.M.S.I. Unit 3A-112  
7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd  
Nashville TN 37209-1048

June 24, 2001

Dear class members:

Here's a copy of an email I received this week from a good friend and brother in Christ. Please consider dropping these men a short note of encouragement.

Thanks,  
Greg

=== original email follows ===

Hi Everyone-

There have been 3 recent baptisms at the Riverbend Maximum Security state prison in Nashville, TN. The following men would really be encouraged by any letters or cards that you might send them.

Buford Gaiter was baptized last week. His address is:

Buford Gaiter #226736  
RMSI Unit 6-A210  
7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd  
Nashville TN 37209-1048

Both Sol Vecchio and Antonio Bean were both baptized this afternoon (Tuesday, June 19th). Their addresses are:

Sol Vecchio #275121  
RMSI Unit 5-C111  
7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd  
Nashville TN 37209-1048

Antonio Bean #208488  
RMSI Unit 4-C211  
7475 Cockrill Bend Industrial Rd  
Nashville TN 37209-1048

Have a blessed day-

Jeff Gray  
<http://www.vuse.vanderbilt.edu/~jgray>