

Barnabas: encouragement with real costs

How did Barnabas help Paul and the early mission?

Barnabas welcomed Paul when others feared him, brought him into ministry at Antioch, and traveled with him. Acts presents his generosity and encouragement alongside serious disagreements, allowing readers to honor his service without treating him as flawless.

Making room for a former enemy

Acts first introduces Barnabas as Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, who contributes proceeds from a field to the community. Later he speaks for Saul before the apostles when believers fear the former persecutor. This welcome is connected to testimony about Saul's changed life. Barnabas models generosity and discerning advocacy, not uncritical trust in every claim to spiritual transformation.

Biblical references: Acts 4:36-37 · Acts 9:26-30

Sources: acts

Strengthening Antioch and traveling outward

Sent to Antioch, Barnabas recognizes God's grace and encourages perseverance. He seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him into a sustained season of teaching. The Antioch community then sends them together. Their journey includes both welcome and persecution; at Lystra they reject worship directed toward themselves. The mission calls people to the living God rather than promoting its messengers.

Biblical references: Acts 11:19-26 · Acts 13:1-3 · Acts 14:8-18

Sources: acts

Disagreement without erasing faithfulness

Galatians reports that Barnabas was drawn into the withdrawal from Gentile table fellowship at Antioch. Acts later records his sharp disagreement with Paul about taking John Mark, after which they travel separately. Neither episode should become an invented account of permanent hostility. Their stories invite honest correction and patient development of coworkers, while keeping the gospel larger than any leader's reputation.

Biblical references: Galatians 2:11-14 · Acts 15:36-41

Sources: letters, acts

Sources

- [acts] Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/ACT.htm>
- [letters] Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section. <https://ebible.org/web/>

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