

November 16, 2025

CFBC... "Difference Maker" (2025 Capital Stewardship Emphasis)

"BARNABAS"

Selected Scriptures

Dr. Erwin Lutzer in his book, *When a Nation Forgets God*, wrote:

I believe that the spiritual climate of America will never be changed unless we have . . . ordinary people living authentically for Christ in their vocations, among their neighbors, and (in) positions of influence. We cannot look to a man [leader] or even a movement as much as to the common person who is committed to Christ and living for Him.

God has sovereignly placed you in your workplace, in your school, on your athletic team, in the band, and in your family to be a difference-maker. Here's the good news. You don't have to be famous or extremely gifted.

Last week we focused on **Stephen**, the first martyr of the first New Testament church. He wasn't one

of the 12 apostles that Jesus had chosen. He was a deacon who embraced spiritual authenticity, biblical insight, and personal courage. God used an ordinary man to take an extraordinary stand for Jesus and He was stoned to death as a result. What a difference-maker he was.

Today we turn our attention to another one of the Bible's minor characters who became a major difference-maker. His name was **Barnabas**. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, introduces us to him in the fourth chapter . . .

Acts 4:36–37... Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Here's what the Lord wants us to know about him:

- He was a Jew who grew up in Cyprus.
- He was named Joseph by his parents.
- He was from the tribe of Levi.

- **He was known as an Encourager (*Barnabas*).**
- **He was a generous man of God.**

I'm not sure when Barnabas was saved, but one thing is for certain. The Lord Jesus transformed him into a kingdom difference-maker!

As we follow his developing story, Luke mentions him again in chapter 9.

Saul, who held the cloaks of those who stoned Stephen, had become an oppressive persecutor of Christians. The religious authorities sent him to Damascus for the sole purpose of arresting believers and persecuting them. On the way, the resurrected and ascended Christ confronted him. Saul believed in Jesus and was converted. When he arrived in Damascus he began to preach in the synagogue. The Jews tried to kill him, but he escaped and went back to Jerusalem. Here's what happened when he got there. . .

Acts 9:26–27... When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but

they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

As you can see, they didn't exactly roll out the red carpet for him. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem were naturally suspicious. Was Saul trying to shmooze them so he could then turn on them? Barnabas really lived up to his name when he advocated for him by sharing the story of his conversion and the way he immediately began to preach Jesus in Damascus. As a result of his favorable testimony, the leaders of the church began to accept Saul as one of them.

The next time Luke mentions the name of Barnabas was in connection with a heaven-sent revival that had broken out among Gentiles in Antioch.

Acts 11:20–26... But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. **21** And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. **22** The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. **23** Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; **24** for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. **25** And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; **26** and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas was a Spirit-filled, godly man. He was a gifted *ENCOURAGER*. As such. . .

- He was open to God doing new things that were out of the box.

- **He preached the Word with a resolute heart and people were blessed.**
- **He was willing to invest in Saul and to give him a chance to hone his preaching skills.**
- **He, along with Saul, were entrusted with a special offering for the church in Jerusalem.**

Acts 11:29–30... And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send *a contribution* for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. 30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

In spite of the fact that Barnabas never wrote a book of the Bible and he never made the A-Team as far as church leadership goes, this brother was surely a difference-maker!

As his story continued to unfold, we discover that he became a part of the leadership team at Antioch and was even chosen by the Holy Spirit to join Saul on the church's first mission trip.

Acts 13:1–3... Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

John Mark, the young cousin of Barnabas, joined them on the mission trip. This was a golden opportunity for him to use his spiritual gift of exhortation (encouragement) to preach the Word and to continue to disciple both Saul and his young cousin.

Look at Acts 13:9—*"But Saul, who was also known as Paul...."* Saul was his Jewish name. Paul was his Roman name. From this verse on, Saul is always referred to in Scripture as "Paul." His kingdom impact can be traced to the investment Barnabas made in his life!

When this first mission trip was concluded, Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch and reported to all that God had done with them and through them. Eventually some false teachers showed up in Antioch and began to muddy up the gospel. That's when Paul and Barnabas sprang into action.

Acts 15:1–2, 12 ... Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

At one of the most crucial moments in the life of the church, Paul and Barnabas (and a few others) traveled to Jerusalem to hash out this theological

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issue with the leaders of the church. Thankfully, the Lord used Barnabas, Paul, Peter, and James to ensure that the gospel was not compromised!

Barnabas was a minor character who became a major difference-maker. We desperately need a pipeline of ordinary people who will be fully devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the explosive growth of His kingdom. You can be an encourager!

Next, I want you to see how the Lord used Barnabas to encourage his cousin, John Mark.

Acts 15:35–41... But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. 36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. 38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And

there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. **40** But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. **41** And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

John Mark evidently got homesick, so he deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. When plans were being made for the second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. Paul flat out rejected that idea. It led to Paul and Silas teaming up and Barnabas and John Mark joining together.

Barnabas, as the Son of Encouragement, saw potential in John Mark. So, he took him under his wing and disciplined him. Ironically, Paul would later view young John Mark as a trusted minister of the gospel and a difference-maker in his own right. . .

Colossians 4:10... Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas's

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cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).

2 Timothy 4:11... Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

Taking the example of Barnabas, I want to challenge you with this goal. . .

**MAKE ENCOURAGEMENT
YOUR PLATFORM FOR MINISTRY.**

In one of the Peanuts comic strips, Linus has just written a comic strip of his own and he wants Lucy's opinion. . .

"Lucy, would you read this and tell me if you think it's funny?"

In the next frame, Lucy is patting her foot, and a little grin comes across her face. She looks at Linus and says. . .

"Well Linus, who drew this?"

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With a big grin on his face, Linus says. . .

"Lucy, I drew this comic strip."

In the next frame, Lucy wads it up and throws it aside and says. . .

"Well then, I don't think it's very funny."

In the final frame, Linus picks up his comic strip, throws his blanket over his shoulder, and says to Lucy. . .

"Big sisters are the crab grass in the lawn of life."

Are you more pessimistic than optimistic? Do you find yourself being more discouraging than encouraging? Today is your chance to flip it over.

**MAKE ENCOURAGEMENT
YOUR PLATFORM FOR MINISTRY.**

By the way, this is a commandment of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:11... Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Hebrews 3:13... But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Here are 4 ways you can be an encourager who makes a difference for the kingdom:

1. CONNECT WITH THE LORD.

Repent of your sins. Commit your life to Jesus by faith. Follow the Lord in believer's baptism. Stay close to the Lord by reading your Bible, by praying, and by being an active member of a Bible-believing, Christ-honoring church.

2. MAKE GENEROSITY A PRIORITY.

Jesus taught this life-changing principle. . .

Matthew 6:19–21... "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; **21** for

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **24** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Be generous with your time, your service, and your money!

3. INVEST IN OTHER PEOPLE.

Discouragers see the worst in others. Encouragers see the best in others. Take a risk on people. Barnabas took a gigantic risk when he believed Saul's salvation testimony, advocated for him, and spent a great deal of time investing in him. He took a risk when he reached out to John Mark and refused to view his failure as final. As a result of his encouragement, 14 books of the New Testament were written!

Somebody believed in you, invested in you, and encouraged you along the way. Aren't you thankful for that? Go and be a Barnabas in someone's life this week!

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