

PART TWO: CELEBRATE // Influencers

//INTRODUCTION//

We are in week two of our summer series, “Celebrate.” This week we are going to be looking at the story of Barnabas. Barnabas was an influencer and perhaps his biggest contribution to the kingdom was choosing to vouch for, invest in and mentor Paul. We all need a Barnabas in our life. We all need an encourager. Being an encourager, though, is not about merely saying a few encouraging words to “cheer somebody up” or “build their self-esteem.” It’s about actually raising up future “impacters” for the Kingdom.

//WEEKEND REWIND//

As you have had time to reflect and think about this past week’s message, what are the things that either challenged you or caused you to take action in your own life?

//WEEKLY REVIEW//

Read: Acts 11:19-30

Saul [Paul] and Barnabas were instrumental in bringing salvation to many people and were key in building up the body that became known as “Christians.” Who we are today started with the work that Saul [Paul] and Barnabas did in the 1st Century. Paul went on to become the most influential leader in the early church. His travels are recorded throughout the book of Acts and he was primarily responsible for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles through at least 3 missionary journeys. He wrote 13 of the NT books and those writings form the basis for much of our understanding of early church life and the impact of Jesus’ death and resurrection in the life of the early church. Barnabas saw something in Saul [Paul] and was willing to take a risk to influence him, call him out into his calling, and encourage him in what God called him to do.

1. Who has been the biggest encourager in your life and what impact have they had on you?

//DISCUSSION QUESTIONS//

2. Does my influence draw those in my life to Jesus? Am I modeling someone they want to become?
3. Who is currently your “Barnabas?”

SUGGESTED ANSWER: We all need an encourager in our life but what if you’ve never had one? How do you find one?

- **Pray for eyes to see:** ask God to bring people into your life who can be an encouraging voice. Chances are, God has already brought someone into your life who’s ready to be a voice of wisdom and encouragement. Pray for eyes to see.

- **Examine the person's life:** We watch people's lives from a distance and think, *Wow! I want to be like so-and-so!* But often, as I've learned about people and their lives more intimately, I've thought: *I don't want to turn out like that.* We can learn from anyone, even

donkeys, but if you're going to invite someone to speak into your life, look at the fruit of that person's life. Make sure you're not aligning your life with someone who has self-destructive tendencies or behaviors.

- **Make sure there's a personal connection:** we may ask people we admire before any real personal connection is made. We may like them, the idea of them or what they've accomplished. But when we sit down face-to-face with them, there may not be any genuine chemistry.

4. Who is the “Paul” in my life that I can be a “Barnabas” to?

//MOVING FORWARD//

Dr. George Wood said, “If I’m succeeding without suffering, it’s because I’m standing on the shoulders of someone who came before me. If I’m suffering without succeeding, it’s because I’m paving the way for someone to come after me.” How would it feel to be Barnabas, knowing you had an impact in shaping a “Paul?”

//CLOSING PRAYER//

Take time to pray together and for each other as a group. Ask God for those people in your group who need a “Barnabas” that God would reveal or provide that person.

//CHANGING YOUR MIND//

“He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.” **Acts 11:24** [NIV]