

Book of Acts Series - Part 6 | the Process

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon explores the process of spiritual growth through the life of Barnabas and the early church in Acts.

Duration: 51:18

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the early church and the impact of the Holy Spirit on believers. He then transitions to the church in Antioch and how their worship led to a significant event that changed the course of the Christian church. The speaker introduces the concept of the process that Christians undergo to fulfill their potential and calling in God. He emphasizes the importance of being willing to do both small and big tasks for God, as everything is significant to Him. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote and a reminder to live a righteous life.

Transcript

I started a series in the book of Acts some weeks ago, and we're going to continue in it, and we're going to do something that I think is going to be fascinating for most of us, because it's a kind of Bible study that maybe you've never done. This message is called The Process. When you become a Christian, you start to undergo a process that God has for each one of us to bring us to our full potential in God toward the calling that's on all of our lives.

The choir are made up of Christians who have a calling on their life. There are some who have started in our church and are now serving the Lord in Haiti or Dominican Republic and Israel. And it's all been part of this interesting process of God saving us for a purpose and then moving us toward that purpose.

So I want to ask a question, honest, real talk question. How many of you want to apprehend and experience why God saved you? Just lift your hand. And none of us are there yet, starting with the speaker.

It's not just get saved and go to church on Sunday, it's God, why did you save me? Also, we want to be the maximum blessing we can to other people, and that's not going to happen if we just circle the wagons and say, well, I'm a Christian, I go to the Brooklyn Tabernacle or any other church on Sunday. So we've learned that the book of Acts, which is the early history of the Christian church, follows the Gospels, written by a man who wrote one of the Gospels, Luke, who's the only Gentile writer of any book in the New

Testament, any part of the writings there. He was a physician, he was probably converted under the Apostle Paul's ministry.

But all of that was in the future when we started reading in the book of Acts how the Spirit came after Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father, after being resurrected from the dead. And we've read about how the Spirit came upon the believers and energized them, made them bold. We read and studied Peter's first sermon, and we found out a little sketch, a little snapshot of the early church.

Now, I wanna go right back to that in chapter four. I wanna stay there. Peter preaches another sermon in chapter three after the one he preaches in chapter two.

And now we're gonna pick up in chapter four. But to get there, I wanna go further ahead in history and pick up one of the great moments in the history of the Christian church. It's affected us, it affected the Bible, it affected missions, it affected everything.

And that was, there was a church in Antioch that had been formed. Antioch is in Syria, which is northeast of Israel. And in that church, there were some wonderful people.

And as they were praising God and worshiping the Lord, something very dramatic happened, which changed the rest of the book. The book now begins to follow two of these people that we're gonna read about. And let's look at it, Acts 13, verses one through three.

Now, in the church at Antioch, there were prophets, inspired speakers, preachers, people gifted by the Holy Spirit, and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, called Niger, which means black. He was a black gentleman. Lucius of Cyrene, Mannan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, King Herod, and Saul.

Saul is the persecutor of the Christian church, Saul of Tarsus, who has recently been converted and is now in the church in Antioch. What a church. And while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, how did the Holy Spirit say it? Through some gift of the Holy Spirit, spoken through one of the members of the church.

The Holy Spirit didn't speak audibly, but through one of the gifts of the Spirit, probably listed in 1 Corinthians 12, for those of you who want to study that, the Spirit, imagine the drama of that. The Spirit spoke and gave the names of the two people in the church. Separate me Paul, Saul, and Barnabas.

Set apart for me Barnabas first and Saul for the work to which I, the Holy Spirit, have called them. What a moment. Imagine two names called out in front of the people.

How different our concept is of church sometimes than what they experience. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and they sent them off. And they sent them off on what is called Paul's first missionary journey, which was followed by at least two other missionary journeys.

And that's how the gospel went into what we call now Turkey, which was then called Asia. It then went into what we now call Greece, which was called Macedonia and Achaia. And then it went to eventually to Rome, he ended up.

And the rest of the book of Acts keeps focusing on the church in Antioch, not in Jerusalem anymore, the church in Antioch more or less and the journeys of Barnabas and Paul and then later Paul. What a

moment. But notice what name came first.

Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work that I've called them. How awesome a man we know about the apostle Paul who was first called Saul of Tarsus, then his name was changed to Paul in that very chapter, which we'll learn about. But the first name that's mentioned is Barnabas.

Barnabas. Barnabas was called out by the Holy Spirit. Obviously the Spirit had been tracking him.

And now this man, whoever he is, is called to go out with a younger man, a less experienced convert named Saul of Tarsus. And they're to go out where? They're gonna go out. Their first stop is Cyprus in the Mediterranean, which is where Barnabas came from.

So what I wanna do today is stop and say, what does the book of Acts tell us about Barnabas and the process that God brought him through? In other words, nobody just appears. God makes people. Trees don't grow overnight.

When God is gonna use someone, they don't get converted and the next day God is using them mightily. There's development, there's the process, there's growth. So why would the Bible, as we're gonna find out, put so many little tidbits about Barnabas except that God wants us to learn about the process so we can be all God called us to be? What can we learn from Barnabas? So let's start with the first mention of Barnabas.

The church has just started and the Spirit has been poured out and Peter's preaching these great messages and the church is loving each other, serving one another. They're sharing Christ with people and now we have the first mention in a church, just like ours, of this man called Barnabas. Let's look.

Joseph, ah, that was his name. His name wasn't Barnabas. His name was Joseph.

How'd he get the name Barnabas? We'll find out. Joseph, a Levite, that means he was a Jew from the tribe of Levi, from Cyprus, that's an island in the Mediterranean, whom the Apostle called Barnabas, which means son of encouragement. He sold a field he owned and he brought the money and put it at the Apostle's feet.

That's the first mention of a guy named Barnabas. What do we know about him? His name was Joseph. He came from Cyprus.

How did he become a Christian? He became a Christian, listen closely everyone, by listening probably to that message preached by Peter, one of those first messages. He became a Christian by hearing the message about Jesus. I want you to be very now concentrating on what I'm about to say here because this is important.

I was talking to someone on the phone this week and they were telling me about a speaker who they were recommending here to me and they said, you really should have him. He's very good and we might have him come. But so I was listening to this person talk and they were saying you should have him because I heard him speak and he really loves God and he believes in God and he shares about how his mother before she died told him, son, do what's right and live the right way.

Don't do what's wrong because it'll catch up with you and you know, he really made me think about God and really believes in God and I'm listening for the key words here and I'm not hearing them. I said, yeah,

but when you heard him, did he give the gospel? I said, well, he said, well, I just told you. He said he really loves God and he believes in God and that God is faithful, has been faithful in his life and that God has all power.

I said, no, but that's not the gospel. If you would have said to the crowd who killed Jesus, there's only one God, they would have said amen. If you would have said to them, there's only one God who created heaven and earth, they would have said amen and then they would have strung Jesus up.

If you would have said there's wrong and right, they would have said amen. That's not the gospel. If you said, mama, before she died said, son, hold on to God and trust the good Lord up in heaven, they could have said amen to that.

None of that is the gospel. The gospel is what my wife mentioned, Jesus. You don't tell people there's a God in heaven only.

You don't tell them that God is faithful. A lot of people could believe that. The Jewish leaders who crucified Jesus could have said, yeah, look what God did for Abraham and look what he did for Isaac and look what he did for Jacob and Moses gave the 10 commandments and God is holy.

They would have agreed in all of that but that's not the gospel. That won't save anyone. The only name that's given among men whereby we must be saved is the name of Jesus.

The way Barnabas, Joseph the Levite from Cyprus got saved is that he became aware that he was a sinner and that he had broken God's law and that there's only one way to be saved and be forgiven and that is to put your faith in Jesus, the only son of the only God who created heaven and earth, who is the father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So the message of this church, if we're gonna survive and be pleasing to God, is not believe in God or God is faithful or God is on the throne or let's sing some of the Psalms that David sang. That's not the gospel.

The gospel is God so loved the world, come on, help me, that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him, who's the him? Jesus, will not perish but have. Because there's a lot of gospels out there. There's a lot of good news but it's not the good news.

I'm listening to the guy and I said, sir, all due respect, you haven't said the magic words for me. He said, what are you talking about? I said, you haven't mentioned the only name that the devil is afraid of. Nowhere in the Bible does the devil cringe when you say almighty God.

Demons don't flutter when you say Lord. It's when you say Jesus, the one who lived 2,000 years ago. Come on, can we say amen to that? Clap our hands.

You might say, well, that's very narrow and I agree with you. It is very narrow. In fact, Jesus said, the road is very narrow that leads to eternal life.

But we didn't make up that road. I'm not some narrow-minded bigot, neither are you who says, oh, my way's the only way. I'm only going by what Jesus said.

There's only one mediator between God and man, so be careful when you talk to people because they're taking the words you're using and thinking of different things. Everybody believes in God. A lot of people believe God created the heavens and the earth, so if you prove that to them, you haven't helped them at

all.

Now, is there a place for that teaching? Yes, there is. There's a place for everything. There's a time for everything.

But if you study carefully in the book of Acts, as we've been doing, what their message was, their message was Jesus crucified under Pontius Pilate, buried in a tomb, risen on the third day, and now seated at the right hand of the Father. And it's only through his blood that your sins can be forgiven. You can try harder, pray harder, promise you'll be different.

It means nada, nothing. When I see the blood, God said, I will pass over you. And that blood, come on, one more time, the blood of Jesus Christ.

That's the gospel. So, that's how Joseph from Cyprus got, became a Christian. He heard the Christian message.

And the Christian message now, I would like to suggest, has been diluted, because a lot of churches are preaching things that are more Moses than that are New Testament. Remember, the law came through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You can prove something's wrong, that there's only one creator, that something didn't come out of nothing, all of that apologist work is so important, but it's not the gospel, the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. And a lot of people have changed it because they know it's when you say Jesus that all hell breaks loose. You can talk about God, the Lord, I love God, I love God too, but what God are they talking about? They could be talking about, there's like seven billion gods out there.

No, it's the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who sent his Son. So, what do we know now about Joseph, a name called Barnabas? We know just two things about him. Number one, he must have got a suggestion from the Holy Spirit, as they were ministering to the needs of the people in the church, he must have got some prompting from the Holy Spirit.

You know that land you own? Sell it and give it all to the church. So they can help people less fortunate. That's all we know.

That's how it started. He was just a guy. You know, like, you're a guy, I'm a guy, you're up in the balcony, I'm up here, but we're all just guys and girls.

And he was just a new convert. And he got this prompting, and he was radical. He went, yo, that's a good idea.

Sold the land, notice, he didn't tell them, look, this is my money, didn't make a show of it. He didn't say, I want it spent this way. He just laid it at the apostle's feet and said, I submit to your authority, I trust in you, take care of the poor.

Well, what are you gonna get for that? Nothing, I wanna just do it in the name of Christ. God was tracking. Every offering you put in, you know God is tracking.

Every sacrifice you make, every sacrifice we don't make, God is tracking. Nobody beats God, and nobody will ever be cheated by God. God's watching what all of us are doing.

He's watching what Barnabas was doing. But then another thing we learn. His name was Joseph, but they changed his name.

The apostles called him Barnabas. So, Barnabas means son of encouragement. So what do we learn? He not only obeyed a prompting and gave, sold some land and gave it to the apostles, but he was one of those delightful people who encourages others.

And he was so kind and so uplifting, he was so happy in his faith, so uplifting, so positive that they said, no, you're not Joseph anymore, you're Barnabas. That means son of encouragement. Oh, do we need some more Barnabases? And if it was feminine, Barnissima, or something.

How many love to be around people that encourage you? Right? There's enough discouragement in life. So, this new convert, all we know is he was a giver, he was radical, he did something like, wow. And he got a nickname that he was an encourager.

He's just one of those happy people that had the gift of encourager. So he's a believer. Wasn't a deacon, wasn't a pastor, wasn't an apostle.

He was nada. He was just a believer in Jesus who was an encourager and a giver. But God was tracking.

So what's the next mention of him? Look. In the book of Acts, it says, when he came to Jerusalem. So, the context now is the church is going on and the biggest persecutor of the Christian church has gotten converted.

Saul of Tarsus, on the way to Damascus, also in Syria, by the way, this church in Antioch that we're gonna get to and a lot of this story is right where all the killing is going on now. They estimate a minimum of 100,000 people been killed in that civil war and trouble going on in Syria. So Saul gets converted and he starts to witness about Jesus.

There's only one problem. He was such a vehement persecutor of the Christian church that when he went to Jerusalem and wanted to join himself to the disciples there and he wanted to minister, they said, get out of here. That's Saul of Tarsus.

They went, no, we're busy tonight. We can't have dinner because they were afraid he was still undercover working to persecute the church. Everybody looking at me, everybody concentrating.

So, Saul's now in between a rock and a hard place. He's a convert to Jesus. His life's been transformed, but when he comes to Jerusalem, nobody will fellowship with him because they go, yeah, we know God can do everything, but this is a lot.

Is this for real? So guess what? Look up. What happens? When he came, Paul, came Saul of Tarsus. He tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. Ah, now we learn another thing about Barnabas.

He's the one who goes, yo, that's not right. Why haven't you received Saul of Tarsus into fellowship? He is a believer. I know for a fact that he preached the gospel after he got it converted.

He risked his life. He is a believer, and he brings him to the apostles and he says, come on, Peter, James, John, I'm just a believer in the church, but I checked this guy out, I vetted him. This is the real deal.

He's doing that for the man who's gonna be the apostle Paul and write a good part of the New Testament. It all happened because of Barnabas. He was a champion of the truth.

He was a reconciler. He was a peacemaker. He had discernment.

He had wisdom. He saw the potential that was in Saul of Tarsus, and he said, you can't treat a guy different just because he had a bad past. Ooh, that's a good sentence, isn't it? You can't treat people bad just because, or different just because they have a bad past.

So now Saul has received this new convert, fairly new convert by the apostles, and who's the guy who made the peace and maneuvered it all? Barnabas. Barnabas. So let's see what else he does.

The next mention of his name. Okay, put it off the screen for a second. Certain people now go to Antioch in Syria and they start a church, but look at me.

It's a different kind of church. It's a church where Jews and Gentiles are meeting together. That hasn't happened.

Churches were all Jewish because all early Christians were Jewish. Jesus was Jewish. The 12 apostles were Jewish.

So if you had a Christian church, it was a Jewish Christian church. But now the gospel has gone to Cornelius, an Italian soldier, through Peter, and now the message is coming. By the way, nobody was sure this could ever happen.

Gentiles can be saved just like Jewish people. Oh, aren't you happy for that since we're all Gentiles? Mostly here. So now this meeting, this revival breaks out in Antioch.

Certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene, northern Africa and the Mediterranean, go and the hand of the Lord is with them. And now the church is just booming and the report goes back to the mother church in Jerusalem. And they gotta, is this for real? Gentiles meeting together with Jews? Could this be happening? So they gotta send someone to check it out.

Look who they send. News of this reached the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and he saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and he encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their heart.

He was, Barnabas, he was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and faith and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Oh, now we're cooking.

Look what's happening with Barnabas. He starts out as just giving a piece of land. He's an encourager in the church.

He steps in for Saul of Tarsus and says, come on, give the guy a chance. And now when they hear about this new church up in Antioch, they say, who can we send who's really smart and objective and well-balanced and mature? Who can we really, ah, I know who we can trust. The apostle sent Barnabas.

So Barnabas goes from Jerusalem. Now he could have taken this attitude. No church is like our church.

Oh, there's a lot of Christians like that in pastors too. They downplay anything happening in any other church. That's true, you don't have to say amen, it's true.

Oh, it's okay here, but not like the tab, you know. That's sad, isn't it? But Barnabas didn't have one of those small, little tiny spirits, he was a Christian. He rejoiced wherever Jesus was glorified, wherever people's lives were being changed, no matter what faults were going on there, and there's faults anywhere.

You'll never find the perfect church. You and I are in it, how could it be perfect, right? So he goes to Antioch and he encourages them, he gets happy. One of the great tests in life is not what you do when people are hurting, it's what you do when people are rejoicing.

One of the great tests of character is not having mercy on someone in the street, it's how you rejoice with people who are being blessed, because a lot of jealousy comes in us. Not when a person loses their job are you tested, it's when they get a better job than you. That's where you're tested.

So, and I'm tested, so the Bible tells us that he goes to Antioch and he encourages them, he fits right in. See, Barnabas was one of those kind of people, wherever you put him, he fit in. There's very few Christians like that.

Most Christians are so cultural and so in their own little thing that the moment they're with other, they reject other. These are Gentiles, these are Syrians, they're not like the folks back home, but a real spirit-filled Christian, he's just going with the flow. Just adjusting, blessing, encouraging.

And then the Bible says this, as we move our way now to that great call that he got from the Holy Spirit, he was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit, he was controlled by the Holy Spirit. He started out as just a new convert just some years ago, but now he's grown to have this testimony, he was a good man.

You ever meet somebody, that doesn't mean perfect, but you ever meet someone you can say, it's a good man. She's a good woman. She's a good woman.

I used to have Carol's late grandmother, she was kind of negative type, his father's mother, and whenever she would hear somebody say good, like he's a good man, she'd go, there's none good but God. Am I right? She would say that. She'd look at me with her little fingering, there's none good but God, Jim.

Well, there is none good but God, but there are still good men and good women. How many wanna be a good man, a good woman? Lift your hand, you wanna just have that testimony? Hey, listen, that's all he has is a testimony. He's a good man, doesn't say he's a prophet, doesn't say yet anything about that, he's just a good man.

Ah, but listen, he's full of the Holy Spirit, and he's full of faith. Oh, that new convert gave some money to the church, encouraged people, stood up for Paul, now goes to Antioch, and now the Bible says he has a ministry of his own, for many people now are coming to the Lord through Barnabas. The church greatly was increasing.

Where'd he get that, who ordained him? What was his name? I don't see any of that happening because gifts don't come from people, gifts come from God. Organization, so we're ordaining someone in the three

o'clock afternoon service, all we're gonna do as we ordain this woman is recognize what God has already done. You can't give somebody, no human can give anybody a power, only God gives that.

So now, this Barnabas, he's really moving. So now the revival is going on, and he's there in Antioch, he didn't go back. He wants to be where the action is.

He feels God wants him there. And then he thinks, hmm, that convert, Saul of Tarsus, he had promise, he's bold, he speaks well, I gotta go find him and bring him here, we need him here. Instead of saying, yo, Barnabas is here, let me handle everything, I'm from Jerusalem, I'm all older in the faith than you new converts, no, he's thinking of how does he develop other people.

These are rare qualities. For a lot of us Christians and ministers, it's all about me, myself, and I. So the Bible tells us, look, then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. See, you gotta find somebody before you can talk to them.

And when he found him, that probably took time, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

What we call ourselves now Christians, guess where it started, in Antioch. And guess who was in the leadership, Barnabas and Saul. Not in Jerusalem they were first called Christians, they were first called Christians in Antioch.

And now you're gonna see the word disciple kind of disappear, and now Christian or saints are the operational words as we define believers in Jesus Christ. What a guy. He leaves where he is to find another guy so that he can develop that man's skill.

And if he hadn't brought him to Antioch, then what we read at the beginning, and the Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, it never would have happened unless Barnabas had thought, wait a minute, you know who's missing here? Saul's missing, we need him here. It's never all about us. God wants to use other people in every situation we're in.

So this amazing man, he's being tracked by the Holy Spirit. Unselfish, humble, peacemaker, edifier, encourager, giver, powerful. But very humble, because while they're in Antioch and they're ministering, guess what happens, ladies and gentlemen? They hear there's a famine in Judea where Jerusalem is.

And the saints there don't have food. They don't have money to buy food. Food has gone sky high, and the saints are starving.

And that goes to prove that when there's trouble on the earth, it affects Christians too. You know, you hear these faith prosperity teachers say, no, if you just serve God, you'll never have a problem in life. You have plenty of problems if you follow Jesus.

Am I right? So they start collecting money for the church in Judea. So in Syria, in Antioch, they're collecting money from all the believers. Come on, hey, come on somebody, give me some money.

Why? We're gonna bring it to Jerusalem to help the Christians there. The apostles are there. And you know, they were Christians before us.

We gotta help them. So when they collect all the money, they say, all right, somebody's gotta deliver it to Jerusalem. Who's trustworthy? Who's humble enough just to be a messenger and deliver some money? They gotta be humble because they're just a gopher.

But they got to be also mature and trustworthy because they're handling money. Look, the disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

The great future apostle is now traveling down a road because he's delivering money. He's Western Union. But you see, when God gets a hold of you, no job's too small, no job's too big.

You know, the late pastor Ware who worked with me all those years, one day there was a problem in Atlantic Avenue, the first building where we were in, just a handful of people in this rundown building. And one of the toilets got clogged. We had no money to call a plumber.

I didn't know a plumber. So I said, Pastor Ware, how about we go down and clean out the toilet? Pastor, I'm ready, come on, let's do it for Jesus. Because when God is in your heart, no job is too small.

In fact, God is watching us when we have opportunities to do little things to see if he can promote us to do bigger things. But some people are so interested in big things that they forget that the little things are just as important. Because to God, there are no big things or little things.

Everything to him is little, everything to him is big. Everything to him is big, he's God. So here they go delivering money.

So now let's close and let's bring us up to where we're at. And what does it all mean to us? So now they come back to Antioch from delivering the money. Oh, I meant to tell you something.

He had a cousin, Barnabas. His name was Mark, John Mark. He wrote the book Mark, Matthew, Mark.

That's Barnabas' cousin, he's younger. And when they go back to Antioch, guess what? He brings John Mark with him. So Saul of Tarsus, Barnabas, and John Mark go back to Antioch.

And now let's reread what happened, Acts 13. Let's just look at verse, go to verse three, please. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The Holy Spirit said, separate me. Whose name went first? Barnabas and Saul. To the work that I've called them to do.

And guess who they took with them? John Mark. He went with them because everybody needs help. Now what's interesting, we're gonna come to one little controversial verse in the Bible.

What's interesting about this trip is it's on this trip when they go to the island of Cyprus, which is where Barnabas came from, that everything turns around. They're confronted by a witch doctor, a Satanist, who tries to obstruct their message. And the Bible says that as Barnabas and Saul are trying to get the message to this Roman officer who has called for them, Sergius Paulus, as they're trying to tell him, this guy, Simon Bar-Jesus, Elimus was his name.

He's whispering and lying about them and doing terrible things to hinder the gospel. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit comes on Saul of Tarsus, and then the Bible says, and then Saul, who was also called Paul, that's

when his name changes, Paul says, you son of the devil, you evil man, and God uses him powerfully to stop that negative influence. And then on for the rest of the book of Acts, on that trip, Barnabas' name drops out, and it says Saul and his, Paul and his companions went here.

Paul and his team went there. Barnabas, although older and in the faith before Paul, the guy who stood up for Paul, he sees, wow, he has more of God than I do. He has more authority.

His calling is different than me. So instead of chafing, instead of resenting, he goes, yeah, I'll be a number two man then. What does it matter as long as Jesus is praised? Who does it matter who? I went this week to see guys that I hadn't seen in decades who played basketball with me at the University of Rhode Island and they had a reunion.

They invited me, and I've never been to any of these reunions. It was really a fraternity reunion. Whoa, and one great scorer was there, and they were laughing and talking.

They said, wow, remember when, I went by Jim Cimbala then, was the way they pronounced my name. So they said, remember when Cimbala was there? They would get the ball, dribble up, and pass to this one, pass to that one, and they would score and pass. And they reminded me that on a basketball team, it doesn't matter who scores, it matters if you win.

So after my sophomore year where I was shooting more, the coach came to me and said, look, we need a point guard who will give up shooting and sacrifice himself and pass the ball and keep it moving because we got some great players, and we did. So would you do that? You're gonna have to work on your ball handling, get even quicker. So your name isn't in the headlines, but you don't care because all you care is, did we win? Barnabas had that kind of spirit of, I'll sublimate myself to people who are more gifted, and I'll root for Paul.

I won't say, wow, that could have been me. I was in the faith before him. Why did I even bail him out? I bailed out in Jerusalem when they were worried about him.

When, didn't the Holy Spirit say, separate me Barnabas and Saul? Didn't my name go first? Why am I second now? Because es lo que es, it is what it is. What if the altos and the sopranos, when Karen comes up and takes the microphone, what they went, they all have good voices, they wouldn't be in the choir. But not everyone's a soloist.

Not everyone's a soloist. You all understand that, right? But without the choir singing this alto, right, alto, soprano, tenor, without them singing a part, you don't have a choir. You don't have a choir.

But you need a soloist. So what if they all resented Karen or one of the other soloists and say, why does she, when she even walks out, they go like that, they clap, and now she has her own little following and everything. I can sing too.

Would we have a good choir? Would God bless that? Barnabas was willing, very rare in life, to root for the other guy. You know, the best Christian in the church is not the one who's most famous. Do you know that notoriety? No one knew about Barnabas or Paul from the newspapers of that day.

If you all just follow the newspapers and you think those people are great, then you have no concept of greatness. Greatness is, God says is great. Because the people in the newspapers many times are degenerates.

And the people who are never mentioned are hidden away doing God's work, and their day will come when the Lord will say, well done, good and faithful deacon. I saw you in that prayer meeting. Listen, as Jason comes.

I saw you in that prayer meeting. I saw you giving that offering. I saw you working with the disabled people.

Right now, we have a class of children being taught. Right now, a lot of autistic children who are being taught right now and again at 12 in a special room over there where they have more personal care. Do you know how hard that is to be two hours with some of these children who are acting out? You don't think God's not tracking that, do you? Oh, you don't know their names.

You've never seen them. You think Pastor Cymbal is somebody. He's nothing.

Maybe at the end of the day, they're gonna have the great reward, and I'll barely get in. It could be that way, because no one knew who Barnabas was. God put him in the Bible, though, so we could appreciate true greatness.

One last controversial thing, okay? They went on their first missionary journey, but while they were just there at the very beginning, guess who left them? John Mark. You know why? He saw some of the beatings that they were taking and the persecution, and he had that temperament that he couldn't take it. He got scared, so he went back, and now they were left alone.

And they picked up other converts. You know, Timothy's got converted later on, and Luke's and all of that, but John Mark turned back. Why? Because it probably was they got hit so hard in one place where Paul almost died, he went, look, I love Jesus, but I'm not risking my life.

I'm not really there yet. So he went back. So now the first missionary journey is over, and they come back to Antioch, and they report it to the church, and they give all these glowing reports of what Jesus has done through Paul and Barnabas and the team, but it's now Paul is prominent.

So they begin to discuss. After a while, they rest, they rejuvenate, they get some good sleep, eat some good food. Let's go on another trip to see how the Christians are doing on that first trip we went, and they have a fight.

I love the Bible, it's so honest. Paul and Barnabas have a fight. You mean Christians fight? Yep.

You mean ministers can have a fight? Yep. Look what happened. Sometime later, Paul said to Barnabas, let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they're doing.

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it was wise to take him because he had deserted them in Panphilia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, and Paul went with somebody whose name begins with an S. Anyone know it? Silas.

So now you had two missionary teams, and some commentators say, well, you see what God was doing? He can even use disagreements because instead of Paul and Barnabas, now it's Paul and Silas, and it's Barnabas and John Mark, and now we got double the power, right? But you know how this probably went

down, right? We know enough about Barnabas, right? Paul said, look, we can't trust John Mark. This is the real deal. We're out here fighting against evil spirits.

This is no easy walk in the park to be a Christian and spread the gospel, and he turned back, and Barnabas, because of his temperament, went, yeah, but Paul, but Paul, give him another shot. Give him another chance. You know, everybody makes mistakes.

And maybe Paul said, yo, he's your cousin. It's a family thing. And Barnabas probably said, no, it's not.

It's just that he's young. I want to have that spirit. You know what, if I make mistakes, I want to make mistakes on the side of mercy because God's been so merciful to me.

Anybody here with me on that? I'd rather have someone say, you know, Jim, you're a fool, that guy got over on you. That girl got over on you. I'd rather have them say that than me say, nah, I can't trust you.

I don't want to say that. So they divided. What's interesting is at the end of Paul's life when he's in prison, and the last letter he writes is 2 Timothy, at the very end of that letter, you know what he says? Oh, by the way, before I die, send John Mark to me.

He's such a good help for me. Paul got one over to the spirit of Barnabas. So what's this mean for us today? I just want to say one thing in closing.

I don't know if God is ever going to say to you and me, separate me and name you to the work. I don't know how God is going to move you to where he wants to move you, but I know one thing, choir behind me, he didn't save you for nothing. He saved you for something.

Why don't we all begin today by saying this? I don't know if I ever preached like Barnabas, and I'm certainly no apostle of Paul, but I can be an encourager. Can't you encourage somebody today? Look at me, those of you who have been through a lot in life and have been hurt and had a dagger put in your back and somebody ripped your soul out. Didn't God permit that so that you would be sensitive to help other people? Didn't God permit you to go through all of that so you can be an encourager? Because you know what it is to be discouraged, don't you? Come on, look at me up in the balcony.

Don't you know what it is to be discouraged? Hey, choir behind me, don't you? Haven't any of you ever gone through it? Haven't you ever been down lower than a curb and feel like you can't go on? Don't you know that God permitted that so that you would be an encourager, a son of encouragement like Barnabas? And you could do it today. You don't need an ordination. I don't need to lay hands on you.

You could just speak words of encouragement. Don't tear people down, don't criticize them. Build them up, say something positive about them.

Yeah, but I see through them. Stop seeing through them. Look in the mirror, you'll see through a lot if you just look through a mirror.

Come on, can we say amen to that? Let's say amen to that. Hey, listen, have I encouraged people? Have I encouraged people who weren't sincere? Yep. Have I encouraged people who ended up laughing in my face? Yep, but guess what? It's on the record.

I tried to encourage them. And who knows that God might visit that little seed I planted someday before they die. On their deathbed, they'll remember, you know what? That guy in Brooklyn, he tried to

encourage me.

We all can be an encouragement. Let's pray together. Father God, I thank you for this beautiful story you gave us in your word.

How a man went from a new convert who was radical in obedience, even sacrificial in his giving, and then just started encouraging people and you were tracking it. And then one day, years later, he heard the Holy Spirit say, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I've called them to do. And you used them in the church in Antioch, you used them on a missionary trip.

How else you use them, we don't know, but what an awesome story his life is for us. Because we've been converted, we are believers in Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives inside of me and all of us here are born again Christians.

So now God, what's our potential? Where do you want us to go? Help us not to live in a box and say, no, I will only go in this little world that I can operate in. Break that box, Lord. And give us the faith that Barnabas had.

Full of the Holy Spirit to move wherever you say to go, to speak wherever you say speak, to give where you say give, to call, to visit, to be bold. Break our little moles of conventionality, Lord, so that we can really be instruments used by you. And now Lord, help us to start today by your grace to be encouragers.

Lord, there's so much discouragement in life. So many people we meet discourage us. Family discourages us.

Husbands discourage us, wives, children sometimes. Parents discourage us. The boss discourages us.

The society discourages us. God, raise up an army of Barnabases, sons and daughters of encouragement who will not be wrapped up in their own little world and what they're going through, but they will speak words of encouragement. They will do acts of love so that others will be lifted up who are ready to give up and quit.

Only eternity will tell what encouragement will mean in the end. We ask for this in Jesus' name. And now Lord, let your face shine upon your people.

And as we dismiss, Lord, I pray that words of love and encouragement will be spoken all over the building. I pray that strangers who just walked in here who hardly know anyone will feel encouraged and leave this building built up in their faith. Satan, we come against every negative thing that you try to plant in our lives.

And we stand on the promises of God, which are yea and amen through Jesus Christ. Build us up together, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen, everyone said.

Amen.

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