

## Does God have a plan for reaching lost people?

**Aim of study:** to see that God uses ordinary individuals in his family to reach lost people

Launching Question: Do you think there is a certain type of person who is more effective in reaching outsiders?

Distribute notes and ask someone to read the following:

"I find it amusing, indeed almost ironic, that the Western church, with its hierarchies, its pomp and circumstance, was brought into being by a bunch of nobodies who were all lay people. Of course, the distinction between laity and clergy, which has so distorted Christianity, was quite unknown in those far off New Testament days. Christianity was entirely a lay movement. The Antioch church not only gave vast scope to laymen: it was founded by laymen. The nearest thing to clergy was the apostles: and not one of them was to be seen at Antioch. They were all keeping their heads down in Jerusalem. But the wandering refugees who had hazarded their lives for the Lord Jesus brought this exciting church into being. Surely there is something for us to learn here." *Evangelism through the Local Church* by Michael Green

### A Character Study of Barnabas

Barnabas belonged to the Jerusalem church. He is first mentioned in Acts 4:36.

Ask someone to read

#### Acts 4:31-37

'Traditionally true apostles were those men who were eyewitnesses of Jesus and particularly chosen for bringing the church into being. Although Luke calls Barnabas an 'apostle' it is because of his role as a leader.' *Adapted from Sharpening the Focus of the Church: S Getz*

1. According to this passage, what sort of character was Barnabas? (Start filling in the table)

What kind of person was Barnabas?

From question 1:	From question 3:	From question 4:	From question 5:
an encourager / generous - giving from his resources	broad-minded / not afraid of new ideas / courageous / inclusive of others / a bridge-builder	good / available / trustworthy / full of faith / controlled by the Holy Spirit / influential / adaptable / people brought to God through his witness / knew his limitations and involved others to help/ took initiative to share his faith	Barnabas could express God's message / was persuasive in his speech / gave God the credit instead of seeking personal recognition / was available to go where he was needed

Barnabas was not one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church; nor was he one of the seven deacons appointed in Acts 6:1-6.

Ask someone to read passage and sentences below.

#### Acts 9:26-28

Barnabas meets Saul, a zealous Jew who was going to Damascus to persecute Christians. He was interrupted on his journey by a brilliant light - a vision of Jesus - that changed his life. (Acts 9:1-19)

2. What did Barnabas have to overcome in order to help Saul?

*Fears about Saul and the negative mindset of the Jerusalem church.*

3. What did this episode show about Barnabas' character? (write these ideas in the box above)

Then the story of Jesus spread to Antioch, and Greeks, not just Jews were turning to God.

**MAKING HIM KNOWN STUDY 3: DOES GOD HAVE A PLAN FOR REACHING LOST PEOPLE? LEADER'S NOTES**

Assign the next passages to two groups, each read the text then list the character qualities in the box above.

**Acts 11:19-26; Acts 13:2-3**

**4.** What qualities of Barnabas' character are shown here? (add to table at question 1)

Get feedback from whole group.

Assign these passages to the two groups

**Acts 13:4,5; Acts 14:1,21,22; 15:12**

**5.** What qualities do we learn about Barnabas here? (add to table)

Get feed back after a few minutes group research.

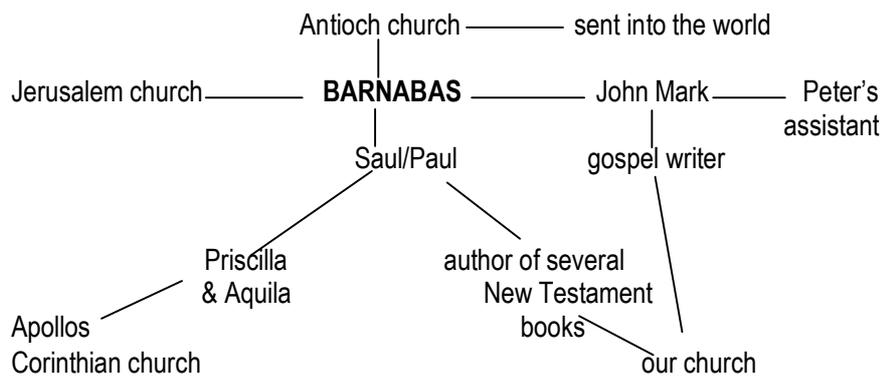
**6.** In what ways might **you** be able to team up with another believer or group of believers in order to share the message of Jesus?

*evangelistic coffee morning with special speaker / bring & share supper for neighbours with 10 minute discussion starter / invite Christian friend for lunch with a work colleague to talk about spiritual things*

**The influence of one man**

Barnabas was the oil in the mechanism that connected and influenced several leaders in the 1st century church. His availability to be used by God continues to affect us today.

This diagram shows how God uses an ordinary person, Barnabas, to influence a vast network, even our own lives, through Mark's gospel today! Priscilla & Aquila were tentmakers like Paul, who instructed Apollos in Ephesus.



**Summary**

How is Barnabas like or unlike the person we imagined in our initial discussion?

*He was ordinary, not a 'professional', not an apparent extrovert / had a concern for the lost that came from his heart - not from a zealous, dogmatic personality.*

What implication does this have for us?

*We are unique people with unique gifts, not all extroverts, but God can use each of us to reach lost people, if we are strongly connected to and supported by God's family.*

**Apply**

- Is there someone in the church I could encourage?
- In what way?
- What stops me from doing this?

- Barnabas' greatest ability was his *availability*.
- Am I available for God to use me to reach lost people? How?
  - What would strengthen my effectiveness and willingness to share my faith with others?

**Pray**

How does Barnabas challenge us?

Each pray for one of your Five in Focus names

**Before next time...**

Finish working through the Apply questions, and pray regularly for your Five in Focus.

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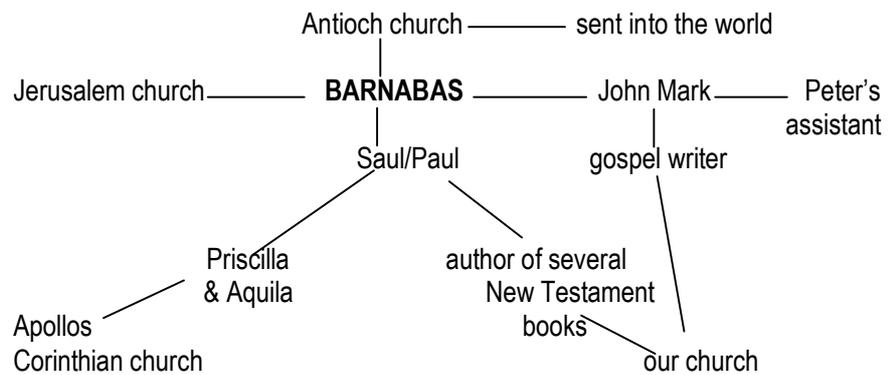
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