

“A Good Man”

Profiles of Faith #6: Barnabas
Read Acts 11:22-26, 4:36

Let's face it, most people want their life described by big impressive words. When we dream of leaving a legacy, often it looks pretty grand. One brother actually told me, "I want to leave a radical imprint on this world, and want to be remembered as a hero of the faith." This sounds really inspiring, so we strive for excellence and our ambitions are large. Secretly, we hope that one day we will be remembered for daring, bold spiritual feats. We are conditioned to think this way. The most impressive person at a conference is the guy who gave the powerful main speech that moved the audience of thousands to their feet. The most spiritual person among the brotherhood is often considered the guy who can bring the most visitors or baptize the most people. The smartest is the person who can articulate well and teach the Bible powerfully. In my opinion, our society has trained us to adore the spotlight and crave being described in powerful, exceptional terms. Quite frankly, anything less is just boring and too normal! This is important to think about, especially since Barnabas was referred to in the Bible as a "good man" (Acts 11:24). Good is none of the things I just listed – it is seen as mundane, simple, and not extraordinary.

This is too bad, for a couple of good reasons. First, the LARGE majority of people in our church will not attain these outwards levels of greatness, which can leave them feeling unappreciated, or not valuable to the grand mission of the church. This is so sad, because most Christians, although not spectacular (the way the world defines it!), have so much to offer! Second, by valuing or pursuing the wrong ideas of success or greatness, we may be thinking about this in the exact opposite way that God does! Think about that...if we think differently about God on a subject as important as value, success and legacy, we need to change our thinking quickly! The honest truth is this: Barnabas was viewed by God as a tremendous Christian, full of impact, and important enough to the early church to be included in the pages of scripture! How humbled we should feel for how worldly our hearts can become.

All Barnabas did was use all of his talents to have the biggest impact on the church that he could. He obviously had some wealth, and when the church needed more funds, he sold some property and gave the money to the apostles (Acts 4:36). Wow, I'd love to be able to do that! Many scholars believe Barnabas led the church in Antioch for a time, and the church was strong, stable and fruitful (Acts 11:25-29). How inspiring is that? He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem to report to the council the missionary work among the Gentiles and discuss some tricky issues of unity (Acts 15). That was one of the most important events in the history of the New Testament church! Barnabas traveled with Paul on the first and second journeys, and was confident enough to engage Paul in dialogue when they disagreed sharply (Acts 15:36-41). That takes a strong person. It seems that Barnabas did full time ministry, but had a full time job to support himself (1 Cor. 9:6). That is no easy feat, and takes true dedication and spiritual depth. Tertullian, the early Christian lawyer and historian, believes that Barnabas wrote the book of Hebrews! His life and impact was broad and powerful.

Here's the thing....Barnabas was sacrificial, dedicated, supportive, confident, convicted, loyal, consistent, loving, reliable, dependable, eager to serve, strong and very spiritual. If this is what God calls "good," I'll take it every time over the grandness of the big stage or the fleeting spotlight. I think our churches are FULL of good people like Barnabas!

