

## Portrait of a Disciple Maker

July 2, 2023 Jerry Tu

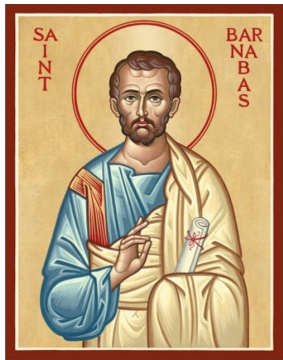
Good morning! My name is Jerry Tu, and it's an honor to share a message today on Discipleship through Relationships. It is the second of two sermons on this foundational PBCC Core Value. Last week, we heard how Jesus discipled His followers, teaching them His Way and sharing life with them. It is the desire of each of us to be disciples of Jesus, and it's also our responsibility to make disciples for Him. Those who are more mature in the faith can become mentors, to lead others to become Jesus' disciples.

In the past 30 years at this church, I've been blessed by several discipleship relationships with mentors who have pointed me to Christ, guided me into ministry, and helped me grow into leadership roles. It started when Carlin and I first joined the church, a former PBCC elder Don Gruelle welcomed us into a newly-married home fellowship group. Under the guidance of Don and his wife Helen, Carlin and I were nurtured in our new marriage, and over the next few years, they launched us into PBCC Couples Ministry. The second person who discipled me was Brian Morgan. Brian picked me out from a men's group and exclaimed, "Jerry, I have a vision for you..." Brian invited me to host Sunday services with him and mentored me into preaching opportunities. And then 21 years ago, I was invited to join the PBCC board of elders, a life-changing invitation indeed. As I served on the board for the next 20 years, John Hanneman, Bill Hyatt, Brian, and other godly men have discipled me, and I owe a great deal to these mentors.

Perhaps you also had a mentor that taught you to be a disciple of Jesus. Or you are or may consider being a mentor, investing in the life of another believer. How does one mentor and help form someone into a disciple of Jesus? What qualities are important, what steps must one take? What biblical examples can we learn from?

With these questions in mind, I invite you to journey with me as we study a character in the Bible that epitomizes the qualities of a mentor. This person discipled a great theologian of the New Testament, Apostle Paul. He then invested in John Mark,

who wrote the first gospel account of Jesus Christ. He influenced Dr. Luke who carefully compiled the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Working humbly in the background, this person deeply influenced and shaped each one of these three important Bible authors. Who was this disciple-maker?



### Barnabas, Son of Encouragement

- Man**
- Ministry**
- Mentoring**
- Missionary**
- Mistakes**

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This person was Barnabas, also known as “son of encouragement”. Today we’ll explore the portrait of this discipler and mentor. Choosing some vignettes from the Book of Acts, we’ll learn about the character of this man, his ministry in church, his mentoring of Paul and his first missionary journey, and even his mistakes. In the process, we will draw applications on how we, too, can take on the role of a disciple maker, mentoring one another, guiding each other to conform to the image of Christ.

### The Man and His Ministry

The first mention of Barnabas in the Bible occurs in chapter 4 of Acts. This chapter records the very first days of the new church in Jerusalem, after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, after Peter preached his first fiery sermon and converted 3,000 people in one day. We begin in Acts 4:34-37:

*<sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

*<sup>36</sup> Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:34-37 ESV)*

Several facts were carefully recorded about Barnabas. His name was Joseph, he was a Jew of the priestly tribe of Levi, born in the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. He was a man of some means to have owned land. And he was generous and compassionate, selling his field to help the early church in Jerusalem.

While his name was Joseph, the apostles and everyone in church called him by his nickname Barnabas, which in Aramaic means “son of consolation”. Luke helpfully translates Aramaic into Greek as “son of encouragement”. The Greek word *parakleseos*, means encouragement, exhortation, comfort, and consolation. As Shawn taught us in his sermon series on John, Jesus called the Holy Spirit “paraclete” (not parakeet), from the same root word because the Spirit encourages and guides the lives of believers. Barnabas, son of paraclete, constantly encouraged and comforted everyone around him. This was so ingrained in his nature, his character shown through his love for others, that his nickname became his name in all of Scripture.

Now let’s look at another passage which shows more of Barnabas - the man and his ministry in church. In Acts 11, we read that the Gospel had been preached to Gentiles in Antioch in Syria. The budding Gentile church was growing.

*<sup>20</sup> ... there were ... men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup> The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and **they sent Barnabas to Antioch.*** (Acts 11:20-22 ESV)

### Ministry

We learn from this passage that Barnabas was a man of wisdom, maturity, and discernment. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem trusted and respected Barnabas. So his task was to go and assess the doctrinal soundness of these new converts, to investigate the genuineness of this fledgling church.

The next two verses speak volumes about Barnabas:

<sup>23</sup> *When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,* <sup>24</sup> *for **he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.** And a great many people were added to the Lord.*

(Acts 11:23-24)

Let's first examine Barnabas' character in v. 24, then we'll look at his ministry.

Barnabas was "a good man...". The "goodness" of Barnabas refers to his winsome, wholesome character. He was a gracious, kind, tolerant, gentle man. Barnabas' "goodness" was a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit; he was full of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transforms a believer from the inside out, and the fruits become evident "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness" (Galatians 5:22). Also, Barnabas was "full of Faith" - faith in Jesus and faith in what the Holy Spirit can do in and through a believer.

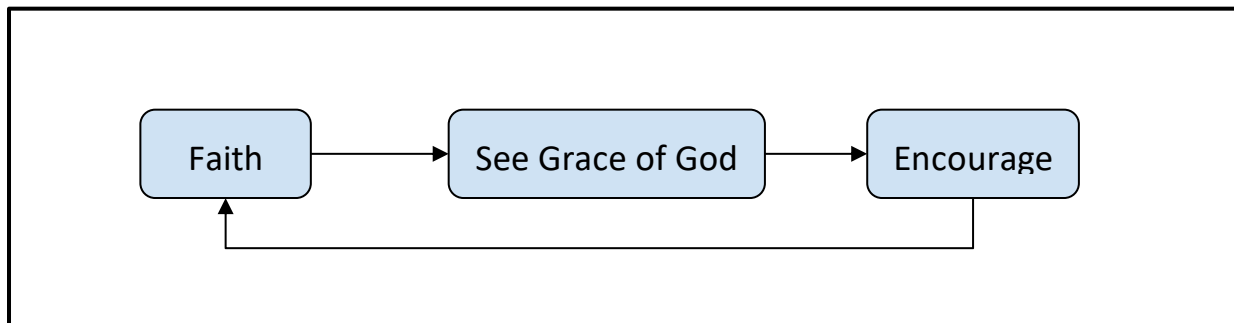
Let's continue to unpack this verse: what was Barnabas' ministry in Antioch?

<sup>23</sup> *When he came and **saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,*** <sup>24</sup> *for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. **And a great many people were added to the Lord.*** (Acts 11:23-24)

Barnabas saw the grace of God in the lives of new believers. I imagine that these new believers were probably not well taught, perhaps immature and needed spiritual nourishment. Barnabas saw the seeds sown in this group and recognized the **grace of God**. Not everyone can see the tokens of God's grace in the lives of immature or imperfect believers, but Barnabas did. He wanted to fan these embers of grace into flames of fire for God. Where others saw imperfection, Barnabas saw grace. And this grace brought Barnabas gladness and joy. That's a wonderful response!

What does Barnabas do? True to his nickname's sake, Barnabas exhorted, encouraged, and fanned the embers of grace. And the Spirit used Barnabas' encouragement to great result, as we read "a great many people were added to the

Lord". This is Barnabas' ministry:

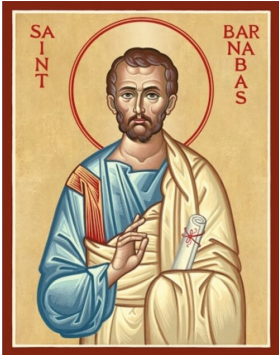


with eyes of faith, recognize the grace of God in imperfect believers, then encourage, exhort, and guide them, so that they increase in faith and love of Jesus.

This was Barnabas' ministry, and it can be ours as well. Do you see God's grace in the lives of the imperfect sinners that He has placed in your life? Will you encourage them to grow in the Lord, and fan the embers into full flames, on fire for the Lord? Imagine if all of us in this body took on that role, making disciples of Christ who are on fire for the Lord, who then make more disciples!

### Mentor

Now let's look at Barnabas' role as mentor / disciple maker.



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We turn to Acts 9, in which Luke records the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, then his rejection by the Jews in that city. Then Saul escapes and goes to Jerusalem. We pick up the narrative in Acts 9:26.

*<sup>26</sup> And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And*

*they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.<sup>27</sup> But **Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them, how on the road he (Saul) had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.** (Acts 9:26-28 ESV)*

Of course, Saul had a reputation of a zealous Pharisee who mercilessly persecuted believers all over Jerusalem. So it's natural for the disciples to be skeptical and fearful of Saul.

Who can take a risk and vouch for Saul? Who had the eyes of faith to recognize the grace of God in imperfect believers? Who can look beyond the blemishes of the past, and see the potential of the future? Of course, Barnabas can! Barnabas invested in a relationship with Saul. He became the advocate for Saul; he took him to the church leaders, gave his endorsement of this former Pharisee. He staked his own reputation on this remarkable young Saul. What discernment on Barnabas' part! What courage it took! Discernment and courage: that was Barnabas. The church leaders trusted Barnabas' wisdom and discernment and accepted Saul. Saul's ministry flourished in Jerusalem as he boldly preached the name of Jesus to all. And Barnabas took note, for this would not be the last time he supported Saul's ministry!

### **Steps of Being a Mentor**

#### **① Discern God's Grace & Invest in Relationship**

This is the first step of being a mentor: recognizing God's grace in imperfect sinners and investing in a relationship.

For the second step of mentoring, we go to Acts 11, the passage we read previously when Barnabas went to Antioch to verify the genuineness of the fledgling church. Having recognized God's grace there, Barnabas also recognized the need for help to teach the new believers. We continue in Acts 11:25.

*<sup>25</sup> So **Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,** <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, **he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people.** And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*

(Acts 11:25-26 ESV)

This is the second stage of mentorship. Having first invested in a relationship with him, Barnabas now began to train Saul in ministry. Together, they taught the new believers. Barnabas gave Saul first-hand experience teaching Gentiles and prepared him for the future ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles. This was practical training, side-by-side in daily ministry of the Gospel. What fertile ground! What an opportunity! The result of this discipleship was that many were taught, and these new disciples were called Christians, a name which was to last 2 millennia to today!

After one year of training and teaching, Barnabas took Saul back to Jerusalem on a ministry trip to deliver a gift of famine relief to the believers in Judea (Acts 11:29-30). Upon completing this ministry task, they returned to Antioch, bringing with them a new disciple John Mark (Acts 12:25). Going on a ministry trip is an effective way to train someone to grow.

This is then the second step of being a Mentor:

### **Steps of Being a Mentor**

① Invest in Relationship → ② Train & set the stage to exercise spiritual gifts

Train in side-by-side ministry and set the stage for the other person to exercise spiritual gifts.

We've seen this process played out in PBCC. John Hanneman used to take the 20-somethings to Yucatan; Brian took his discipleship group to Romania, and Shawn took his group to Liberia. In each instance, the mentors trained disciples, brought them to a stage where they can use their gifts, then returned home, giving glory to God.

Missionary Journey

The third stage of Discipleship for Barnabas and Saul occurred in their missionary trip that started in 46 AD from Antioch (Acts 13):

*<sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**”<sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

Acts 13:2-3 ESV

The Holy Spirit set aside Barnabas and Saul for a missionary trip to the unreached people of Cyprus, Pamphilia, Galatia. Note here the order of names is Barnabas first, then Saul second, exactly as it was carefully recorded by Luke also in Acts 11:30 & 12:25. This indicates Barnabas as the mentor had the role as the leader at the start of the missionary trip.

On the island of Cyprus, their roles begin to change. Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark proclaimed the word of God powerfully in Jewish synagogues throughout the island. Then they encountered a Jewish magician named Elymas who opposed them publicly. And Saul exploded with the Holy Spirit, saying, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy ... ” (Acts 13:10). Wow, this was certainly not the style of Barnabas, the gentle son of encouragement and consolation! This was Saul, on fire with the Holy Spirit. It was a turning point for the apostle. This was the first time Saul was called Paul, and from this point on Luke called him Paul.

It was also a turning point for Barnabas. From now on, it's Paul who delivered the sermons, performed signs, and converted Gentiles. For the remainder of this missionary trip, Barnabas fades into the background. Starting from this incident, when both are mentioned by Luke, it's “Paul and Barnabas”, not “Barnabas and Saul”.

Having invested in Paul in a relationship, training him, and supported him as Paul blossoms into apostleship, Barnabas willingly retreats into Paul's shadow.



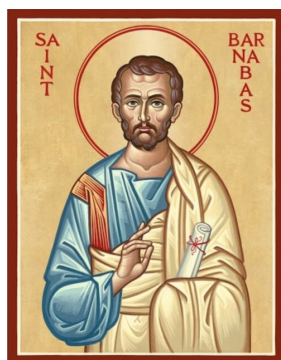
## Steps of Being a Mentor

① Invest in Relationship → ② Train & set the stage → ③ Step back & support

By strategically investing in Paul's life and career then stepping back, Barnabas secured forever his secondary status in church history, and I love him for this! This is the mark of a humble, grace-filled biblical mentor!

These, then, are the three stages of biblical mentorship as exemplified by Barnabas. First invest in the relationship, then train this person and set the stage for spiritual gifts to be exercised, then when the time is right, step back and watch the disciple grow and thrive. This is the biblical model of Discipleship through Relationships.

Having explored Barnabas: the man, ministry, mentorship, and missionary journey, you may be thinking, "Gee, what a perfect godly person Barnabas was!"



### Barnabas, Son of Encouragement

Man  
Ministry  
Mentoring  
Missionary  
**Mistakes**

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But Barnabas was a human being like you and me, with his own flaws and mistakes just like we have. Lest we idolize Barnabas, I want to complete his portrait with two incidents of mis-steps and mistakes.

### Mis-Steps

After that missionary trip, there was an incident which Luke does not mention in Acts, but we read about in Paul's letter to the Galatians. A serious disagreement

occurred in Antioch, when Peter came from Jerusalem to visit the new church. We read Paul's description in Galatians 2:

*<sup>11</sup> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that **even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*** (Gal 2:11-13 ESV)

Peter and Barnabas were fellowshiping with the Gentiles, but due to pressure from the circumcision party from Jerusalem, they refused table fellowship with Gentile believers. They were hypocritical, out of step with the Truth of the Gospel. Salvation does not come from being kosher or keeping laws of cleanliness or circumcision. These Jewish identity markers only enslave a person to bondage of Law.

Peter and Barnabas knew that. They preached this message every day! So why did they succumb to expectations of circumcision rather than stand up for the Gospel of Truth? Because they were fallible, with faults, weakness, and sin. Real life has a tendency to expose weaknesses, even in a godly man like Barnabas. The bubble of ideal Christian life is burst by the needle of reality. Believers are still sinners and may go astray. The honesty of the Bible is truly amazing, because it accurately portrays that even the best of them - like Barnabas - make mistakes, mis-steps, and failure.

In much of our Christian life and ministry, we face incidents of both faith and mis-steps. So how shall we deal with the reality of life? Let us not become arrogant nor complacent in our walk. Let us pray as Jesus taught, that we may not fall into temptation. Let us take up the whole armor of God, of truth, righteousness, and faith so that we may be able to stand firm. (Eph 6:10-18)

Another incident occurred after this. Paul wanted to go on a second missionary journey to strengthen the churches that they planted during their first trip (Act 15):

*<sup>37</sup> Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. <sup>38</sup> But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not*

*gone with them to the work.* (Acts 15:37-38 ESV)

During the middle of the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13), John Mark departed from Paul and Barnabas, choosing to return to Jerusalem rather than continuing on to Galatia.

In Paul's mind, Mark deserted them unfaithfully and was therefore unworthy for further ministry on the missions field. Barnabas, on the other hand, chose to look beyond mistakes of the past, recognize the ember of God's grace in Mark, and wanted to invest in this disciple by giving him another chance. This was in keeping with Barnabas' character and gifting.

<sup>39</sup> ***And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.*** *Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,* <sup>40</sup> *but Paul chose Silas and departed...* (Acts 15:39-40 ESV)

The disagreement was so sharp that it tore apart this decades-long friendship. This mentor and disciple, the co-worker and colleague, two godly followers of Christ that owed each other so much. They split.

Who was right, who was wrong? Luke remained objective and took no sides. And we cannot say for sure who was to blame, if anyone. What we do see is that two godly believers disagreed, a rupture of their partnership occurred, and they went their separate ways. Barnabas was never mentioned again in Acts.

Disagreements can and do occur among godly believers. This happens even today, even in this church. Disagreements are not bad in and of themselves. What ***could be*** bad is the potential rancor, bitterness, and resentment that poisons relationships. As Eugene pointed out last month, we are a church of great diversity, and the gift of diversity brings different opinions. So how can we overcome disagreements? By our pursuit of Christ, we must love each other as family. As God loved us, so we must love one another. We are people who don't belong together, learning to belong together, because we love as a family and are centered on Christ. By this shall all people know that we are His disciples, for we have love for one another.

What happened with Barnabas and Paul and Mark?

### Epilogue

The epilogue to the two mis-steps is reconciliation and renewed ministries.

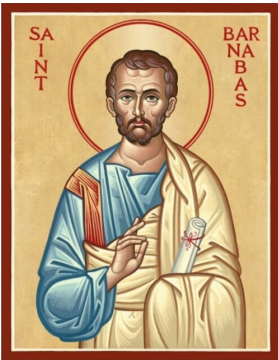
There is evidence that Paul and Barnabas reconciled. In 1 Cor 9:6, written after their split, Paul referred to Barnabas as a co-worker who shared life and labor side-by-side. We see that the breach has been repaired, their relationship has been healed.

Furthermore, Mark was restored to Paul as well as we learned from Eugene's last sermon in Colossians. And also in 2 Tim 4:11, Paul refers to Mark lovingly, *"Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry."* Mark has been reconciled with Paul, who now considered him valuable and useful in ministry of the Gospel. In fact Mark became the first gospel writer, penning the Gospel of Mark, the first written account of Jesus our Lord, influencing Matthew and Luke in their subsequent Gospels.

Renewed ministries: we know that Paul & Barnabas continued to minister and each took on new disciples: Barnabas mentored John Mark, Paul disciplined Timothy and Titus and maybe more.

Out of mistakes and mis-steps, God's grace brought about reconciliation. Out of one faltering missionary journey, there emerged two. And out of one mentoring relationship, there came two, or even three or many more. God has done it! To God be the glory!

### Summary

	<b>Portrait of Barnabas</b>		
<b><u>Man</u> <u>Ministry</u></b>	<b><u>Mentoring /</u> <u>Missionary</u></b>	<b><u>Mistakes</u> <u>Mis-steps</u></b>	
Faith → Grace → Encourage	Relationship → Train → Step Back	Reconcile → Restore → Relationship	

In this message we covered a lot of ground, looking at the portrait of a Mentor through the life of Barnabas. We examined the man, his ministry, mentorship, missionary trip, and mistakes. Each facet of Barnabas' life yielded lessons for us.

While not many of us may presume to be discipling the next apostle or mentor a "gospel writer", **it *is* our calling to be as much of a disciple maker as we can. All of us have the opportunity to influence and shape others to conform to the image of Christ. We all can - and should - use our spiritual gifts, exhort others to do so, to help each other grow in our Spiritual walk, to deepen our love for Jesus.** To the degree we can do this, to the degree that we influence others to walk with Christ, we are making disciples of Jesus and mentoring them. We all have that capability and calling.

In closing, I offer the following exhortations. I encourage you to:

- Look for God's grace exhibited in the imperfect brother and sister around us.
- Fan to flame these embers of Grace by encouraging and guiding.
- Invest in the relationship
- Train each other in side-by-side ministry.
- Set the stage for others to exercise their spiritual gifts.
- When they are ready for their leadership role, step aside humbly and let them thrive.
- Continue to disciple in the background with accountability, help, and prayer.

These are the applications I hope you can take home with you. (If you're interested in participating in a mentorship relationship, please contact Eugene or Shawn).

I hope that this portrait inspires and encourages us to be Barnabas in this church. Let us all strive to point each other to Christ, and shape each other to become Jesus' disciples.

### Benediction

I close with an exhortation modeled after 2 Tim 2:2: "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful disciples, who will be able to disciple others also."

So go, encourage each other, and make disciples of all nations and the Lord will be with you always, to the very end of the age.