

Series: *Serving in the Shadows* # 1
Being a Barnabas
Acts 11: 19-26

Our text today speaks of a man, who although not obscure in the Scriptures, is often found serving in the shadows. He is first introduced among the early believers in Jerusalem. [Acts 4:36 – And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, \(which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,\) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.](#) The next mention we find of Barnabas, he is associated with Paul, following his conversion. [Acts 9:27 – But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.](#) The Scriptures provide enough detail to discern that Barnabas was a faithful servant of the Lord, used in mighty ways, but his work and ministry is often overshadowed by the man he served alongside, the apostle Paul.

Our churches are filled with those who quietly go about their work, faithfully serving the Lord, making significant contributions, and yet their service goes largely unnoticed. I have been involved with the church long enough, and have enough experience in the diverse aspects of ministry to know that it takes many people working together for a congregation to be successful in ministry. While many positions may go unnoticed, they are not unappreciated, and are certainly not unnecessary. I can assure you that while others may not notice or appreciate your contributions, the Lord sees and knows. He will reward your faithfulness and bless your efforts.

Over the next few weeks I want to look into the lives of individuals who faithfully served the Lord in the shadows of others, but made a tremendous difference in ministry. I would like to encourage you to faithfully serve where the Lord has placed you, knowing you are important to the Lord and the work of the church. Let's examine the [characteristics](#) of this faithful servant as we consider: [Being a Barnabas](#).

I. The Calling of Barnabas (19-23) – Here we get a glimpse of the great move of God that was sweeping that portion of the world. The Spirit had filled believers at Pentecost, the Gospel was being preached, and thousands were coming to faith in Christ. That is the setting in which Barnabas was called into ministry. Notice:

A. The Anticipation in His Calling (21-22a) – [And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.](#) ^[22] [Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem.](#) Following the persecution that led to the stoning of Stephen, the church was scattered and the Gospel was taken to distant areas. Believers made their way to Antioch, an area 300 miles north of Jerusalem and a great number of people were saved. Such a

move of God garnered the attention of the leadership in Jerusalem. In fact, I am convinced they anticipated an even larger harvest of souls in response to the Gospel. This is the setting in which Barnabas was commissioned for service.

- As we serve the Lord, in our respective positions, we too should anticipate a great harvest regarding the Gospel. We ought to make every preparation possible to ensure the message is shared and people are presented with the truth of the Gospel. Such anticipation will affect our attitude and efforts within the various ministries of the church.

B. The Approval in His Calling (22b) – [and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.](#) Here we find the biblical basis for the modern missions model. Missionaries are called of the Lord, commissioned of the church, and sent out to serve the Lord. Their work and ministry is embraced and supported by the local church.

- Looking at this in a general sense regarding service to the Lord, as the church realizes needs within its ministry and the community, she approves, encourages, and equips her members for service. Just as Jerusalem sensed a need and embraced Barnabas for the task, we need to sense the needs of our day and embrace those who are willing to be used of the Lord.

C. The Affirmation in His Calling (23) – [Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.](#) When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he rejoiced at what the Lord had done and sought to encourage the new believers in their faith. As of yet, he had not made an individual contribution to the work there, but he rejoiced in the fruit of those who had. He sensed God was at work and he wanted to be involved with the Lord in His work.

- We must develop an attitude of affirmation as well. Barnabas wasn't concerned about who had done what or who would receive the credit; he was genuinely happy that God was working. We must be willing to rejoice in the success of others and determine to support and encourage every member for the wellbeing of the entire body.

II. The Character of Barnabas (24) – [For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.](#) Here we are given details regarding the character of Barnabas. Consider:

A. His Identification (24) – Barnabas was described as a [good man](#), one who was known and respected by his peers. His life had been examined by those who knew him and he was identified as one who sought to help others, living a good life among men.

- Physical abilities can be learned, but genuine character comes from within. There is more to a man than his abilities. In fact, I had rather have those of character than those of talent, if I had to choose one or the other. Churches and ministries need those of moral character.

B. His Invigoration (24) – Barnabas was also known to be full of the Holy Ghost and faith. His life was not lived in an effort to promote himself or please the flesh. He walked closely with the Lord and enjoyed fullness of the Spirit. His life and ministry were motivated by faith. He was not a man who sought fame or prestige. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit instead of pride and arrogance. His life was known and recognized by those who knew him.

- Again, much emphasis has been placed on particular abilities, and often the most important character traits are overlooked or not sought. God is able to equip us for the area of service He chooses to place us in. We need to emphasize and encourage closeness with the Lord and fullness of the Spirit. Those whose lives are in tune with the Lord will always make an impact on others. Our power and influence needs to come from above, not from our own abilities. The Lord uses those who are submitted to His will for their lives.

C. His Inspiration (24b) – [and much people was added unto the Lord](#). While he walked with the Lord, in close communion with Him, Barnabas impacted the lives of many people. His influence inspired others to seek the Lord and submit to Him in salvation. Luke doesn't mention Barnabas being a great speaker, and effective administrator, or even a great teacher. He only mentions his fullness of the Spirit and faith. These traits impacted others for Christ!

- Our availability and willingness to be used of the Lord will exceed any abilities we have. Granted, God does equip us to serve, and He uses our abilities for His glory, but He is seeking those who will simply surrender their lives to Him. Those who have impacted my life the most spiritually have been much like Barnabas. They didn't have an out-front position, but their quiet commitment challenged me to serve the Lord faithfully. Through their example, I realized our relationship with the Lord takes priority over positions within the body. If we will be faithful to the work God has given us, we will make a difference in the lives of others and be of benefit to the body of Christ!

III. The Cooperation of Barnabas (25-26) – Barnabas knew the work was too great to accomplish alone, so he sought help to ensure continued growth. Notice:

A. His Wisdom (25-26a) – Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: ^[26a] And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. Barnabas knew he needed help in the work at Antioch. There was much to do and he wasn't able to meet the great needs himself. Following the wisdom of the Lord, he immediately sought help in this great endeavor. He wasn't concerned about receiving the credit alone for what was happening at Antioch; he was concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of the believers and sought Paul to help him in this work.

- We too need to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and seek help when needed. There is no place for lone rangers in ministry. There is a great work to do and we cannot possibly accomplish it alone. Wise servants will seek out those who are able to aid in ministry, placing the wellbeing of the congregation above personal desires or egos.

B. His Work (26b) – And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. Barnabas remained faithful to the church in Antioch. He diligently labored alongside Paul, meeting regularly with the congregation and teaching the people. He was committed to the work the Lord had given him. He wasn't seeking a larger or more influential role; he was content to serve where the Lord had placed him.

- The modern church needs those with the commitment and attitude of Barnabas. We need those who will humbly follow the leadership of the Lord, serving faithfully where He leads, and remaining in their position as long as the Lord desires!

C. His Witness (26c) – And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. Although this was an identification viewed negatively by society at that time, it bears record of the influence Barnabas had on those whom he encountered. Along with Paul, their teaching and encouragement led society to identify the church in Antioch with Christ. His witness and influence made an impact that would remain long after the Lord moved him to another area of service. Barnabas helped establish and growing and vibrant body of believers in Antioch.

- Church that is what it is all about anyway. It isn't about who is doing what or who is getting the most recognition. It is about sharing the Gospel and seeing lives transformed for Christ. It is about investing in the lives of others to promote their growth in the Lord, so they too can reach others and disciple them. Even if you are called to serve in the shadows, serve the Lord with gladness. Seek to grow in your faith and share your blessings and wisdom with others. I am not

interested in being remembered for my ability to preach, but I am interested in making a lasting difference in the lives of those I meet. Each of us has the potential to do that!

Conclusion: Although Barnabas served in the shadow of a giant of the faith, God used him in mighty ways as well. He is not as well-known as Paul, but he served faithfully in the role God called him to serve. He was content to serve wherever the Lord led and in whatever capacity the Lord chose. We need more with the attitude and commitment of Barnabas.

If you are struggling to find your place, seek the Lord for guidance and wisdom. If you are part of the body of Christ, He has a work for you to do. If you have yet to respond to the call of salvation, the Lord stands waiting for you to heed the call. Come to Him today and find whatever you need. He is the solution for your problems!