



Barnabas

“Loyal Followers”

“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.”

Acts 9:27

Many of us would like a friend like Barnabas. He was kind; a man of his word; and he dared to stand up for someone when others didn't want to get involved. He traveled with Paul as an apostle. He was not one of the original disciples. His belief was strong and he helped to convert many people to Jesus. Paul and Barnabas, apostles or messengers, were designated according to God's purpose at a given time. Barnabas was known as “son of encouragement.”

We know a lot about him from just one incident. When Saul, later to become Paul, was blinded on the road to Damascus, it was Barnabas that took this man who had hurt so many people and took care of him because he believed that he had been converted. Saul was not well liked; the disciples knew well that he had been involved in the stoning of Stephen. Barnabas had faith, stood up to the crowd, and told them that Paul was a new person who could be trusted. He saw a new man; and told the disciples he believed Paul's conversion and trusted him to be a leader.

Barnabas realized the disciples needed some financial support for their ministry. He sold some of his property and gave the money to the disciples. He was a man who practiced what he preached.

As the apostles traveled to different areas to preach, Barnabas was also involved. He sometimes went with Paul. Sometimes he would take another one of the younger men with him. Paul and Barnabas faced many difficult times, but never lost their focus on spreading the word of God. Barnabas was the one that thought they should give Mark a second chance when Paul was upset with Mark's youthful presence on a former trip.

We can look to Barnabas as an example of a good Christian life. People of his day admired him for his work. Unlike many of the original disciples, he never experienced violence or stoning while ministering to others.

When we moved to the area where we now live, the church had a woman who helped in the infant nursery named Mary Lou. After approximately 50 years in the position, she retired. During that entire time, she helped with children, their children, and eventually their grandchildren. She was amazing; everyone loved her – regardless of age. She was always sincerely pleasant and thoughtful. I think Barnabas was this kind of person. If he saw someone who needed help, he helped. These people are hard to find. They are a real jewel to count among our friends. Yes, sometimes people take advantage of them, but I feel sure that Barnabas and Mary Lou never held a grudge, but always prayed to help in any way they could.

Several hymns come to mind when I think of our friend, Christ. There is no better friend. One of our choir members, who has now passed on to his eternal reward, and whose name was Andy used to often sing “Andy walks with Me, Andy talks with Me, and he tells Me I am his own.” We all knew the song he was paraphrasing, but we also knew that Andy had a very close friendship with his Lord. To this day and forever, I will think of Andy when I hear that song.

Another well-known song about our friendship with Christ was written in the 1800's. The first verse says “I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend! He loved me ere I knew Him, He drew me with the cords of love, And thus He bound me to Him; And round my heart still closely twine Those ties which nought can sever, For I am His, and He is mine, Forever and forever.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, we thank you for the many gifts which we never take time to list. Among those, we count your love and friendship as a given. Help us to be compassionate to people in their grief and tell them about your love. Help us to live our lives so that others will know we are their friend and we will be faithful to you. Amen.

1. Are we able to be a friend to someone like Barnabas?
2. How can we know when we have a real friend?
3. What sometimes stands in our way of being a true friend to others?
4. There is an old song that says “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief's to bear” Do you know that friend? How can we become a friend to others?

