SEA CHANGE CHURCH

THE CURRENT

The Church Has Left the Building · S1E3

Barnabas

A 7-Day Study

"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 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, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 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 11:19–26 ESV

Pastor Adam Stadtmiller · August 9, 2026

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

"For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith."

Acts 11:24

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, The Current walks through a piece of Sunday's passage: a short verse study, encouragement, journal questions, and a daily prayer.

Take one day at a time — there's no need to rush.

DAY 1

Ordinary People, Uncharted Ground

> **ACTS 11:19-21 ESV**
>
> *"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord."*

VERSE STUDY

Persecution scattered believers out of Jerusalem, and most of them played it safe, preaching only to fellow Jews. But a few men from Cyprus and Cyrene did something riskier: they spoke to the Hellenists too — Greek-speaking Gentiles — at a moment when it wasn't yet settled among believers that the gospel was meant to go that far.

These weren't apostles making a strategic decision at headquarters. They were unnamed, ordinary refugees, scattered by tragedy, who simply kept preaching wherever they landed — and took a risk their own Jewish Christian community wasn't sure was even allowed.

The result wasn't small: 'the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.' God didn't wait for a committee's permission. He moved through the risk ordinary, unnamed people were willing to take.

This is the same big idea running through this whole series: the mission of Jesus was never meant to depend on a handful of extraordinary leaders. It depends on people willing to go first into places no one's gone yet, even without a title or a plan.

TAKE HEART

You don't need permission from a stage or a platform to take the next faithful risk God is putting in front of you. Some of the most significant expansion in church history started with people whose names we don't even know.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Where is God inviting you to go somewhere or say something that feels riskier than what's comfortable or familiar?
2. Who is a 'Hellenist' in your life right now — someone outside your usual circle who needs to hear about Jesus from you specifically?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, give me the courage of these unnamed believers who preached wherever they landed, even when it was risky. I don't want to wait for permission or certainty before I take the next step You're putting in front of me. Show me who is outside my usual circle, someone I might be tempted to overlook. Let Your hand be with me the way it was with them, not because of my confidence, but because of Your faithfulness. Make me willing to go first, even without a plan. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Have one conversation about Jesus this week with someone outside your usual circle.

NOTES

DAY 2

Encouragement That Rejoices in Someone Else's Growth

> **ACTS 11:22-23 ESV**
> *"The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 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."*

VERSE STUDY

When Jerusalem hears what's happening in Antioch, they send Barnabas — not to investigate or contain it, but because they trusted his character to respond well to something new, fast-growing, and unfamiliar.

Notice his first reaction: he sees the grace of God among people who don't look like his home church, and 'he was glad.' Not cautious, not territorial, not worried about doctrine drifting off course — glad. He rejoiced in what God was doing even though it wasn't happening through him or in his hometown.

Then he does what encouragers do: he doesn't just observe, he exhorts them 'to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose' — not drifting purpose. He gives language and direction to momentum that was already real, helping it last.

It's worth asking a hard question here: when you see God moving in a place, a ministry, or a person that isn't 'yours,' is your first instinct gladness, or something closer to suspicion or comparison?

TAKE HEART

Being glad about someone else's growth, even when you had nothing to do with it, is one of the clearest marks of a heart shaped like Barnabas's.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time you were genuinely glad to see God's grace at work in a place or person you had no part in?
2. Who could use your steadfast encouragement right now to keep going with 'steadfast purpose' instead of drifting?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, give me a heart that rejoices freely when I see You at work in places that have nothing to do with me. Remove any comparison or suspicion that creeps in when I see someone else growing. Help me be someone who gives language and direction to what You're already doing in others,

instead of just watching from the sidelines. Show me who needs my steadfast encouragement today to stay the course. Let my first instinct always be gladness. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Find someone whose spiritual growth you've noticed lately, and tell them specifically what you see God doing in them.

NOTES

DAY 3

The Name That Became His Character

> **ACTS 11:24 ESV**
> *"For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."*

VERSE STUDY

His birth name was Joseph. But by the time we meet him in Acts, everyone just calls him Barnabas — 'son of encouragement' — a nickname given to him by the apostles themselves because his character had become that defining. He didn't choose it. It was simply who he had become.

Scripture sums up his qualification for this entire moment in one line: 'he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.' Not the most gifted, not the most visible, not the most credentialed — just a genuinely good man, filled with the Spirit. Character came first; everything else followed from it.

The Greek word behind 'encouragement,' paraklesis, and its verb form, parakaleo, mean to come alongside, to urge onward, to strengthen, to comfort — the same root used for the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. Barnabas's whole life was shaped around that one posture toward people.

It's worth sitting with the question honestly: if the people who know you best — not just your closest friends, but a wide group who've watched how you actually live — had to rename you after your most defining trait, what would they call you?

TAKE HEART

You don't need a title to be defined by your character. Barnabas never held apostolic office; his reputation was built entirely on who he consistently was toward other people.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. If people who know you renamed you after your greatest characteristic, what do you think they'd call you — and is that the name you want?
2. What's one specific way you could grow more 'full of the Holy Spirit and of faith' this week, regardless of what gifts or platform you have?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, shape my character before You shape my gifting. I want to be known for something true about who I am, not just something impressive I can do. Search me and show me what my consistent, everyday posture toward people actually communicates about You. Fill me with Your Spirit and with faith, the same simple qualification that defined Barnabas. Let my name, however people know me, become synonymous with encouragement. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Ask one honest friend or family member this week what they think your defining character trait is — and just listen.

NOTES

DAY 4

Generosity as a Form of Encouragement

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

VERSE STUDY

Before Barnabas ever exhorted a crowd in Antioch, he did something quieter: he sold property he owned and gave the proceeds to the church, no strings attached, no conditions on how it would be used. He simply laid it at the apostles' feet and trusted their leadership.

This is easy to skip past, but it's the first concrete thing we learn about him. His encouragement wasn't only verbal. Sometimes the most encouraging thing a person can do isn't a speech or a compliment — it's a sacrificial, practical yes that says, 'I believe in what's happening here enough to give something real.'

Barnabas had something to lose and something real to give — land, security, options — and he gave it away for the sake of a community he believed in. That kind of generosity is its own language of encouragement, one that doesn't require any words at all.

It's worth asking what you actually have to give, beyond kind words: time, money, a skill, a resource, a connection. Encouragement that costs you something tends to land differently than encouragement that costs you nothing.

TAKE HEART

Your encouragement doesn't have to be eloquent to matter. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can say is nothing at all — just a sacrificial yes.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What is something you actually have — money, time, a resource, a skill — that could become a tangible act of encouragement for someone or something you believe in?
2. Is there a place you've been withholding generosity out of caution that God might be inviting you to release?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, give me a generous heart, one that's willing to give something real, not just say something kind. Show me where I've been holding back out of caution instead of trust. Help me see my resources — time, money, skill, connections — as things You've given me to lay at Your feet for

others. Let my generosity speak encouragement even when I don't say a word. Free me from the fear of loss that keeps me from giving sacrificially. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Give something specific and tangible this week — time, money, or a resource — as an act of wordless encouragement.

NOTES

DAY 5

Believing in Someone Before the Results Show

> **ACTS 9:26-28 ESV**
> *"And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him... But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus."*

VERSE STUDY

Before Saul was Paul, before he wrote half the New Testament, he was a man the entire Jerusalem church was terrified of — the one who had approved of Stephen's murder and hunted Christians. When he showed up claiming to be a believer, no one trusted it. No one, except Barnabas.

Barnabas didn't have proof that Saul had changed — no track record, no finished ministry, no visible fruit yet. He had a conversation, a conviction, and a willingness to be wrong in public if he was mistaken. He took the risk of vouching for someone before there was any evidence to back it up.

That's the specific gift on display here: encouragers see potential before everyone else sees results. They're often the first ones willing to say, 'I believe this person is who they say they're becoming,' long before it's safe or obvious to say so.

Think about what was actually being risked. If Barnabas was wrong, his own credibility and safety were on the line. He vouched for Saul anyway, because he trusted what he'd seen in him more than what everyone else assumed about him.

TAKE HEART

Somebody, at some point, took a risk believing in you before you had anything to show for it. You get to be that person for someone else now.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Who took a risk believing in you before you had results to prove it was worth it?
2. Is there someone right now that everyone else has written off, who you sense God asking you to believe in anyway?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, give me the discernment and courage Barnabas had to believe in someone before the proof is in. Show me who You've already been at work in, even if all I can see is their past. Protect me

from the safety of only trusting people once they've already succeeded. Let me risk my own credibility, if that's what it takes, to vouch for someone You're calling forward. Thank You for the people who once believed in me before I had results to show. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Identify one person others have written off, and take a specific step to believe in them this week — a conversation, an introduction, a vote of confidence.

NOTES

DAY 6

Walking Beside, Not Just Ahead

> ACTS 11:25-26 ESV
>
> *"So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 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."*

VERSE STUDY

Barnabas didn't just vouch for Saul once and move on. He went looking for him — traveled to Tarsus specifically to find him — and brought him into the work at Antioch. Later, when the church commissioned a missionary journey, Barnabas didn't send Paul out alone. He went with him.

That's a specific kind of encouragement, distinct from cheering someone on from a distance: encouragers don't just walk ahead of people, pointing the way — they walk beside them, in the actual work, for the actual mileage.

The result of that year of partnership was something neither man would have produced alone: 'they met with the church and taught a great many people,' and it's in Antioch, under this partnership, that believers were first called Christians at all. A shared, sustained ministry produced something that became a permanent part of the church's identity.

It's worth noticing what Barnabas didn't get: top billing. History remembers Paul's name far more than his. But the partnership itself — the willingness to walk beside rather than just launch someone and step back — is what made the whole thing possible.

TAKE HEART

Some of the most significant kingdom impact you'll ever have won't have your name on it. That's not a loss — it's exactly the shape Barnabas's life took.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Who is someone you've cheered on from a distance that God might be asking you to actually walk beside, in the real work, not just from the sidelines?
2. Are you more comfortable encouraging people from a distance, or being present in the actual mileage with them? What would it look like to grow in the harder one?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, teach me to walk beside people, not just ahead of them or apart from them. I don't need my name attached to what You're doing through my encouragement of someone else. Give me the patience for sustained, shared partnership, not just a one-time word of support. Show me who

You're asking me to actually go find, the way Barnabas went to find Saul. Let something lasting be built through faithful, unglamorous presence. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Commit to one specific, ongoing way you'll walk beside someone this month — not just a one-time encouragement, but sustained presence.

NOTES

DAY 7

Encouragers See Redemption Where Others See Failure

> **ACTS 15:36-39 ESV**
>
> *"Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 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. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other."*

VERSE STUDY

John Mark had quit partway through an earlier missionary journey — left the mission, went home, for reasons Scripture doesn't fully explain. When it came time to go again, Paul refused to bring him. Barnabas insisted on giving him another chance. The disagreement was sharp enough that these two lifelong partners actually split up over it.

This is worth sitting with honestly: encouragers aren't naive about failure. Barnabas isn't pretending John Mark didn't quit. He's making a different bet — that failure isn't necessarily the end of someone's story, and that a second chance, offered by someone willing to walk beside them again, might be exactly what turns a quitter into someone dependable.

History suggests Barnabas was right to bet on him: this same John Mark is widely believed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark. The man Paul wrote off became one of the most consequential writers in church history, in part because someone refused to let his one failure be his final word.

This is the last thing we see of Barnabas in Scripture, and it fits everything that came before: sold his property for others, believed in Saul before there was proof, walked beside him for a year of ministry, and now stands up for someone everyone else had given up on. It's not a coincidence that it's in Antioch, through this pattern of ordinary encouragement, that believers were first called Christians at all.

TAKE HEART

Whatever failure you're carrying, or whatever failure you've watched in someone else, redemption is still available. Encouragers are the ones who keep believing that when everyone else has moved on.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Is there someone whose one failure you've written off as their whole story? What would it look like to offer them a second chance this week?
2. Looking back across this whole week, who is God calling you to be a Barnabas to — specifically, starting now?

DAILY PRAYER

Before you pray, spend a few quiet minutes with today's verse — read it slowly once more, or simply sit in silence and let it settle. Then, when you're ready, pray this over your day:

Lord, give me eyes that see redemption instead of only failure, in others and in myself. Where I've written someone off after one mistake, soften my heart toward the possibility that You're not finished with their story. Give me the courage to stand up for someone even when it costs me a relationship or my own credibility. Thank You for never treating my failures as my final word. Make me a Barnabas to someone specific, starting today. Amen.

ACTION CHALLENGE

Reach out to someone you've written off after a failure, and take one concrete step toward extending them a second chance.

NOTES

MEMORY VERSE

“For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”

Acts 11:24

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