

Barnabas 2026

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, May 3, 2026

OFFERING

KEY – I want to call forth the ushers to collect the morning offering. Those who give online are yet able to do so, and the offering boxes will remain in place should you find you are not ready to participate in this collection, yet let us take time to honor God with our tithes and offerings (which sustain His work locally and in the earth).

RETREAT

FYI – A team of women are away this weekend for the Haven of Hope Women’s Retreat. May they be blessed!

C.E.

KEY – It is now time to dismiss our Nursery (0–6), Children’s Church (ages 6–12) and the corresponding workers.

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INTRODUCTION

KEY – Thank you for joining us! Whether you are here in person or via the livestream you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – This morning I want to offer as standalone sermon on a character we have not noted for many years.

NOTE 2 – The pages of Scripture are filled with timeless and timely figures who have captivated the hearts of believers for millennia. If I were to ask you to list significant and/or memorable characters who appear in the biblical narrative you might posit Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, David, Solomon, Elijah and Elisha, Joseph and Mary, Peter, James, John, Paul and young Timothy.

NOTE 3 – Yet the Bible is also full of notable secondary and tertiary characters who, in their own way(s), can be just as impacting to the diligent student of the Word—characters that even the most faithful of churchgoers may know precious little about unless they spend time in Scripture (i.e., personally and regularly). This morning it is my desire to once again talk about one of my favorite figures in Scripture: Barnabas (cf. Acts).

Q. What do we know of this man?

Acts 11:24a (NIV) (Emphasis Mine)

24 He [Barnabas] was a **good** man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith . . .

NOTE 4 – There is much that this passage begins to reveal about Barnabas. Firstly, he was clearly a deeply spiritual man who was reliant upon the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (24b). Secondly, he was clearly a man of deep faith—faith which had been cultivated by both the passage of time and hardship (24c). However, I want to hone in on one aspect of his life noted by Luke (author of Acts) (24a): “He was a good man.”

DELVING IN

NOTE 1 – Now upon first consideration this might sound contradictory when compared to other selections from the New Testament. After all, had not Jesus Christ Himself declared (Mark 10:18 cf. Luke 18:19): “No one is good—except God alone.” Thus, how do we reconcile Acts 11 with passages like those we just noted?

NOTE 2 – Quite simply, Acts 11:24a is not claiming that Barnabas’s personal goodness was sufficient to save. Rather, as one who was saved by the grace of God, the Lord had cultivated goodness within the man. After all, is not goodness one aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit? What did the apostle Paul proclaim to the Galatians?

Galatians 5:22b–23a (Emphasis Mine)

22 . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

DELVING DEEPER

Q. What does it mean, therefore, to be good?

NOTE 1 – This is where we begin to run into a bit of a problem, as we use the word to convey many things. In fact, the term “good”—much like “love”—is used so often to communicate disparate elements, it is nigh a non-word (i.e., a word that possesses little to no clear meaning). For instance, consider the following:

Q1. How was the movie? GOOD (passable or acceptable way to kill time).

Q2. How was the movie? GOOD (life-changing and transformative cinema).

Q1. How was school today? GOOD (boring but I managed to “survive” the day).

Q2. How was school today? GOOD (I aced big text that I have been studying for).

Q1. How was church today? GOOD (pastor didn’t preach heresy and I stayed awake).

Q2. How was church today? GOOD (the Lord spoke to me and utterly changed my life).

NOTE 2 – The meaning of the word “good” is gen. unclear apart from both tone and context (i.e., non-word). This is true, also, in how we use the word in relation to people: **a)** Tim is a good guy; **b)** Bubba is a good man; or **c)** Patty is a good woman. You can see how the meaning of the term is entirely up for personal interpretation.

Q. How can we begin to discern what Scripture means by the inspired claim that Barnabas was a “good” man?

DELVING DEEPLY

NOTE 1 – To begin, we might consider the meaning of the underlying term in the original language (Greek). Delving in, the Greek term is “agathos”—meaning “virtuous and beneficial.” It, thusly, speaks to one who is: **a)** excellent or distinguished re. their constitution and nature (upright/honorable); and **b)** helpful or charitable.

NOTE 2 – Moreover, we might consider the tenor of the life of the man. When we review the appearance(s) of Barnabas in the Book of Acts, do we see such traits? Do we see virtue? Do we see uprightness and honor? Do we see someone “useful” in the hands of God (charitable)? Yes! Let us consider together what made Barnabas a “good” man in Christ, and what we should aspire to be like as those similarly called to follow Jesus.

ACTS 4

Q. How does Acts characterize the Apostolic Church?

A. Well, we can begin by considering Acts 2:42–47. Note:

Acts 2:42–47 [Post-Pentecost]

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Q. Yet was this a one-off or isolated activity? In no way!

Acts 4:32–37 (Emphasis Mine)

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called **Barnabas** (which means “son of encouragement”), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

Q. What can we glean concerning Barnabas herein? How is his *godness* in Christ evidenced by the selection?

A1. Consider that he is introduced as a source of great encouragement within the Early Church (v. 36). Barnabas was one who ongoingly worked to hearten, cheer, uplift, inspire, motivate, strengthen and enrich those in his sphere. Are you and I not similarly called to function as sources of encouragement in His kingdom?

1 Thessalonians 5:11a

11 . . . encourage one another and build one another up . . .

QUOTE – “Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you.” –William Arthur Ward

A2. He was also a man of sacrificial generosity (vv. 32, 34–37). That is, Barnabas, like many of his peers, was moved by compassion to go above and beyond in meeting the needs of others. He was remarkably kind. To what degree are our lives marked by sacrificial generosity? Is such not what our Lord demonstrated herein?

ILL – The story is told that one day a beggar by the roadside asked for alms from Alexander the Great as he passed by. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins. A courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented, "Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?" Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving."

Hebrews 13:16b

16 . . . do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

QUOTE – “You make a living by what you get—You may a life by what you give” –Unknown

ACTS 9

Acts 9:26–28 [Post-Saul’s Conversion: Initial Days as a Believer] (Emphasis Mine)

26 When he [Paul] came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27 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. 28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Q. What can we glean concerning Barnabas herein? How is his goodness in Christ evidenced by the selection?

A. We can see that the man had a heart for the outcast, the outsider and the shunned (vv. 27–28). Note that Barnabas worked diligently, putting his own reputation on the line, to bring Saul of Tarsus into the fold. Can you imagine what might have happened if Barnabas failed to build such bridges? What might have happened to the spiritual health and/or ministry of Paul if Barnabas was not present in such a crucial moment?

Q. Should not our faith be evidenced by our concern for the outcast, the outsider and the shunned? Consider:

James 1:27

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Q. What did Christ Jesus Himself teach on such a topic (i.e., beyond his clear willingness to show such care)?

Matthew 25:31–46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 40 The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ 44 They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ 46 Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

ACTS 11

Acts 11:19–30

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. 27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Q. What can we glean concerning Barnabas herein? How is his *goodness* in Christ evidenced by the selection?

A1. He was a man charged w/ oversight (i.e., a reputable leader):

Acts 11:22 (Emphasis Mine)

22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and **they sent Barnabas** to Antioch.

A2. We—again—see Barnabas working as a source of encouragement:

Acts 11:23 (Emphasis Mine)

23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and **encouraged them all** to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

A3. We—again—see Barnabas working to open doors for the prov. outcast:

Acts 11:25–26 (Emphasis Mine)

25 Then Barnabas **went to Tarsus to look for Saul**, 26 and when he found him, **he brought him to Antioch**. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

KEY – We saw Barnabas help Saul find his way into the fold (bridge-builder). Now to deeper ministry (mentor)!

A4. He could be trusted with the finances (good steward of his money and others):

Acts 11:30 (Emphasis Mine)

30 This they did, **sending their gift** to the elders **by Barnabas** and Saul.

Q1. Do you want to be “good” before God? Encourage others (already noted beforehand)

Q2. Do you want to be “good” before God? Provide mentorship and open doors of ministry

Q3. Do you want to be “good” before God? Be a person of “reputation and trustworthiness”

ACTS 13

Acts 13:1–5

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 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.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

Q. What can we glean concerning Barnabas herein? How is his *goodness* in Christ evidenced by the selection?

A1. We See Barnabas was Responsive to the Call of God (MACRO Level)

Matthew 28:18–20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

A2. We See Barnabas was Responsive to the Call of God (MICRO Level)

KEY – Barnabas was willing to allow the Lord to use Him and lead as the Lord saw fit. Consider the degree of intimacy, trust, humility and obedience this would necessitate (i.e., to simply launch out into the ancient Greco-Roman world with nothing but the gospel and the call of God). To what degree can we emulate!

ACTS 15

Acts 15:36–41 [Second Missionary Journey]

36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work (Acts 13:13). 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Q. What can we glean concerning Barnabas herein? How is his *goodness* in Christ evidenced by the selection?

A. It wasn't in his nature to quickly quit on a person. Rather, it was his nature to invest and ongoingly cultivate.

Q. Do you want to know something?

NOTE 1 – This is a case where both parties were correct. The assessment of Paul re: John Mark was correct, as John Mark was not ready or prepared for such ministry at this point. Paul required deeper maturity of his companions in mission. Yet Barnabas was correct too. John Mark had potential, and that potential would never be realized apart from time, mentorship, investment and prayer. He was weak but could become strong.

NOTE 2 – Paul went his way with Silas, and praise God he did (fruitful ministry). Barnabas took John Mark under his wing, and PRAISE God that he did. This young man would go on to author the Gospel of Mark. What would be lost in our faith w. out such a contribution! Moreover, Paul would come to recognize his merit:

2 Timothy 4:9–11 (Emphasis Mine)

9 Do your best to come to me quickly [Timothy], 10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is **helpful to me** in my ministry.

NOTE 3 – Oh that we would have more men and women like Barnabas! People who do not quickly quit on men, women and children, but who are willing to put the hard work in. Ministry is messy and requires a great deal of time and investment. Embrace the pain! Because of Barnabas, both Paul and Mark were cultivated to reach their potential in Christ. You may not have heard much re. Barnabas, but I know heaven knows him well!

Q. Who might you reach? Who might you impact?

SUMMATIONS

Q. What was good about Barnabas?

A. He was: **a)** an encourager; **b)** a sacrificial giver; **c)** had a heart for the outcast, the outsider and the shunned; **d)** was a mentor who opened doors for greater ministry; **e)** he was a man of good report and trustworthy; **f)** he was missional and responsive to the call of God; and **g)** he did not quit on people but cultivated the weak. He was “good” because he was virtuous and beneficial (useful) in the hands of God. What shall be said of you?

QUOTE – “There are certain fine things that you and I can never possess. We know that. Genius or greatness—they are high and forbidding mountain peaks. Their sides are rugged and precipitous. They have pulled iron hoods of snow and ice upon their brows. But goodness—that is a peak that may be scaled by the tender feet of little children and by the tottering feet of old age. It may be scaled by the reluctant feet of those in life’s prosaic middle passage. Let us address ourselves then to this high task. Let us matriculate this morning in God’s school for this degree, the degree of ‘goodness.’ And one day it may be written of us as it was written of Barnabas, ‘He was a good man.’”

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – I would call you to worship the Lord through financial giving. Please feel free to give online or in person.

NOTE 2 – Check out our church website for upcoming events and beyond (www.NewLifeBarre.org). Join in too.

NOTE 3 – Men's Ministry this Saturday from 9–10am. Spring Clean-Up to follow the event starting at 10:15am!

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.