

GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 3 WEEK OF MAY 12



GROWTH GROUP SPRING 2019

FOCUSED: EXPERIENCING & EXPRESSING THE TRANSFORMING LOVE OF CHRIST WEEK 3 – MAY 12, 2019 - ACTS 4:32-37 AND 11:22-26

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) Share about a time when you felt like “the church”, or your “small group,” or some form of “Christian community” was really there for you.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Our Scripture lessons this week features the story of Barnabas and his connection to the church in Antioch. We are introduced to him in Acts 4:32-37. We read that all the believers in Jerusalem were of one heart and mind and that no one in that faith community had any needs. Pretty amazing!

This early community of believers had a radical understanding of their possessions. They seemed to have lived as though whatever they had or owned was available for people in need. People were willing to sacrifice for the sake of others and people received help as they had need.

Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement, was a part of this community. He had come from Cyprus originally and we discover that his actions match his name and it is perhaps this act of selling the field and bringing the money to the apostle’s feet that earned him this nickname of Barnabas.

In Acts 11 Barnabas is dispatched to the community of faith in Antioch. The church in Jerusalem had done this before. We read about them sending Peter and John to Samaria in Acts 8:14. Perhaps, they were checking up on the young church, or perhaps they hoped Barnabas would ensure that the proper theological perspective was being taught. No one is sure exactly why Barnabas was sent. One thing is clear is that when he arrived he found a church that was alive. God’s grace was changing lives and this new international community was adding new followers of Jesus on a regular basis.

After being there for a while Barnabas went to Tarsus to find his friend Saul. After Saul’s life was threatened in Acts 9:28-30 he had fled Jerusalem and made his way to Tarsus. Seven to eight years later Barnabas came looking for him. We are not sure exactly what Paul did during those years, but his letter to the Galatians alludes to him spending some of that time preaching in Syria and Cilicia.



Barnabas obviously knew about Saul's calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles (9:15, 27), and it may well have been the Gentile conversions in Antioch which made him think of Saul. It was also in Antioch that believers were first called Christians. The people of Antioch labeled the believers "followers of Christ" or Christians.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Acts 4:32-37 and 11:22-26

4:32 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.

11:22 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.

- 2) After reading the passage from Acts 4:32-35, what are your thoughts on how the early Christians lived. What seems realistic and what seems a little unrealistic?
- 3) We read in Acts 4:36 that Joseph from Cyprus sold a field and brought the money and gave it to the disciples. It seems as though he was given the nickname of Barnabas which literally means "son of encouragement." Share about someone in your life who has been an encourager to you. How has that impacted your life?
- 4) How did the church in Jerusalem respond when they heard about the number of people who were becoming believers in Antioch? Compare this with Acts 8:14 when they sent Peter and John to see what was happening in Samaria. Why did the Jerusalem church do this? Why did they send Barnabas, and not one of the apostles?
- 5) After Barnabas had been there for a while, he journeyed to Tarsus, which was about 75 miles northeast, to find Saul. Why do you think he did this? See also Acts 9:27-28. Why didn't Barnabas just keep teaching the people at Antioch?
- 6) We are told that believers were first called Christians in Antioch. How would you define the word Christian? What does it mean to be a Christian?
- 7) As you think about your own definition of Christian, how do you think people who are not followers of Jesus would define Christian. Is there a difference between what you would say and what people of the world might say?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Share with one another about a way that people in your growth group could help encourage you.