

How You Are Called to Be Like Barnabas

People often say that Acts 11:25 is one verse that changed all of history:

“So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26a, ESV).

Barnabas goes and searches for this young man and finds him living back home in Tarsus. Paul was resigning from his calling because of hope deferred, disappointment and wounds from leaders.

Imagine the conversation.

After he returns from Tarsus with Paul, the passage says they spent a whole year teaching a great many people (Acts 11:26). Barnabas returns to Antioch as an apostolic leader to care for this young revival community and nurture it into maturity while mentoring Paul in Antioch. The community starts to reflect this DNA: radical generosity and love for people under the leadership of Barnabas. Two verses later, an offering is being taken up to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. This was no small love gift. Everyone in the church of Antioch pitched in. In fact it says that everyone according to their ability, or NASB says it this way: “And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution” (Acts 11:29a).

Sound familiar? Love for people and radical generosity with joy!

A year or two later, Barnabas and his young companion, Paul, will be launched out of Antioch as the first apostolic missions team. The result will be revival communities all across Asia minor. They will emerge as arguably the most

important catalytic leadership team in the rapid expansion of the church in the first century.

All because he sold a field.

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:7-9, ESV).

You may be asking, “Well, what does that have to do with me?” Let me tell you.

You are reaping what you sowed five to 10 years ago. What you do today is setting the stage for what you will walk in five and 10 years from now. If you live above the “poverty line” in America, you are in the top 2% of the wealthiest people in the world. If you live on or above the median income level in the United States, you are in the top 1%. You may have more in common with the rich young ruler than you think. You may be in more danger of following the road of Ananias and Sapphira than you realize.

David Platt said, “We have grown up in a dangerous redefinition of Christianity. One that takes the Jesus of the Bible and twists Him into a version of Jesus we are more comfortable with. A nice, middle-class, American Jesus. A Jesus who doesn’t mind materialism and who would never call us to give away everything we have. A Jesus who would not expect us to forsake our closest relationships so that He receives all of our affection. A Jesus who is fine with nominal devotion (as long as we are being responsible and treating people OK). A Jesus who wants us to be balanced, who wants us to avoid dangerous extremes, and who, for that matter wants us to avoid danger all together. He does not infringe on our comforts, but wants us to have bigger, better and more as we

live out our Christian spin on the American dream. If that's the Jesus we worship, we might be in danger of not worshipping the Jesus of the Bible but of ourselves."

Christ is fighting for our greatness! Not only in this age but in the age to come. He is gently but firmly leading us away from that which will kill us. He is calling us out of the fortified cities of our wealth and ways of life so we can be useful to Him in the kingdom.

Apostolic centers are always deeply marked by the lives of fathers and mothers like Barnabas who long ago "sold their field" to be a part of what God was doing on the earth. They have been radically transformed by grace. They have seen Jesus as supremely worthy, and they have responded with all their hearts. I believe that they are beginning to be gathered to the Antioch Sending Centers for such a time as this. These companies of people will be comprised of those that God has gathered, marked with love, grace and joy, and they will become the safe place for a new generation of leaders and laborers to be formed and fashioned without the fear of over-correction, manipulation or punishment. Their history in God, lives of faith and obedience over the last decades are giving permission for another generation to go hard after God no matter what the cost.

If Jesus is calling you to follow Him, don't be like the rich young ruler. If you are experiencing the blessing of God on your labor and abundance in your resources, don't be like Ananias.

Be like Barnabas.

This is an excerpt from Antioch Series: When Worship, Prayer and Missions Collide. Read the whole blog series at .

Listen to the full episode titled, "The Prototype for Prayer and Missions: Looking at Antioch Part 1" on the Charisma Podcast Network here. {eoa}

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