

CHARACTERISTICS OF A JOY SPREADER

(HOW TO BE A BARNABAS AND REPRODUCE YOURSELF)
Acts 11:19-26



Barnabas Is Our Example

- ◆ Of Faith (In Saul)
- ◆ Of Giving (To the Needy)
- ◆ Of Forgiveness (To John Mark)

*“Saul was rejected by the disciples, **but Barnabas took him to the apostles.**”*
(Acts 9:26, 27)

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“CHARACTERISTICS OF A JOY SPREADER”

Text: Acts 11:19-26

Subject: How to be a Joy Spreader in the local Church

Introduction

Fact: It's no secret that great doctrines are a powerful means of shaping lives.

Fact: It's also no secret that, even more powerful is a great doctrine lived out by a real person.

(In Fact)

- God intends that examples in Scripture make His truth more powerful in our lives.
- God intends that their lives give us inspiration and guidance in practical living.
- God intends for memory to be a great means of grace.

Case in point – Barnabas!

- In our text, the persecution of Stephen has just taken place.
- The disciples have been scattered all over the Mediterranean coastlands.
- Some scattered 400 miles north to Antioch and preached to the Gentiles there.
- Many people believed (v. 21) and the news reached the church back in Jerusalem
- The church back in Jerusalem then sends Barnabas to help the Gentile believers in Antioch.
- This is where v. 22 picks up the ministry of Barnabas who speaks to us all!

#1. Joy Spreaders Root for the Underdog

(Instead of exploiting them)

“When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They thought he was only pretending to be a believer.” (v. 26)

“Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus. Barnabas also told them what the Lord had said to Saul and how he boldly preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus.” (v. 27)

Question: What was Paul up against?

Answers: He was rejected by the church and fled to Jerusalem!

(Notice v. 26)

“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples...but they didn't believe that he was a disciple.”

- The word “**assayed**” (EPEIRAZEN) means “to try repeatedly”.

In Other Words

- Paul's past life was haunting him.
- The believers would not accept him.
- They were suspicious of his testimony.
- Paul was thought to be an imposter.
- Yet Paul did his best to become a part of the fellowship.

Question: What did Barnabas do?

Answer: He stuck his neck out and took a chance for the sake of the Kingdom (when the Jews were plotting to kill Paul because they considered him as a traitor to their religion and nation.)

In Plain Vanilla

- When the Jews were convincing the civil authorities and the governor of Damascus that Paul was a threat to the peace of the city...
- ...Barnabas **became Paul's advocate** until the church accepted him (resulting in a flourishing ministry in Jerusalem).

#2. Joy Spreaders Obey the Holy Spirit

(Instead of resist Him).

"When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch." (v. 22) "When he arrived." (v. 23)

Question: What's the discovery here?

Answer: That Barnabas yielded to the call of God through the local church!

In Other Words

- There was a need to establish the new converts in Antioch.
- The church saw in Barnabas the necessary gifts to meet that need.
- The church sent Barnabas, he went and that was that.

(It happens Again in Acts 13)

"One day while the men were praying, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (v.2)

"Sent out by the Holy Spirit, Saul and Barnabas went down to the seaport of Seleucia."(v.4)

Question: What's the discovery here?

Answer: That Barnabas possessed two extraordinary character traits:

1. He was totally yielded to the Holy Spirit (and go wherever God directed).
2. He was also totally submitted to delegated authority and takes his cue from leadership in the local church.

Fact: Joy spreaders live with joy to the degree that they follow the leading of the Lord.

Fact: Joy spreaders are teachable and accountable to those God places over them.

Fact: Joy spreaders are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Fact: Joy spreaders know this one absolute certainty:

- Our progress in God will go no further than our **obedience** takes us!

#3. Joy Spreaders Leaders Celebrate Potential

(Instead of criticizing weaknesses)

"When Barnabas arrived in Antioch and saw the grace of God at work he was glad."
(11:23)

Question: What did Barnabas see in the new church that had just been planted?

Answer: He saw beyond the imperfections and....

- ...rejoiced in the tokens of God's grace in the saints.
- ...rejoiced in the potential among brand new converts.
- ...rejoiced in the work that God was doing in his midst.

In Other Words

- Barnabas possessed a good attitude because he focused more on the potential (than the problems) in Antioch.
- Barnabas saw embers of grace to fan into flame, while others saw only the ashes of imperfection.
- Barnabas rejoiced in the good that God was doing, instead of pick and criticize the weaknesses around him.
- Barnabas "Thanked God" for His amazing grace at work in the local church.

Fact: Joy spreaders always look for the good in other people!

Fact: Joy spreaders know that encouragement is oxygen to the soul!

#4. Joy Spreaders are Givers

(Instead of hoarders)

"Barnabas sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles for those in need." (Acts 4:37)

"The believers in Antioch sent relief to the saints in Judea...entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem." (Acts 11:29, 30)

Question: What does God say about Barnabas?

Answer: That Barnabas lived free from **materialism**!

1. He was chosen to be trusted with the collection for the saints in Judea.
2. He was willing to sell his own land for the cause of the gospel.

In Plain Vanilla

- Joy spreaders are #1 **Trustworthy**, and #2 Extremely Generous!

In Other Words

- Barnabas trusted God to take care of his future.
- Barnabas lived free from the love of money.
- Barnabas had his security in the Lord.
- Barnabas saw himself as a steward (not an owner) of his possessions.

#5. Joy Spreaders Deflect Praise

(Instead of desire praise)

"Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to find Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch." (11:25, 26)

Question: Why did Barnabas go to Tarsus to bring Paul back to Antioch?

Answer: Because Barnabas was a self-effacing leader who was secure, kingdom minded and free from self-promotion!

Just grasp this picture here:

- Barnabas' ministry in Antioch had been so successful that new converts were everywhere.
- Barnabas could have been carnal and established himself as the prominent preacher in this part of Syria.
- Barnabas (instead of maneuvering for his own exaltation) leaves town to look for an associate.

Question: What does he do?

Answer: He chooses an associate who is a dynamic leader with a teaching gift that he does not have. Wow!!!

In Other Words.

- Barnabas is willing to **fade** into the background while pushing another into prominence.
- Barnabas shrinks back from the **primary role** for the good of the people.
- Barnabas slides into Paul's **shadow** like an aircraft mechanic fades into the shadow of the soaring pilot.

Almost immediately Luke says:

“Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos.” (13:13)

Fact: Barnabas is not even mentioned!

Fact: Paul (not Barnabas) delivers the sermon in Antioch of Pisidia.

Fact: From now on it's “**Paul** and Barnabas” not “Barnabas and Paul”.
(13:43, 46, 50; 15.2, 22, 35)

True Joy Spreading Is...

- Delighting in the growth, gifts and **successes** of those around us.
- Empowering and **releasing other** people to advance God's kingdom.
- Dying to all **envy** and **jealousy** that strangles the work of God in the local church.

#6. Joy Spreaders are Good **Forgivers**

(Instead of score keepers)

“Now Paul and those with him left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark deserted them and returned to Jerusalem.” (Acts 13:13)

Fact: John Mark backed out from the dangerous and hard trip up the rocky mountain pass to Antioch of Pisidia.

Fact: John Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas in the mission to the Gentiles.

Question: How did Barnabas process the failure of John Mark?

“Paul said to Barnabas, ‘let's return to each city and see how the new believers are getting along’.” (15:36)

“Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark, but Paul disagreed strongly since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia.” (37, 38)

“Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark and Paul chose Silas.” (v. 39, 40)

In Other Words

- Paul believed that a deserter was a **poor example** for young churches that needed to be strengthened.
- Barnabas believed that a deserter should have a **second chance** to redeem himself in ministry.

Question: Who was right?

Answer: All evidence points to the fact that Paul evidently misjudged:

- Mark did redeem himself and is later seen serving with both Paul and Peter (Col. 4:10, II Tim. 4:11. Phile. 24. I Pt. 5:13)
- In fact, Paul pleads for Timothy to bring John Mark to him in II Tim. 4:11: **“Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me.”**

In Other Words

- Paul didn’t trust John Mark beforehand, but he surely forgave him and carried no offence after they separated.
- Paul also carried no offence towards Barnabas, evidenced by his acknowledgment of Barnabas’ great ministry in writing to the Corinthians (I Cor. 9:6)

#7. Joy Spreaders are **Gracious**

(Instead of contentious when they do not get their own way)

Question: Is conflict a sign that something is wrong?

Answer: No, 1,000 times NO!

It’s just a revelation...

- That people who love Jesus equally will have **different opinions, different views, different sentiments** and **different apprehensions!** (and that’s ok)

“We shall never be all of one mind till we come to Heaven where light and love are perfect.” (Matthew Henry)

- Paul focuses on the larger cause **of the mission.**
- Barnabas focuses more on the **need and potential of John Mark.**

In Other Words

- Disagreement is not bad, it’s OK and can be healthy
- What’s bad is when bitterness and resentment pollute and contaminate our spirit.

The key is not disagreement!

- But to disagree in a way that **preserves relationships** and **doesn’t burn bridges!**

JOY SPREADERS UNDERSTAND FULLY THAT...

- A bad attitude makes a person a prisoner of their own experience!
- No provocation ever justifies an unchristian response!
- Unforgiveness is the poison we drink while we wait for the other person to die!
- Unforgiveness is the umbilical cord that keeps you tied to the past. When you forgive, you cut that cord and can live free from the control of what someone else has done to you.
- When you don't forgive someone, they own you!
- To the degree we have not forgiven, everyone who has ever hurt us still hurts us every day.
- If you are suffering from a bad man's injustice, forgive him lest there be two bad men and if you're in pursuit of vengeance be sure to dig two graves!
- Resentment is allowing someone you despise to live rent free in the house of your mind!
- Blessed are the boiler-makers for they shall always be in hot water!
- Our offences will either be our tombstone or our stepping stone; it all depends on our choice!
- I must be bold enough to be obedient yet humble enough to be corrected!
- An enemy in the heart is worse than 10,000 in the field!
- The only part of me that can be offended is that part which has not died!

And never forget this:

When you go through a tough time, be sure to pray this prayer: "Lord, callous my knees and not my heart."