
Overview

Biblical Passage	Acts 4:32-36, 11:19-24, 15:36-41
Supporting Passages	Deut. 15:4-11; Acts 2:44-47, 4:23-31, 8:1
Memory Verse	Hebrews 3:13
Biblical Truth	Barnabas constantly uplifted and supported those around him as he lived his life on mission for God.
Context	<p>The call to be on mission does not discard the giftedness of individuals. God has made us unique, and He uses us in distinctive ways as He equips us for His purposes. In this last lesson of Living Loud, we see that Barnabas had a particular role to play. He was not cut out of the same mold as Paul. His was a supporting role as an encourager, and although there is not quite as much to read about him as Paul, it doesn't mean that his role was not just as important and useful to God. We can see through all of these lessons that God gifted and used His servants uniquely to accomplish His mission.</p>
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore: Students will understand the value of support and encouragement as demonstrated by Barnabas throughout the book of Acts.• Transform: Students will begin to value just how important it is for them to encourage and support each other in the midst of a world that can often be hostile.
Prayer Suggestions	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pray that your students will know and understand the empowering capacity of encouragement in the lives of others.• Pray that your students will have people within their lives who will powerfully encourage and support them.• Pray that your students will make it a habit to encourage and support those around them who are carrying out their call in following Christ.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

Luke wrote the book of Acts to record the events and persons surrounding the birth of the Church and its spread and development. Luke's first volume was his Gospel, which focused on the life of Christ. The book of Acts was a natural continuation of the expanding impact and influence of Christ through his followers during that time.

Early on in its existence, the Church, made up of a group of Jewish believers, faced persecution. It came as no surprise that those who had persecuted and brought about the death of Christ would turn their focus to His followers. The traditional Jewish leaders saw the early believers as no less of a threat than they had viewed Jesus Himself.

The more the Jewish leaders attempted to suppress the message of the believers, the more the message went out. The increasing level of altercations eventually led to the stoning death of Stephen. His death became the catalyst for a blazing wave of persecution that engulfed the young Church. Such persecution forced the believers to flee from Jerusalem. As they **Scattered** to other areas, the believers continued to be true to their life's driving purpose—letting others know the Good News of Christ.

Importance

This passage teaches the Essential Truth that **The Church is God's Plan**. The plan and purpose of God has always been about the redemption of humanity, bringing His creation back into a relationship with Himself, and ultimately bringing glory to Himself. As part of God's plan, He chose to use people—the very ones who had turned their backs on Him but who had since been redeemed, transformed, sanctified, and equipped with His message to reach the nations.

Barnabas, acting in a significant role within the early Church in Jerusalem, became instrumental in carrying the message of the gospel to other places and encouraging its spread even as the Church underwent extreme persecution. God used His people as His vessels to carry His message under adverse circumstances. He continues to do this even today.

This passage also teaches the Essential Truth that **People are God's Treasure**.

Interpretation

Acts 4:32 Luke emphasized the state of the community of the early Church, as he did in Acts 2:44–47. The believers had developed a true community, in which they experienced complete unity, being one in heart and mind. The sharing of material possessions as needs arose was simply a natural extension of their unity and shared common life. They practiced placing the needs of others before their own.

Acts 4:33 The believers in Jerusalem had been facing persecution from the Jewish leaders. In Acts 4:23–31 Luke recorded the response of the believers to Peter and John’s account of their confrontation with the chief priests and elders. Instead of praying for a change in their situation, the believers prayed for boldness to speak in the situation and to be the instruments through which God would perform signs and wonders. The results of that prayer are seen in Luke’s testimony that the apostles continued to **testify** with great power to the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 4:34–35 The shared common-life practice of the believers in the early Jerusalem church was a fulfillment of what God had always intended for His people. In Deuteronomy 15:4–11, God told the Israelites who were preparing to enter the Promised Land how He expected them to live and respond to each other. This early Church was the living reality of that instruction. There was no forced system of communal goods. The believers simply lived with open hands and gave of what they had to fill needs as they arose.

Acts 4:36–37 Barnabas, who became a larger player later in the book of Acts, was introduced in these verses by Luke. He was born on the island of Cyprus but certainly had ties with Jerusalem. He was first introduced to the Church while in Jerusalem and played a significant part there. Like the apostle Peter, whose actual name is Simon, Barnabas became the nickname for the man previously known as Joseph. Although there is dispute by scholars over the translation of the name Barnabas, Luke designated it as meaning “Son of Encouragement”. This adequately described the character of Barnabas.

Acts 11:19 According to Acts 8:1, the martyrdom of Stephen precipitated a great persecution against the Church. Luke recorded that everyone except the apostles fanned out to other areas away from Jerusalem. These believers scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. They continued to boldly proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, but only to the Jews.

Acts 11:20–21 The men from Cyprus and Cyrene were **Hellenists** who reached out to **Gentiles**. This was a true breakthrough in the early Church, although it was not such a large leap for the men from Cyprus and Cyrene. As Hellenists, they had already assimilated much of the Greek/Roman culture. It would have been far easier for them to find ways to communicate the Good News of Jesus to a Gentile mindset than to a Jewish one. These men saw a great number of Gentiles become believers because God’s hand was on them.

Acts 11:22 The apostles, who were still centralized in Jerusalem, continued to keep a watchful eye on the young, growing Church. Barnabas had become a trusted figure whose judgment was seen as solid and whose capacity to evaluate was keen. With his background as a Cypriot, he was also an ideal candidate for the role.

Acts 11:23 Barnabas didn’t look to see what laws or traditions were being followed or broken. He looked to see where God’s hand was in the situation. Once he perceived God at work among the Gentiles of **Antioch**, he responded with encouragement, which was so very much a part of his character. He didn’t encourage them to embrace a set pattern of rituals or traditions but rather to continue being true to God with a total commitment.

Acts 11:24 Barnabas’ character impacted those around him in a powerful manner. Due to his encouraging and empowering of those who were preaching the Good News as well as his own Spirit-led and faith-driven life, many came to faith in Christ.

Acts 15:36 Barnabas had become an advocate for the acceptance of **Paul** within the Christian community while

Paul was still viewed as a suspect character by many. By embracing Paul, he served as a catalyst for the launch of Paul's ministry. Together, Paul and Barnabas had been sent out by the church in Antioch to proclaim the Good News in the outer reaches of the Roman Empire.

Acts 15:37-38 In their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas included John **Mark**, who was a cousin of Barnabas. True to Barnabas' character, he was willing to give John Mark another chance after John Mark had abandoned them in Pamphylia. Barnabas wanted to encourage John Mark's growth in ministry.

Acts 15:39-41 Barnabas had proven himself to be a risk-taker when he originally championed Paul. He appeared to have the same dogged determination in his advocacy for John Mark. The disagreement that arose between Paul and Barnabas resulted in two missionary teams sent by the church at Antioch. Barnabas and John Mark set sail for Barnabas' homeland. Perhaps Barnabas selected Cyprus as a location because he felt more comfortable there and would be better able to mentor John Mark in that setting.

Implications

For God to use the early Church for His own purposes, He needed a Church that was unified, placing the needs of others before its own. The church in Jerusalem knew the value of such living even though its members may not have known just exactly what God was about to do. How does your church live with a unified sense of purpose in order for the gospel message to go out and in order for God to be glorified?

Unity is a big catchword for students and most youth ministries. Youth value a unified group even though they may not know exactly how God wants to use their sense of unity. How can you promote a sense of encouragement among your youth so that they become encouragers, become unified, and begin to realize God's plans and purposes?

Teaching Plan

Connect Activity

Review Questions: Philip: Anytime, Anywhere

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the “Review Questions” activity sheet. Print one copy for your own use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide context for today’s lesson.

Drama: Support Groups

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will watch a drama about two girls who receive support from their respective guys.

(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the drama script. Prior to the session, enlist four students to enact the drama. Give copies of the script to cast members ahead of time so that they will be ready to perform it.

Prompt students to perform the drama. Afterward, ask: **So, what do you do to be “uplifting?”** Then say: **Sometimes it can be easy, and sometimes it can be burdensome. Barnabas was a real natural at being a support and encourager to people who needed it. We’ll look at his life today and compare our lives to his as encouragers.**

Media Option: Be a Barnabas

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

Students will watch a video about the value of imitating much of the life of Barnabas.

(3-5 minutes, Reverb Media Pass required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb Media Pass or the Reverb DVD, preview and arrange to show the “Be a Barnabas” video. (If your church has not purchased the Reverb Media Pass, you can purchase this single video through the “Media” tab.)

Play the video for your students. When the video is over, ask: **Who can guess who we will be studying today? If you said Barnabas, you are correct. Who has any idea what this video was demonstrating? (Answer: all the people Barnabas’ life impacted) What was the challenge of this**

video? (*to be a Barnabas*) Explain that this week's lesson will drive home this challenge by helping students understand just how important Barnabas' ministry of encouragement was.

Explore Activity

Master Teacher Key Study: Barnabas: Supporting as We Go

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Acts 4:32-36, 11:19-24, and 15:36-41 to understand the difference that Barnabas' encouragement made in the mission of the early Church.

(10-15 minutes, easy set-up)

Download the Master Teacher Key Study. Print one copy for your own use. Also download the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Print a copy for each learner. Also provide pens.

Learning Goal: Students will understand the value of support and encouragement as demonstrated by Barnabas throughout the book of Acts.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Acts 4:32-36, 11:19-24, and 15:36-41.

Transform Activity

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the qualities of Barnabas that they value in their friends.

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Learning Goal: Students will begin to value just how important it is for them to encourage and support each other in the midst of a world that can often be hostile.

Lead a discussion about encouragement by asking the following questions.

- **What are the qualities in Barnabas that you value in your friends?**
- **Why might your friends value these qualities in you?**
- **When you find that you're just stuck in discouragement, what sort of encouragement does it take to move you forward—sympathy? empathy? objectivity?**
- **How does the encouragement that you receive from friends or family move you to**

encourage others?

- **How would it be possible to get by without encouragers in this world?**

Creative Prayer

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will pray for God's help in being an encourager to others.

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Using half sheets of blank poster, write a characteristic of an encourager on each one, such as listener, compassionate, blessing, helper, uplifting, loving, giving, persevering, praying.

Learning Goal: Students will begin to value just how important it is for them to encourage and support each other in the midst of a world that can often be hostile.

Ask students to stand in a circle so that they can see each other. Tell them to place their hands behind their backs. Walk around the circle and place one of the signs into the hands of several individual students, instructing all of them to keep the signs behind their backs until they are called on to reveal them. After the signs have been distributed, stand in the circle with the students and lead them to show their signs one at a time. As each one reveals the word on his or her sign, call on students to say aloud, "God help me to become (a) ____" and fill in the blank with the new word. Afterward, ask students to bow their heads and personally thank God for the encouragers whom He has placed in their lives.

Reverb Student Book Option: Your Influence

(10 minutes, Reverb student book required)

If your church has purchased the Reverb student book, preview the activity on page 271. If possible, provide a copy of the book to reference as you mention the activity to students.

Learning Goal: Students will begin to value just how important it is for them to encourage and support each other in the midst of a world that can often be hostile.

As students work through pages 270-275 in the *Reverb* student book this week, challenge them to take about 10-15 minutes and read through the "Your Influence" activity on page 271. Ask: **Have you considered how much influence you carry based on your relationship with Jesus Christ?** Encourage students to look at the previous page and take in the overall influence (that we know of) of Barnabas. Note that he probably wasn't a loud person, but he lived his life loudly through his ministry of encouragement and influenced hundreds of thousands of people—and he continues to do so to this day.

Living Loud 6: "Barnabas: Supporting as We Go"
Review Questions

1. Philip was told by God to _____.
 - a. go to Jerusalem and check on the disciples
 - b. walk the road between Jerusalem and Gaza
 - c. go to Gaza and check the temperature in the desert
 - d. go to Bethlehem and see the Christ child

2. The Ethiopian eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to _____.
 - a. check on the progress of the Temple construction
 - b. pay his taxes
 - c. worship
 - d. buy olives and grapes

3. When Philip approached the chariot, the eunuch was _____.
 - a. reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet
 - b. looking at a map for the right road back to Ethiopia
 - c. counting his money (because, after all, he was the queen's treasurer)
 - d. holding on for dear life

4. Philip's role in this story was to _____.
 - a. obey God
 - b. explain to the eunuch Isaiah's message
 - c. tell the eunuch the Good News about Jesus
 - d. all of the above

5. What prompted Philip to baptize the Ethiopian eunuch?
 - a. Philip spotted water.
 - b. The eunuch asked to be baptized.
 - c. Philip knew that this was the next step after being saved.
 - d. Philip realized that no one would be there in Ethiopia to do it.

Living Loud 6: "Barnabas: Supporting as We Go"

Answers

1. Philip was told by God to _____. (*Lesson 5*)
 - a. go to Jerusalem and check on the disciples
 - b. walk the road between Jerusalem and Gaza**
 - c. go to Gaza and check the temperature in the desert
 - d. go to Bethlehem and see the Christ child

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 - a. check on the progress of the Temple construction
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 - c. worship**
 - d. buy olives and grapes

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Support Groups

Characters:

TRUDY
JUDY
LARRY
JERRY

Props: No props are needed.

Costumes: All four should be dressed casually.

Creative Note: The girls should be really over-the-top while the guys should be fairly understated.

(Two couples enter from opposite sides of the stage. TRUDY sits atop JERRY'S shoulders, and JUDY sits atop LARRY'S. They act as if this is perfectly normal. The girls converse with each other and the guys converse with each other, but neither gender acknowledges what is spoken by the other.)

JUDY: Hi, Trudy!

TRUDY: Oh, hey, Judy!

JUDY: So, how's it going?

TRUDY: Good, good. How about you?

JUDY: Oh, fine, fine. What have you been up to?

TRUDY: Oh, so much. You wouldn't believe. You?

JUDY: Me too. I've just been crazy busy.

TRUDY: I know what you mean. I don't know how I make it.

JUDY: Oh, I know. I have no idea either.

LARRY: Hey, man.

JERRY: Hey, dude. What's up?

LARRY: Not much. You?

JERRY: Nada. I see you've still got Judy there.

LARRY: Yep. And I take it you've still got Trudy?

JERRY: You know it.

LARRY: How's that going?

JERRY: Fine. You know. I do what I can. You?

LARRY: Yeah. The same, pretty much.

JUDY: I mean, just getting around takes it all out of me.

TRUDY: Oh, I feel you, girl. I'm exhausted, like, all the time.

JUDY: Well, at least we've got a bit of help, you know?

(JUDY reaches down and pats LARRY on the side of the face without even looking at him.)

TRUDY: Oh, that's so true. Every little bit helps, I suppose.

JUDY: But it's not like it's that big of a deal.

TRUDY: Oh, no. Not at all. I mean, I could totally get by on my own if I wanted.

JUDY: Right. Right. Me too. For sure.

JERRY: People keep asking why I do it.

LARRY: Yeah. I get that sometimes too.

JERRY: So, what do you tell them?

LARRY: I don't know. I usually just tell them it's who I am.

JERRY: Get out of here! That's exactly what I say. But they never really understand.

LARRY: Oh, yeah. Never. But, I mean, how could they?

JERRY: Exactly.

TRUDY: Just between us girls, though: I do love the support.

JUDY: Me too! It makes everything just a little bit easier.

TRUDY: Yes. Just so you can, like, take a breath.

JUDY: Have a break.

BOTH GIRLS: Or get a pedicure.

(Both girls laugh. Both guys sigh.)

TRUDY: Listen. It's been great catching up, Judy, but I really better get going.

JUDY: I guess I should too. No rest for the weary, as they say.

TRUDY: So true. So true.

JUDY: Okay. Well, bye.

TRUDY: Talk to you soon.

(Both couples begin exiting.)

JERRY: Okay. Good luck, man. Keep it up.

LARRY: Don't you mean keep "her" up?

(They chuckle.)

JERRY: Yeah. That too.

LARRY: Will do.

(The couples exit.)

(The End)

Master Teacher Key Study **BARNABAS: SUPPORTING AS WE GO**

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Intro: What are the characteristics of an encourager?

Description: Encouragers are important in the Christian life. There are enough difficulties in living and serving the Lord. We need people who will walk alongside of us and build us up.

Illustration: In the animated motion picture *Shrek*, the ogre Shrek was a loner. He really didn't like being around others. But Donkey wouldn't just be tossed aside. He had too much to give in the way of friendship, and when the going got tough, Shrek came to realize that Donkey was a true friend who would be there to encourage him, care for him, and cheer him on.

1. Encouragers are giving people (Acts 4:32–37).

Description: Barnabas saw a need and unselfishly sold a piece of his own property so that the needs of others could be met.

Illustration: At the end of each week, former newscaster Charlie Gibson of the ABC Nightly News would feature a "Person of the Week." The new newscaster, Diane Sawyer, has carried this on. These are true stories about people who have given of themselves in order to benefit the lives of others. You can't watch these stories and not feel encouraged even if you were not the direct recipient of that person's kindness in giving.

Application: Encouragement is not selfish and self-seeking. Rather, it means valuing the lives of others to the extent that we invest ourselves in them in order to see them succeed.

2. Encouragers are people who express faith by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:19–24).

Description: Barnabas was the right person to send to Antioch to encourage the new Greek believers. He was from Cyprus, had lived among the Greeks, and had the presence of the Holy Spirit encouraging Him, enabling Him to encourage other believers.

Illustration: The primary job of a missionary overseas is to equip the people of a particular nation to reach their own people with the message of Christ. Why? Because no one is better at encouraging and reaching a people than someone from that same people group. That person knows his or her people intimately and knows their greatest needs and know how to communicate the encouragement of Christ. So if you're from Kenya, you will best know how to reach Kenyans. If you're from Brazil, you'll best know how to reach Brazilians. And if you're American, then you are the best at reaching other Americans.

Application: God uses us to encourage people to live out their faith by remaining in Christ. We depend on the Holy Spirit in us to encourage us as we encourage others.

3. Encouragers take up for the weaker in the faith (Acts 15:36–41).

Description: Although it involved controversy, Barnabas knew that he needed to remain with his young cousin, John Mark. John Mark needed the encouragement of one who was more mature in his faith and modeled it through his life.

Illustration: *The Mighty* is 1998 motion picture about a crippled teenage boy who was very intelligent and who developed a friendship with another boy in his class who was much larger than most of his classmates and wasn't known for his brains. The two became inseparable. Even though Kevin ("Freak") was the weaker of the two, he was able to encourage and provide Max with the confidence that he needed. Max, in turn, was able to provide "Freak" with the physical strength that he needed. Both were weak in their own way and strong in their own way. Both found ways to support and encourage the other in his respective weakness.

Application: We daily encounter friends and family members who may be weaker in their faith than we are. They need our encouragement by example, by counsel, and by uplifting words.

Conclusion: Encouragers provide support to God's people for the purpose of building up His people in order to serve God.

Description: Barnabas was a clear example of encouragement both to the Christians of the early Church and to people like the apostle Paul, who led the way in global evangelization.

Application: With the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, we too can become encouragers like Barnabas.

REVERB::LIVING LOUD::lesson six

BARNABAS: SUPPORTING AS WE GO

biblical passages: Acts 4:32-36; Acts 11:19-24; Acts 15:36-41

memory verse: Hebrews 3:13 “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

BARNABAS: SUPPORTING AS WE GO

1. Encouragers are _____ (Acts 4:32–37).
2. Encouragers are people who express _____ by the _____ (Acts 11:19–24).
3. Encouragers take up for the _____ in the _____ (Acts 15:36–41).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the qualities in Barnabas that you value in your friends?
- Why might your friends value these qualities in you?
- When you find that you’re just stuck in discouragement, what sort of encouragement does it take to move you forward—sympathy? empathy? objectivity?
- How does the encouragement that you receive from friends or family move you to encourage others?
- How would it be possible to get by without encouragers in this world?