



Sermon Series: Mentoring: Investing in Others

To be used with Session 5: Barnabas and Paul

Sermon Title Possibilities: From Leadership to Leader Shift

Scripture: Acts 9:26-28; 11:22-26; 15:36-40

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Mentoring: Investing in Others” this sermon teaches us to expect the mentoring relationship to change over time. We learn from examining the relationship between Paul and Barnabas that despite the success these two men experienced together, there are three things to consider: First, mentorship success does not guarantee agreement in all areas. Second, separation does not mean the absence of God’s favor. Lastly, mentorship relationships can shift overtime, but if the origin of the relationship is love for Christ and others, reconciliation is foreseeable.

Introduction: Michael Jackson, considered the “king of pop” in the music industry, recorded over thirteen number one records and is considered one of the greatest entertainers of all time. However, before he was labeled the king of pop, Jackson was just one of five members of the Jackson 5. The group started in 1964 by his father, Joseph, which included his four brothers, Jermaine, Jackie, Tito, and Marlon. Over time, the group experienced change that included personal growth, worldwide fame, and a pull in opposite musical directions. A change that saw Michael Jackson break away to begin his solo career. Whether in a family group or mentor relationship, change is inevitable. However, managing change is essential for a productive and meaningful life. In our text, we find Paul and Barnabas experiencing such change. A change that seemed unfortunate, but God works everything together for the good (Rom. 8:28). In examining the relationship between Paul, the mentee, and Barnabas, the mentor, we will discover the natural progression in the seasons of change.

1. Season 1: The Introduction (Acts 9:26-28)

Despite Paul's conversion in the Book of Acts, it was difficult for the disciples to believe that transformation occurred in his life. Because Paul was known for "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), this made it difficult for the disciples to bring him into the fold and believe his transformation by the power of Jesus Christ (v. 26). Barnabas, whose name means encouragement, was willing to put his life at stake to

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investigate the incredible move of God in Paul's life. Barnabas's mentorship began with bringing Paul into the apostles and serving as a mediator. Barnabas stood in the gap and explained to other disciples what Paul experienced on the Damascus Road (v. 27). With Barnabas on his side, Paul had someone who could vouch for him and continue a mentorship/companionship throughout the region. Mentors should advocate and be willing to put themselves in possible harm's way to protect, encourage, and smooth the path of mentees.

2. Season 2: The Inclusion (Acts 11:22-26)

The significance of a mentor is immeasurable. Advice is not the only role of a mentor, but opening doors to various experiences grows a mentee also. In our text, Barnabas experienced the move of God on the hearts and minds of devoted individuals of the faith at the church of Jerusalem (v. 22). Being an encourager, Barnabas preached and shared glad tidings as he watched large numbers of people add to the Lord (v. 24). Barnabas' undoubtedly gained inspiration as the church in Jerusalem continued in the faith. However, as a mentor, Barnabas did not hold these experiences for himself, he looked for Paul and found him in Tarsus (v. 25), and the two traveled together to Antioch. Barnabas's role is significant in the life of Paul because, for an entire year, Paul received on-the-job training from Barnabas, gained hand on instructions, and witnessed the power of God in the lives of others. Barnabas' inclusion of Paul during this historic time in the early church gave Paul the experience and enabled him to become one of the leaders of the apostolic church.

3. Season 3: The Isolation (Acts 15:36-40)

After completing the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas took a much-needed rest. As a dynamic duo, these two men were beaten, hungry, jailed, and experienced many things for the cause of Christ. Jesus foretold this kind of persecution and reminded all of his disciples that “if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). Surprisingly, the departure of John Mark in the middle of the first missionary journey left a bitter taste in Paul's mouth. For whatever reason, John Mark, who accompanied them, deserted them and returned home (v. 38). Despite the severe persecution and the leaving of John Mark, Paul, and Barnabas desired to visit the churches on a second missionary journey. However, this time a dispute between the two brothers in Christ ensued. The Bible is specific about the sharp disagreement and that Barnabas wanted to take John Mark (v. 39), but Paul refused him for deserting them on the first missionary journey. As a result, a separation occurred. Despite the separation, God's power remained at work in both of their lives, the mutual love remained, and these two brothers reconnected, continuing the work of ministry (2 Tim. 4:11).

Conclusion: Mentorship relationships can change over time. As experiences and opportunities for growth present themselves, differences of opinion, viewpoints, and philosophies can shift. In our text, we see Paul's sternness and Barnabas's gentleness cause friction between the two men. However, God still used them both as they faced the challenges of ministry. Frequently, people believe that Christians are merely a happy-go-lucky group with no arguments or opposition. However, what this text provides, as a way of examining a mentor/mentee relationship is to positively adjust when changes come. Barnabas cultivated Paul and had to let him make his own decisions. As we continue to mentor, mentees will have their own perspectives, but if the core connector remains mutual respect and love, the mission of God will move forward, and the reconciliation journey will find a destination.

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