



+ **YOU**

Summer 2023
Mentoring: Investing in Others

Sermon Title: Laborers Together With God
To be used with Session 5: Barnabas and Paul
Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22

Connection with the Study: To complement the Bible study “Barnabas and Saul,” this sermon explores the change in mentoring relationships. Barnabas and Saul were stalwart friends who later disagreed over a matter of restoration, but God blessed them in different ministries when they parted. Peter and John shared many experiences during the earthly ministry of Jesus and in the early days of the church, but they seemed to have gone different paths in later ministry. Their lives demonstrate that mentors and friends may choose different paths and alter their former relationship. God gifts each of us in unique ways and ministry can be expanded when relationships change.

Introduction: Most Christians remember the faithful teachers and church leaders who taught them about Christ and showed by their lives how to be faithful. I remember many from my childhood and from college and seminary days who are now with Christ. Fortunately I was able to tell a number of them of my admiration and appreciation before they died. Relationships change, but life lessons remain. Peter and John shared the same vocation as fishermen and heard the invitation of Jesus to follow him. Both surrendered their lifework and committed to an uncertain future and lived many life-changing experiences. They are a good New Testament example of men who helped each other for a time and then parted in obedience to the call of mission.

1. Peter and John Followed Jesus (Matt. 4:18-22).

The Gospel of Matthew records the first days of Jesus’s public ministry. After He was baptized and tested in the wilderness, He walked the shores of Galilee and called His first four disciples. Interestingly, they were two families of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and James and John. These men worked together and brought individual uniqueness to the ministry of Jesus (Luke 5:10).

Peter was married, or widowed, since his mother-in-law is mentioned (Matt. 8:14); thus he was a mature man. It’s widely believed that John was a teenager when he became a disciple for two reasons: (1) He was afraid and stayed close to Jesus at the Last Supper and was often referred to as “the one Jesus loved.” This special relationship could have been because John was the youngest of the group and needed assurance and protection. (2) Traditionally John was the longest-lived disciple and ministered as an aged leader in Ephesus; thus he must have been young in the days before the resurrection. This theory may also explain why Jesus entrusted His mother to John since John would be the one to live longer and provide care.

Lifeway

Peter and John fulfilled their mission as witnesses to the work of Christ (1 Pet. 5:1, 1 John 1:1-3). They were together at the Mount of Transfiguration, along with John's brother, James (Matt. 17:1). The same three men were invited to pray with Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37), and Peter and John were in the high priest's courtyard when Jesus was arrested. John must have been "another disciple" since he had first-hand knowledge of what transpired that night (John 18:15). Peter and John witnessed a miraculous healing at the temple in the early days of the church and were arrested for preaching the gospel (Acts 3:1-10, 4:7). The church sent them to Samaria to confirm the validity of Samaritan conversion (Acts 8:14). Paul later acknowledged Peter, James, and John as "pillars" in the Jerusalem church who blessed his and Barnabas's ministry to Gentiles (Gal.2:9).

The partnership of these two men demonstrates that older believers can encourage younger believers, and younger believers in return can serve as faithful examples (1 Tim. 4:12).

2. Peter and John Followed Different Pathways

At some point Peter and John went separate ways. We have no record of their meeting again or working together after Luke's focus in Acts shifted to Paul and his journeys. Church tradition, though not Scripture, asserts Peter took the gospel to Rome and died under Nero in the early 60s. It's further asserted that the emperor gave him an opportunity to recant, but Peter declared he could not fail the Lord a second time. Tradition also declares that John was the pastor in Ephesus and was exiled to the island of Patmos when he wrote the book of Revelation.

Whereas church tradition can be unreliable, we do know that the ministries of these disciples took different pathways. In 1 Peter, the writer explained that believers are "exiles" who face suffering just as Jesus suffered, and that "fiery trial" was surely coming. In his second letter Peter condemned the unfaithful who fell away from faith. He also condemned false teachers and wrote about the terrible judgment of God in the last days. John, however, is known as the apostle of love. He called his hearers "little children" and exhorted them to maintain fellowship with God and with each other. Though he did write about false teachers in 2 and 3 John, he continued to exhort believers to love one another as evidence of their genuine faith. The messages of these two disciples weren't contradictory but complementary. The church must preach both fidelity to the truth and love for one another.

3. Relationships Change, but the Mission Remains

The New Testament is filled with diversity. Paul and Barnabas were different, Stephen and Philip were different, and Peter and John were different. Each of these teams worked together, and each of them had a point of departure. A wise pastor told those of us at a conference to take someone with us when we went to a home to share Christ or to the hospital to pray for the sick. "Then," he said, "commission that person to find a partner and do the ministry you taught them." This is the essence of discipleship, but it also teaches the principle of changing relationships.

Peter and John were partners for a time, but their lives began to diverge. This divergence didn't seem to come about due to a rupture in fellowship as may have been the case with Barnabas and

Paul, Peter and John, no doubt, treasured their former partnership but were obedient to the Holy Spirit who sent them to different ministry stations.

Conclusion: An old adage is “nothing lasts forever.” Mentors may not remain with us. Sometimes they’re called to new ministries in other locations, and sometimes they’re called to heaven. Sometimes we who are taught are called to new ministries in other locations. God uses many people in our lives at various times to teach us how to serve faithfully. As Paul wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). The work of all those who serve Christ is important. We learn from our mentors for whatever season God gives them to us, and we labor with God in His harvest.

Michael Brooks is pastor of Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, Alabama. He previously served as professor of communications at Judson College. He earned two degrees at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and enjoys reading, writing, and collecting political items. He and his wife, Donna, have two children and three grandsons.