

## Barnabas: God's Bridge Builder

### Scripture Reading — Acts 11:19-30

*Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. — Acts 11:25-26*

The expansion of God's family to include the Gentiles did not stop with Peter's encounter with Cornelius. The scattering of believers because of persecution led to more and more Jews hearing about Jesus, and in Antioch some believers began sharing the good news with Greeks and other Gentiles.

The church at Jerusalem wanted to equip these new believers in Antioch. And the person whom they chose to do this was Barnabas, whose name means "son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36). Barnabas began ministering in Antioch, and many people came to believe in the Lord.

God also motivated Barnabas to look for Saul and to bring him into the work in Antioch. Barnabas had introduced Saul earlier to the apostles (Acts 9:27), and now he became a bridge builder again. For the next year, Saul and Barnabas "taught great numbers of people." And the believers there became so identified with Jesus that a term of ridicule, Christians — meaning "little christs" — became a badge of honor.

The final verses of our passage show us that the bridge works both ways. When a severe famine came into the region and Judea was hit hard, the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul with gifts for the people in Judea. Bridge building is the way God wants us to work together.

### Prayer

*God of all people and places, may we be challenged to live as bridge builders who desire to serve whomever we meet. May our eyes be opened and our hearts be in rhythm with yours. Amen.*

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