**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Better Together**

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ([Ephesians 4:3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph4.3))

*The Christian life is never lived alone. When we become a Christian, we’re adopted into God’s family. We’re welcomed into a community. We’re meant to live and grow in faith together. But that takes humility and intentionality. We grow together as we pray and study Scripture together. We bear responsibility for one another by our encouragement and our honoring of those in authority. God is growing us together as one body, one family.*

**Session Overview**

**Welcome Others**

**Biblical Encounter:** Barnabas Stands Up for Paul ([Acts 9:19–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.19-30))

**Outcome:** Include new believers as they abandon their past and pursue a new life in Christ.

*In this session, we encounter Barnabas and Paul. Following Paul’s conversion, we see how Barnabas included Paul, even though Paul had been persecuting Christians prior to his conversion. Some people didn’t believe that Paul had a genuine change in his life. As believers, we are to include and champion new believers. This can be difficult to do, especially if we are familiar with their past. The role we play helps them to pursue their new life in Christ.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Pens or pencils, one per student* *• Sheets of paper or index cards, one per student****Getting Ready*** *• Give each student a pen and paper for the activity.* • ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for the*** [**Facilitator Guide**](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)**.** |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [***BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads***](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Pray that each student would be a part of the discussion, and that we all would understand how to welcome new people in the faith. Ask God to help us know how to help others in their relationship with Jesus and encourage them to grow closer to Him.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**Has someone ever doubted that you were telling the truth? How did that make you feel? |

Sometimes when others have known you awhile, and you start to change for the better, they may doubt if you are telling the truth. They may wonder if you’ve truly changed for good or if it will last. This happens sometimes when people come to know Jesus. As believers, we are called to come alongside new believers and help them continue their new walk with Jesus.

**Group Activity**

**Who Are You?**

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Pens or pencils, one per student* *• Sheets of paper or index cards, one per student****Getting Ready*** *• Give each student a pen and paper for the activity.* |

Convincing people that we’re not exactly who they think we are can be challenging. For our activity today, I’ve given everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Write out three facts about yourself. Try to disguise your writing, and don’t put your name on your paper. When you are done, place your paper facedown on the table.

• *Read each paper and have the whole group try to guess who wrote it.*

Just as it’s exciting to learn new facts about each other, we should be excited to get to know new believers. Even if a person’s past isn’t the best, remember that Jesus came to give them a new future. Jesus loves us how He finds us and leads us to a new life full of His purpose. To discover this takes time and people who believe in us. As we go through our discussion today, we will meet people in the Bible who championed a man that others didn’t believe had really changed. Before we get started, let’s watch this video.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

Sometimes, our past isn’t a pretty picture. Perhaps it was a long time before anyone shared with us who Jesus is, or we had the wrong idea about who God is. Maybe we did some things we aren’t proud of. When we begin a relationship with Jesus, those things are cleared up. But other people may not believe we’ve truly changed.

That was the case for a guy named Saul in the New Testament. If you’ve studied the New Testament much, you probably know him instead as Paul. Saul and Paul are the same person and same name. Saul is the Hebrew version of the name and Paul is the Greek version. This is like Mary and Maria are the English and Spanish versions of the same name. I know it’s a little confusing, but just remember that Paul and Saul are the same guy! And since most of the New Testament calls him Paul, we’re going to call him Paul today.

Paul had a questionable past. He was a hater of Christians. He had them imprisoned and was okay with them being killed. Many believers were still afraid of him and doubted he had really changed. Today, we’ll look at how Christians responded to him as a new believer. How can we be the one person to help new believers fulfill all that God has for them? Let’s find out.

**Paul Began Preaching about Jesus Immediately**

Read [Acts 9:19–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.19-21).

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| **QUESTION**If you had been a believer in Damascus, how would you have responded to Paul’s newfound faith? Would you have let him stay with you? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you think people usually change outwardly quickly or slowly when they become a Christian? Explain. |

Paul was a brand-new Christian with a questionable past. Just a few days prior to this, he was on a mission to arrest anyone who called on the name of Jesus. Christians were afraid of him. But things changed dramatically for him after having an encounter with Jesus. Paul went from hating Christians to preaching about Jesus. This was how radical his encounter with Jesus was.

God makes immediate spiritual changes when people become Christians, but sometimes it takes time for the outward behavior to change. What helps is having someone who believes in us and can stand with us to help us grow.

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| **QUESTION**What was the biggest change in your life when you accepted Jesus? |

**Paul Continued to Preach**

Read [Acts 9:22–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.22-25).

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| **QUESTION**If you were Paul, how would you feel knowing that people were trying to kill you because of your belief in Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**Have others ever treated you badly because of your faith in Jesus? How did you handle it? |

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| **QUESTION**Who was it that warned Paul and helped him escape? |

God radically changed Paul. In a short time, he went from being one who hunted down Christians to becoming one. Paul didn’t waste any time and began to pursue God with all that he had. When people come to Jesus, changes start to happen. Everyone’s past will affect them, but as believers, we shouldn’t allow someone’s past to get in the way of how we see them.

We need to remember that when God forgives people, they are made new people ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.17)). We need to choose to believe the best for them and see them as new people—as God does. Even though it can be hard to see them as immediately changed, our belief in them can become a motivation for them to continue to change and grow as new Christians.

**Barnabas Stood Up for Paul**

Read [Acts 9:26–27](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.26-27).

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the believers in Jerusalem didn’t trust that Paul was a believer in Jesus too? |

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| **QUESTION**If you had been one of the believers in Jerusalem, would you have met with Paul, or would you have been afraid of him? Explain. |

Some Jews weren’t ready to accept Paul. They saw him as a threat. It took one brave person to choose to stand up for Paul. Barnabas had influence, the believers trusted him, and he personally trusted the changes in Paul’s life. So, Barnabas vouched for Paul. He didn’t allow Paul’s past to determine how he would view him.

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| **QUESTION**Has there been a time when you stood by someone that others didn’t? What was that like? |

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| **QUESTION**How can we be more like a Barnabas to others? |

We have the ability to help a new brother or sister in Christ—just as Barnabas did. When we choose to walk with someone as they begin their faith journey, we pave the way for them to pursue God and grow their faith in greater ways.

**Paul Connected with the Apostles**

Read [Acts 9:28–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac9.28-30).

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| **QUESTION**Who is someone you know that needs a Barnabas in their life? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you think even people who grew up in church need a Barnabas? Why? |

The apostles were the main leaders in the Early Church at that time. Connecting with them put Paul in the perfect position for the ministry God had for him. And that connection came about because of Barnabas’s act of kindness.

In each city Paul went to, he encountered not only people who wanted to harm him, but also those who trusted him. We see a wonderful process of what happens when we encourage and disciple others rather than focus on their past or ignore them. Barnabas’s courage and compassion led him to introduce Paul to the apostles. Barnabas also put his reputation on the line by vouching for Paul. Barnabas’s response may have changed the course of Paul’s image and ministry. Barnabas’s example shows us how God sees us. We come with a past as well. But God chooses to vouch for us and use us.

**Did You Know?**

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| The important role that Barnabas played in the Church is often overlooked due to the significant focus of the Book of Acts on the missionary journeys of Paul: Barnabas was only present for the first one. But did you know that Barnabas was influential in the Early Church before Paul was ever saved? (Acts 4:36) Barnabas was the leader of that first missionary journey. Paul came along to assist him. This is supported by what happened to them in city of Lystra (Acts 14:8–20). The locals believed Paul and Barnabas were the incarnation of Greek gods with Barnabas being the chief god Zeus and Paul being Hermes, the messenger god for Zeus and the other Greek gods. |

**Reflect**

**Include new believers as they abandon their past and pursue a new life in Christ.**

New followers of Jesus are our reminders that we were once lost in sin too. There should be a humbleness that happens when we see God move powerfully in another person’s life. We are reminded of His power to help us leave our past and pursue a new life. Barnabas showed Christian love to Paul. He stood up for Paul when others didn’t. We can be reminded that our past doesn’t dictate what God can do in us and in others. God is gracious to save us, and we can have the same attitude toward others.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection after reading the questions. Then ask students if they want to share. Sharing your personal response may also be helpful to the students.*

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| **QUESTION**Do you feel like your past sometimes prevents others from seeing you as God does? How? |

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| **QUESTION**Do you feel like others have your back and help you grow in your faith? If not, how can we encourage you? |

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| **QUESTION**Is there anyone in your life that you believe God wants you support like Barnabas did Paul? |

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*We may feel unworthy, stuck, and unchangeable. But just as He did with Paul, God can meet you in your mess. He is able to turn things around and show you how much He loves you. This requires you to acknowledge that you need Jesus. Today, you can choose to start your journey of faith just like Paul did. Jesus is ready. Are you?**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Activate**

Think of someone you may know who just started a relationship with Jesus. Initiate a conversation with them and start to be a Barnabas in their life. Take some time to pray with and encourage them when they need support in their faith journey. Let’s begin right now.

**Conclusion**

God is still in the business of changing people’s lives. We can choose to be part of helping new believers write a future with God in it. God calls us to encourage and allow others into our circles. As others are surrounded by a faith community, they’ll start to see what it’s like to be loved as they pursue Jesus. Barnabas could have simply ignored Paul, but instead, he chose to help Paul abandon his past and become a strong believer.

**Prayer**

God, thank You for the beautiful example of how we can treat and love new believers. Thank You for seeing beyond our sin and past mistakes. You see us for who You created us to be. Help us to see others the same way. Help us to love and care for them as Barnabas cared about Paul. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal**

I’ve so enjoyed discussing the Bible with you. You’ve been awesome! I’ve loved hearing your thoughts and responses to the questions and stories we’ve read together. I hope you’ve learned as much as I have and are ready to grow even deeper in your faith as you live for God.