

Barnabas - a GEM of a man

A Levite from Cyprus, possibly married, a believer and a disciple (Acts 4.32-37)
later known as a prophet or teacher (Acts 13.1)

GEM - The G stands for the Grace

That he not only gave to others but was able to recognise in others when no-one else did:

1. In newly converted Saul (Acts 9.26-27)
2. In the new cosmopolitan non-Jewish church at Antioch (Acts 11.23)
and in the church in the new and first non-Jewish church at Antioch.
3. He was gracious and graceful in changing roles from leader to number two - for in Acts 11.25, in the 13.1-4 list in order of importance, in 13.7 on the first missionary journey it is Barnabas and Saul - but from 13.9 the gift and anointing of Paul starts to emerge strongly and soon from 13.42 onwards it is Paul and Barnabas, except back in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15.12, 25)

The E stands for the En-courage-ment

That he was known for (Acts 4.36, 11.23, 14.22) *Paraklesis* - comfort, consolation, entreaty, exhortation - Barnabas pleaded and persuaded rather than dominated and controlled. Similar word to *Paraclete* used for the Holy Spirit as our advocate and comforter - the One who stands with us against our weaknesses. Barnabas was a good man to have around.

The M stands for the Mission that was his calling

He travelled from Cyprus to Jerusalem, he willingly travelled out from Jerusalem to Antioch, God confirmed his earlier call to mission - the mobile rather than the static, the away team rather the home team - by the Holy Spirit in a time of worship and fasting (Acts 13.2) With the call comes the grace for cross-cultural ministry and Barnabas led the way out and became a perfect companion to Paul, with very compatible and complementary ministry gifts as well as a similar embracing of the need to support himself in mission by work (1 Cor. 9.6)

And he was a gem of a Man

With plenty of qualities: A good man, full of the Holy Spirit, full of faith (Acts 11.24), generous in giving and trusting of leadership (Acts 4.36), dear and beloved (Acts 15.25) a man of fine appearance - assumed to be Zeus, principal god (Acts 14.12), a risk taker with Saul and the first Christian mission, and able to handle persecution (Acts 14).

Barnabas had a few very human failings as well

He could be "led astray" by others (Gal. 2.13) and in his insecurity would please men - Peter, and the narrow minded believers from James in Jerusalem. He had a bitter argument with Paul (Acts 15.36) over his cousin Mark (Col. 4.10) wanting his own way to the point of separating himself from God's anointed man. Maybe he saw the emerging grace in John Mark, the gospel writer of later years, maybe Paul could have been more gracious and patient, maybe Barnabas should have submitted to God's chosen leader - but whatever - an argument like this was no way of going about it - and although we can be confident that Barnabas continued doing good work with Silas this is the last we hear of him in the book of the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit.'

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