

Episode 98

“When Paul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.”

- Acts 9.26

A few years back I came across a study that pointed out that more than 50% of students drift from God, church, and their faith between the ages of 18 and 25. Those who broke the mould and came through these years stronger were those who had at least five solid relationships with people a season or two ahead of them.

The same is true even of the great apostle Paul.

Barnabas is believed to have been at least ten years older than Paul. While he was a man of integrity and credibility among his peers, he was also willing to stoop to Paul's level to help him find his feet among the community of believers that he had previously persecuted. By using his gifts and character to release something in Paul, Barnabas effectively had a global and generational influence on scripture, church, our understanding of God, and ultimately, Christendom as a whole.

This little verse in Acts chapter 9 is unpacked in more detail in Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he tells of how crucial this moment was for his journey with God and the early church. He writes of how he had spent fourteen years in something of a wilderness, both physically and spiritually, which led him to question whether or not he was running his race in vain. He was carrying what God had revealed to him close to his chest, but all that God had appointed him to, had not yet come to full bloom. The clarity of what God had appointed Paul to be and do only seemed to come into focus once Barnabas had taken him under his wing, becoming a catalyst to Paul's calling, because the outworking of our calling is always clearer when we pursue it in community.

Whenever I read this verse I can't help but wonder what lies dormant in the lives of those around us. Maybe the next church planter or CEO is sitting across the table from me, needing a Barnabas to set his calling alight. Could it be that the next Elon Musk or Nelson Mandela sits alone and uncertain in the reception area, unnoticed by those who have the gifts to unlock their future? Maybe it's a first-time mom, varsity student, business executive, or entrepreneur facing a mountain they don't know how to overcome.

There are moments we often cannot walk through without the input or influence of others. And so Barnabas took Paul to the apostles, and the rest as they say is church history.

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