

FRIENDSHIP

USING YOUR WORDS AND ACTIONS

TO SHOW OTHERS YOU CARE.

WEEK **2**

BARNABAS AND SAUL

Acts 9:26-28 (Acts 9:1-25, 26:12-18, supporting); Romans 15:7

MEMORY VERSE | Proverbs 17:17

Barnabas had heard the stories about Saul. Of course he had. Who hadn't? Saul had made it his mission to eliminate followers of Jesus one way or another. He had them thrown in prison. Or worse . . .

Barnabas heard Saul was there watching the day Stephen was killed outside the city of Jerusalem.

"Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!" Stephen cried out against the angry mob.

Saul was a dangerous man, and Barnabas had every right to fear him.

But then Barnabas heard another story about Saul. One that changed everything.

Saul had gone to Damascus, hoping to find Jesus-followers so he could have them arrested, or even put to death. As he approached the city, Saul saw a light, brighter than the sun, shining all around him.

"Saul! Saul! Why are you opposing me?" a voice called out.

Saul fell to the ground. *"Who are you, Lord?"* he squinted against the blinding light.

"I am Jesus . . . I am the one you're opposing," the voice continued. "Now get up. Stand on your feet. I'm appearing to you because I want you to serve Me. You must tell others about Me. Go into the city and you'll be told what to do."

Saul got up from the ground. He opened his eyes, but he was unable to see. The men he was traveling with led him into Damascus, where Saul refused to eat or drink anything for three days.

Barnabas was still amazed when he thought about the story. Even more amazing was what happened next.

"Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street," God instructed Ananias.

There was a believer named Ananias living in Damascus at that time. While Saul was blind, going without food and water, Ananias was having a vision from God.

"Ananias!" God called out.

"Yes, Lord," Ananias responded.

"Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street," God instructed Ananias. "There is a man named Saul there who needs you to place your hands on him so he can see again."

"Saul?" Ananias' voice faltered. "Uh, Lord, I've heard of Saul. He's come here to arrest people who worship You. If I help him, won't I be in danger?"

"Go! I've chosen [Saul] to work for me," God commanded.

And so Ananias went to the house of Judas on Straight Street.

"My name is Ananias," he said to Judas, who opened the door. "I'm looking for a man named Saul."

"Come in," Judas replied. "He's here."

Ananias cautiously entered the house. And there was Saul, the man Ananias used to think was his enemy. He looked weak and hungry.

"Brother Saul . . . [the Lord] has sent me so that you will be able to see again," Ananias spoke as he placed his hands on Saul. "You will be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Right away something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. And he could see again. Barnabas found himself thinking . . . If Ananias could accept Saul, maybe he could, too.

And it wasn't just Ananias. After Saul regained his sight and his strength, he spent several days with the other Jesus-followers in Damascus. And if they were having trouble believing that Saul was a changed man, their doubts were relieved when Saul started preaching in the local synagogues.

"I am standing here before you to say that I believe without question that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Saul addressed the crowd gathered in front of him.

Many who heard him believed and began to follow Saul's teachings carefully. Saul's own people, the Jews, saw that he was gaining power, and they began to mutter among themselves. *"Didn't he used to be on their side, having Christians arrested?" they wondered. They decided something had to be done to stop him.*

So they came up with a plan to have Saul killed. Saul heard of the plan, however, and his followers helped him to escape the city. Saul climbed into a basket, and they lowered him down through a hole in the city wall. It was that narrow escape from Damascus that brought Saul back to Jerusalem.

Barnabas and many of the others were terrified when they heard Saul was coming back. Could they really believe him? He was saying he was a follower of Jesus now, but what if he was trying to trick them? Maybe it was a trap!

Barnabas wasn't so sure. Ananias had accepted him. And the believers in Damascus did, too. Even Jesus Himself, if the stories were true. Barnabas had to make a decision . . . especially since Saul was now standing before him!

***“Hello.
Are you Barnabas?”
Saul greeted him.***

“Hello. Are you Barnabas?” Saul greeted him.

Barnabas gulped. “Uh, yes. That’s right. I’m Barnabas.”

“I’m Saul,” the man continued.

“I . . . I know. I’ve . . . heard of you,” stammered Barnabas.

“Nothing bad, I hope,” Saul followed up.

“Uh . . .” Barnabas trailed off.

“I’m kidding,” Saul chuckled. “I’ve changed, Barnabas. I really have changed.”

Barnabas tried to imagine what it would feel like if he were Saul, wanting to make new friends, but not finding anyone who could trust him. So he made his decision.

“I believe you,” Barnabas boldly declared. Then, Barnabas took Saul to the apostles, Peter, John, and the others, and he made an impassioned plea on Saul’s behalf. He told them how Saul had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, how he had preached without fear in Jesus’ name, how he had changed.

“And that’s why I think we should accept Saul as one of us,” Barnabas finished his speech to his friends.

The apostles decided that Barnabas was right, and they welcomed Saul into their company. So Saul stayed with the believers and taught about Jesus boldly. Later Saul, who was also called Paul, would travel to many different cities preaching the good news with his good friend, Barnabas.



Let's
Talk!

Every friendship needs that first step of kindness.

For Saul, it took Barnabas believing his story and standing up for him. Some time after he was accepted by the believers in Jerusalem, Paul (Saul) wrote this in the book of Romans: “Christ has accepted you. So accept one another in order to bring praise to God.” Jesus has accepted you. He proved it when He died on a cross to pay for your sins so you could be a friend of God. And God wants you to accept others, because it’s a way of showing your appreciation to Him. This week, be on the lookout for ways you can take that first step of kindness. Get started now by praying together for someone that you have had a hard time accepting in the past. Ask God for help taking that first step toward accepting that person.