

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

“Redemptive Friendships”

Genesis 1:1-2

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Q. When Christians think of the word *redemption*, what usually comes to mind?

For the sake of this study, we will be using *redemption* in a wider context. The idea of redemption can mean, "To offset from a bad effect; to make worthwhile." Jesus is the only redeemer of the souls of men. But you have the opportunity to bring redemption in this second sense to relationships. This week's study will look at some ways we can learn to do that.

Building Redemptive Relationships

1. The first time we see Paul and Barnabas together is in Acts chapter 9. As this chapter starts out, it reintroduces the man we know as Paul, who was originally named Saul. What impact did Saul have on the church after the stoning of Stephen according to Acts 8:1-3?

2. Saul was not content to arrest Christians when they gathered in the temple precincts. Where did he go next to find them according to Acts 8:3? Who would you compare him with in the world today?

Saul's aggression toward the church is further described in Acts 9:1-2.

3. What picture do you visualize when you read the first sentence of Acts 9:1?

4. What is significant about the fact that Saul expanded his search for Christians outside the city of Jerusalem?



5. Where in Damascus did Paul believe he would find information about other Jews who considered Jesus to be the messiah?

6. What do you think the letters from the high priest said to the leaders of the synagogues?

7. If Paul's mission in Acts 9:2 had been successful, how would it have changed the lives of believers in Damascus?

8. Look at Acts 9:26. If you had been there, would your response to Saul's attempt to join the leaders in the church have been the same as the disciples? Why or why not?

9. What would have been some of the advice others might have given Barnabas about trusting Saul? In what ways do you think Barnabas was careful at first with Saul? If you wanted to see if Saul were genuine, what would have been some of the first things you would have done as you interacted with him?

10. What did Barnabas risk as he gave Saul a chance that others would not? (See Acts 9:27.) How did his choice pay off?

11. List what you might consider to be some wise guidelines for taking risks with relationships:

Redemptive Friendships

12. Barnabas demonstrated this redemptive heart in another relationship. Who was the person he stood up for in Acts 15:36-40?

13. What makes Paul's response a bit ironic in light of what Barnabas had done for him years earlier? Why can we appreciate such grace toward ourselves but be cautious when it comes to others?

14. Barnabas' willingness to trust ministry to John-Mark threatened his friendship with Paul. Why do you think a generous spirit like the one Barnabas displays sometimes causes problems between friends?

15. Barnabas' redemptive friendship was built around serving Jesus together. Look at the following verses and identify the common objectives Barnabas and Saul shared: Acts 9:27; 9:28; 11:24.

16. How else did Paul and Barnabas partner together? (See Acts 11:25.) How do you think this shared labor for Jesus grew their friendship? What do we miss out on when we try to do Christ's work solo?

17. Notice the order of the names in Acts 13:7. Compare that with Acts 13:42. What changed? What does this say about Barnabas' character and his friendship with Paul? How might a less spiritual man have acted?

18. Barnabas was a very capable disciple on his own. What task was he entrusted with in Acts 11:20-22? What kind of qualities would you want in someone who would take on this kind of job?





Reaching Up and Reaching Out

524 River Hills Dr. P.O. Box 291

Phone: 515-733-5360 Web: www.harvestefree.org E-mail: office@harvestefree.org



19. What other leadership / character quality of Barnabas is reflected in Acts 4:36-37?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 19.

Sometimes people partner with others because they feel weak and inadequate alone. Barnabas did not 'need' Paul in order to be an outstanding leader in the early church. Amazingly, Barnabas refused to think in terms of what he could do with his own gifts and abilities to impress other people. He could have made a bigger name for himself without investing in this newcomer named Paul. But he chose to work with Paul as a team.

20. Barnabas put much at risk to work with Paul. What do you think he gained in the end?

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 20.

21. How did Paul help Barnabas when Barnabas' thinking about living the Christian life became clouded by the circumstances? (See Galatians 2:3.)

Three horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 21.

We owe a lot to the initiative Barnabas took in befriending Paul. We can never know what Paul's ministry would have been like without the role that Barnabas played in a key moment.

22. Jesus set the pattern when he called you into a redemptive relationship with himself. He invites you to follow his example. Ask God to show you one or two "unlikely" individuals you might reach out to in the next few weeks. Write their names below. Resist the temptation to make a list instantly. Take time to reflect. Let God speak to you. You may be surprised who comes to mind.

Three horizontal lines for writing names in response to question 22.

23. Redemptive relationships are possible only for Christians. They always have a spiritual component to them. How might you take an existing relationship and go deeper spiritually? What would it look like if it were more shaped by God's kingdom agenda?

Two horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 23.

Quotations are from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.