

## 12. Developing Team Ministry

Once a team has defined its purpose, developed its objectives, and begun to develop goals to carry out those objectives, it is time for the team to begin to put those goals into action. This means that the team needs to learn to work as a team, not just a group of individuals. A team will only have an effective ministry as it learns to work as a team. We might make a comparison between two types of teams. One situation is where a group of people at a family reunion choose up sides and play a ball game. Another is a high school ball team that wins a championship for an entire state or region.

The two teams at the family reunion play as teams, but they do not function as a team. Instead, they just have a good time and very sore muscles the next day. In contrast, the high school team that wins a championship has spent many hours learning to work together as a team. The reason they are able to win the championship is due to the fact that they have learned to work together as a team. We want to help developing team leaders learn to help their team learn to do the work of the Lord as a team, so the Lord can work mightily through that team.

A very effective team member in the New Testament was Barnabas. We will look at several passages that show us why Barnabas was such an effective team member, and what he did to develop the ministry of other Christians. In Acts 4:36 and 37, we read, “And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet.”

These verses tell us how Barnabas ministered to the apostles and helped them develop their ministry as a team. He ministered to the apostles by providing encouragement to them, as well as to many others. This ministry was so important to the apostles, they changed his name to Barnabas to let others know how he encouraged them. A key characteristic of an effective team member is that he or she provides encouragement to the other members of the team. Such a person will also help the other team members learn to encourage one another.

Acts 9:26-27 gives us another key characteristic for developing team ministry. Those verses say, “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” Barnabas was willing to take risks in order to add people to the team. He was sensitive to the leading of the Lord, rather than acting out of fear. As a result, he saw potential, while the apostles were motivated by fear.

Acts 11:22-24 show us some other reasons why Barnabas was an effective team member. Those verses say, “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.” These verses show us three characteristics of an effective team member. Barnabas was a good

team member because of his godly character. He was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He was full of faith.

Barnabas was also ready to serve under the guidance of the other team members. When the church at Jerusalem asked him to go to Antioch, Barnabas was ready to go. Here, we see that Barnabas trusted the team and expected the Lord to work through them to give him guidance about the way he could be the most effective in ministry. The other team members recognized his gifts and knew that he would have an effective ministry.

We also see that Barnabas immediately began to build a team spirit in the new believers at Antioch. We read that he, “encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” Notice that this one phrase uses three words that focus on becoming a team: “them”, “all”, and “they”. Barnabas wanted all of the believers to have the same purpose of heart. He wanted them to learn to abide with the Lord. As they each learned to depend on the Lord, they would also work together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:25-26 tell us, “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Here, we see that Barnabas realized the importance of adding to the leadership team at Antioch. With all of these new believers, Barnabas realized that there were more than he could teach effectively. He was willing to leave the work temporarily in order to recruit a qualified team member to help him.

This passage also shows us that Barnabas recognized the leadership potential of Saul. Galatians 1:18 and 2:1 would indicate that Saul had left Jerusalem about ten years earlier. However, Barnabas kept Saul in his thoughts and prayers, and now, he saw an opportunity to give Saul an opportunity to develop and expand his ministry. Team ministry is strengthened when team members see the potential in other people and provide opportunities for them to develop that potential.

Acts 13:1-2 says, “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Here, we see that Barnabas knew how to build a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural team for ministry. The team that developed in Antioch came from five different areas.

In these verses, we also see that Barnabas had helped the team learn to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As a team, they were seeking the guidance of the Lord when the Holy Spirit led the team to become two teams, by sending Barnabas and Saul to take the Gospel to other places. The team was united and in agreement that the Lord was leading the church to send out a team to take the Gospel to other places. Barnabas and Saul had also equipped the newer team members so they were prepared to continue to lead the church without Barnabas and Saul present.

Acts 13:9, 13, and 14:12 show that Barnabas was also able to switch roles and let Paul become the leader of the team. Those verses say, “Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ...<sup>13</sup>Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. ...And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.” If we drive others, we will drive them until they get out of the way. If we lead others, we can lead them as far as we have gone. If we serve others, we can help them reach their full potential, which may be far beyond our potential. Barnabas chose to serve Paul to help him develop his full potential.

Barnabas was also willing to let people fail and give them a second opportunity to develop their ministry. The verses above mentioned that John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. Acts 15:36-39 tell us, “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing.’” Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.” Here, we see that Barnabas saw potential in John Mark, while Paul saw failure.

The commitment of Barnabas to developing team members is shown by the final results in the life of John Mark. Years later, Paul would tell Timothy, in 2 Timothy 4:11, “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” Mark developed because Barnabas gave him a second opportunity. One who had been a failure became one who could minister to Paul as Paul faced death.

Developing a team ministry is helping people learn to work together as a team to bring glory to God. A team working together can accomplish far more than team members can do by themselves. As you help team leaders develop, the example of Barnabas gives many principles to help team leaders learn, so they can help the team function as a team. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing team leaders help Christians learn to function together as a team.