

## On your marks

Many children's leaders have found the style of storytelling that has been developed within Godly Play to be a very helpful and effective way of opening up the Bible with children. At BRF we have experimented with some additional stories from scripture presented in this style. We are making them available so you can try them out with your children's group and we would be interested in any feedback on how they were received. Remember to tell the story slowly, focusing on the objects and on the story itself, **not** on the children who are listening. When you have finished telling the story, leave a short space and then use the wondering questions written out for you at the end of the piece.

## Get set

Barnabas is a fascinating character from the story of the first years of the Christian Church. You can read about him in Acts 4:32-37; Acts 11:9-30 and 12:25; and Acts 13—15. Although we don't hear of Barnabas doing great miracles or giving powerful sermons, he nevertheless remains one of the most important figures of this period, because of his generous spirit, his daring welcome of the convert Saul and his loyal nurture of his cousin John Mark. The church remembers this saint on 11 June. His encouraging nature and his concern for the young was of course the inspiration behind choosing his name for the Children's Ministry and Publishing wing of BRF.

For more ideas, see [Getting going with special people - Barnabas](#), and [Stories of Everyday Saints](#)

For this presentation you will need the following items, choosing or making 3D objects that are both simple and attractive:

- seven pieces of A4 felt - blue, brown, red, purple, green, dark blue and white - which are laid out (storyteller's) right to left as the story unfolds;
- an outline shape of Cyprus in a coppery felt with some sea shells;
- a wooden model of the great gate at Jerusalem;
- a Bible, a paten and some bread, a model or picture of praying hands and a candle;
- a bag of money, some stones and two wooden figures for Saul and Barnabas;
- a further five wooden figures;
- a 'make poverty history' band; a wooden model sailing boat;
- another smaller wooden figure to represent John Mark

## Go!

**1** In the beginning there was a baby. His parents called him Joseph.

**2** *Put down the blue cloth, the outline shape of Cyprus in coppery felt and some sea shells*

Joseph was born on the island of copper. Today we call it Cyprus. He was one of the people of God from a family who used to be priests and musicians. In the past they had led the worship in the great



temple in Jerusalem. Joseph grew up to love God and to love others as his neighbours.

**3** *Put down the brown cloth and the wooden model of the great gate at Jerusalem*

Every year Joseph and his family would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the high and holy festivals. Once at the great harvest feast of Pentecost, Joseph was among the crowds on the streets. He was there when the friends of Jesus rushed out like a whirlwind - on fire to tell everyone about Jesus.

'Jesus is God's chosen Messiah', they said. 'He came, and he went but now he has come again and offers everyone and new start'.

Joseph listened and he too believed in Jesus. He received the gift of the Holy Spirit so that he was now part of the people of God in a new Easter sort of way.

**4** *Put down the red cloth, the Bible, the paten with some bread, the praying hands and the candle*

Joseph stayed on in Jerusalem. He learned about the story of Jesus from the Apostles.

He joined them in the prayers.

He came close to Jesus and Jesus came close to him as he broke and ate the bread with the others.

He worshipped at the temple and in people's homes.

He grew in faith and goodness.

**5** *Put down the purple cloth, the bag of money (on one side), the stones (on the other side) and two figures, whose hands if possible, can 'touch' each other, for Saul and Barnabas (in the middle). Put out the items in this order as the story unfolds in the following paragraphs*

Now the number of those who believed in Jesus was growing. Joseph helped care for them, especially those who were poor. He sold some land that belonged to him on Cyprus and he gave the money to those who were in need. Joseph was always generous and he earned a special nickname. The apostles called him Barnabas, which means 'the encourager'.

Barnabas the encourager was full of the Holy Spirit. He saw how the disciples had changed. People knew they had been with Jesus. Some of the religious leaders tried to stop them talking about him. They were threatened and some were even killed, but the others went on telling everyone that Jesus was God and that because of Jesus, God can live in people by his Holy Spirit. Barnabas, whose family had served in the old temple, was himself now part of the new temple of God, because the Holy Spirit lived in him.

Amazing things were happening. From Damascus came strange news. Saul, who once had vowed to kill all who followed the way of Jesus, had himself become a follower of the Way. Some people were suspicious. But when Saul came secretly to Jerusalem, it was Barnabas who believed him and went out to meet him. He believed that God's love was so great that it can make even enemies into friends. He welcomed Saul like a brother and encouraged the others to do the same.

**6** *Put down the green cloth and five wooden figures and a 'make poverty history' band*



Some years later Barnabas was sent to a place called Antioch in Syria to see how God was blessing not just Jews but any who called on the name of Jesus. Barnabas recognized the grace of God at work and stayed to encourage them in the faith. He also went and fetched Saul to be their teacher and together they encouraged them to keep on believing in Jesus. It was here that people first called the followers of Jesus Christians. Barnabas helped these Christians organise a collection for the poor back in Jerusalem.

The church leaders in Antioch prayed and one day they knew that the Holy Spirit wanted Saul and Barnabas to travel to other places with the story of Jesus. They blessed them and sent them on their way.

*7 Put down the dark blue cloth and the wooden model sailing boat*

Saul and Barnabas set sail for Cyprus because Barnabas longed to tell the people back home all that had happened to him. Later they sailed on to Turkey, where they explained to anyone would listen that Jesus was God and that, because of Jesus, God can live in people by his Holy Spirit. Some refused to listen. Others got angry and chased them away. But many did believe and new groups of Christians began meeting in many towns.

*8 Put down the white cloth and transfer the figure of Barnabas from the purple cloth and place beside him the smaller teenager figure representing John Mark*

Barnabas was always encouraging other people and especially new believers. On their first journey they had taken with him a young man called John Mark but Mark had gone home early. Saul thought that he had given up too easily and when they set off on another journey he did not want to take Mark again. Barnabas could not discourage Mark in this way and so decided instead not to go with Saul. Barnabas took Mark back to Cyprus. They spent their time encouraging the new churches there.

I like to think of Barnabas going on encouraging Mark. So much so that one day, Mark himself became a great leader and even a writer. He became someone useful to God all because of Barnabas the encourager.

*I wonder what you like best about this story?*

*I wonder what you think is the most important part of this story?*

*I wonder where you are in this story or which part of the story is about you?*

*I wonder if there is anything in the story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?*