



On your marks

Barnabas' generosity, courage and his concern for young Mark are aspects of his discipleship that are inspiring. Barnabas wasn't his given name but one that he earned because of the gift he made to the church in Jerusalem. It means 'son of encouragement' or more simply 'the encourager'. He was the sort of follower of Jesus that every church needs: someone who draws out the best in others by seeing the positive side of a situation or the God-given potential in others – such as when he dared to welcome Saul after his conversion. The following piece picks up on this aspect of Barnabas' life and draws lessons for us today. It was originally used at a children's festival, encouraging the audience to join in and call out, 'Bring on Barnabas!'

In the church's year, Barnabas is celebrated on 11 June.

Get set

The story of Barnabas can be found in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, particularly Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-30; 11:20-26; and Acts 13-15.

There is also a reflective story at [Barnabas the Encourager](#).

Go!

(Tell the following story 'encouraging' those who are listening to call out for Barnabas, whenever the text is bold. The storyteller is an angel!)

Bring on a Barnabas! Bring on a Barnabas!

Oh dear, oh dear. What am I going to do? Oh, hello. What are you looking at? Haven't you ever seen an angel before? Not even an angel in a pickle. Listen: **Bring on a Barnabas!**

Nothing happens. Nothing at all!

You're looking puzzled. Let me explain. We angels used to shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and straight away, there would be a shout back, 'Here I come!' And there was a Barnabas, always ready to rush off and encourage people.

If you were feeling down, we'd call, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and a Barnabas would cheer you up.

If you felt like giving up, we'd call, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and a Barnabas would say something that put you back on your feet again.

If it felt as if the whole world was against you, we'd shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and a Barnabas would come and give you a hug and tell you how special you were to God.



If someone needed to know about Jesus, we'd call, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and a Barnabas would always be there with just the right words at just the right time. Oh yes, we angels called, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' an awful lot.

But listen, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' Nothing happens.

Why do we call them Barnabases?

Well, a long time ago, there lived a man called ... Joseph. Ha ha, fooled you! This man, Joseph, was so good at encouraging other people, that he got a nickname: Barnabas. It means 'encourager'. Whenever we angels needed someone, we knew we could call on Barnabas to do the job. He was never too busy, never too tired and never ever felt he was too important to do the job. And he never chickened out of what had to be done to tell other people about Jesus. We'd call, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and he'd shout back every time, 'Here I come!'

Like the time when Paul arrived in Jerusalem. We angels knew Paul had a really important job to do - he had to tell loads of people about Jesus, and he had to write some cracking letters for the Bible. But he very nearly turned his back on the job and went back to his tent-making. Why? Because he'd been such a vicious, stinking rotter, that when the Christians saw him coming, they hid under the beds and shouted 'Sorry! No one at home today! Try next door!'

Poor Paul had no friends to help him learn more about Jesus, and everybody was scared of him. He was very lonely. So we angels shouted, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and Barnabas heard us. He knew Paul was nearby and he suddenly wondered what Jesus would do. He remembered how Jesus loved the people no one else liked, like Zacchaeus, and he swallowed and shouted back to us, 'Here I come!'

And he went out and instead of running away from Paul, he invited Paul in for tea and listened to his story. Thank goodness he did! Before long they were firm friends and Barnabas told the other Christians what a very good person Paul was now. Phew.

So Paul stayed with the Christians in Jerusalem and learned more about Jesus and told lots of people about him. We angels were delighted - this was just the job that God wanted him to do. But before Paul could get on to any letter-writing, so that you could have a Bible today, the other people in Jerusalem who weren't Christians got so angry with Paul that they threatened to kill him and the Christians sent him back to Tarsus to keep him safe. Oh dear. Would he be forgotten about?

Meanwhile, there was something strange going on up the coast at Antioch. There was a church there, but the Christians there weren't Jews but they still believed in Jesus. We angels were delighted that more people were getting to know Jesus. But we weren't sure that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would approve. So when they prayed about who they should send to have a look at the church in Antioch, we all shouted, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' And Barnabas called out, 'Here I come!'

He travelled all the way to Antioch and was so excited about the church there that he stayed and



helped them get to know Jesus even more. But there was someone who could help them even more. So we angels shouted, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and Barnabas called back, 'Here I come!' And he went to fetch his friend Paul to help them even more. And even though it meant another journey and even though it meant that Paul seemed more important than he was, Barnabas did what God had called him to do.

And there was someone else God wanted to encourage: Mark had got left behind. We angels knew God wanted Mark to write a book for the Bible as well, but how could he do that when he'd almost given up on following God? We shouted, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' and Barnabas shouted back, 'Here I come!' and he went and cheered Mark up and fired him up for Jesus again and took him on his journeys with him, until Mark could write his book for the Bible that we can still read today.

So when angels see someone who needs encouragement, that's why we shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**'

But the problem is that Barnabas isn't around anymore, and when we shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**'... wait a minute. There are lots of people here who look brave and kind and friendly and cheerful and ready to put other people first. Look, we need Barnabases in schools and churches and homes everywhere. I wonder if you could help? Perhaps if you'd be ready to be a Barnabas, when I shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!**' you could shout, '**Here I come!**' Let's give it a try.

Bring on a Barnabas! ...

Fantastic. A whole new generation of Barnabases to encourage the world.

You just keep listening for our shout - it comes in lots of different ways!

Eh-up, better be going. Oof. So much to do, so little time! Sometimes I get so depressed. But then I shout, '**Bring on a Barnabas!** And someone, somewhere shouts back, '**Here I come!**'