Preschool–Grade 6

Barnabas

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Be an encourager. Barnabas stood by Saul when everyone else was afraid, and he helped people stay close to the Lord.
Bible passage: Acts 4:36–37; Acts 9:26–31; Acts 11:22–26. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." *Acts 11:24 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, a beanbag or small soft book, 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, a soft ball, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Acts 9:27 and Acts 11:24.

1. Opening game: Try It Twice (5 minutes)

Choose a child to walk across the room with the beanbag balanced on their head. The first time, everyone else sits very quiet. The second time, everyone cheers kind words: "You can do it!" "Keep going!" "Great job!" Give everyone a turn who wants one. Ask: *Which time felt better? How do kind words help us?* Say: "Kind words that help someone keep going are called encouragement. Today we will meet a man whose name means encouragement!"

2. Bible story: Barnabas Stands By Saul (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Acts 4, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

In the very first church, there was a man named **Joses**. The apostles gave him a new name: **Barnabas**. The Bible tells us what it means: "The son of **consolation**" (Acts 4:36). Say: "Consolation means comfort and encouragement: helping someone feel better and keep going." Barnabas was a **Levite**, from the family of Levi, and he came from **Cyprus**, an island in the sea (4:36). Barnabas had some land. He sold it, brought the **money**, and laid it at the apostles' feet (4:37), so it could be given to people who needed it (4:35).

Now there was another man named **Saul**. Saul used to fight against the people who loved Jesus (9:21). But the Lord Jesus spoke to Saul on the road, and Saul believed. In the city of Damascus he preached **boldly** about Jesus (9:27). Say: "Boldly means bravely, without being shy."

Then Saul came to **Jerusalem**. He tried to join the disciples, but they were all **afraid** of him (9:26). They did not believe he was really a disciple now.

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The story continues: **Read Acts 9:27 from your Bible:** "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Say: "**Declared** means told. Everyone else was afraid of Saul, but Barnabas took him and stood up for him!" After that, Saul was with the disciples in Jerusalem (9:28). Later, some people wanted to hurt Saul, so the believers sent him safely away to his home city, **Tarsus** (9:11, 9:29–30).

Some time later, many people in a city called **Antioch** believed and turned to the Lord (11:21). The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas there (11:22). When Barnabas came, he was glad, and he **exhorted** them all to **cleave** unto the Lord (11:23). Say: "Exhorted means encouraged. Cleave means hold on tight and stay close."

Read Acts 11:24 from your Bible: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." Say: "That means many more people came to the Lord!"

Then Barnabas went all the way to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they taught many people together. And in Antioch the disciples were called **Christians** for the very first time (11:25–26)!

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. What does the name Barnabas mean? *("The son of consolation," Acts 4:36. It means a comforter and encourager.)*
2. What did Barnabas do with the money from his land? *(He laid it at the apostles' feet, 4:37)*
3. How did the disciples feel when Saul came to Jerusalem? *(They were all afraid of him, 9:26)*
4. What did Barnabas do for Saul? *(He took him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord, 9:27)*
5. Where were the disciples first called Christians? *(In Antioch, 11:26)*

4. Memory verse: Stand Together Verse (5 minutes)

Give 5 children one strip each and have them stand side by side, in order: *For he was a good man, / and full of the Holy Ghost / and of faith: / and much people was added / unto the Lord. Acts 11:24.* Explain the old words: **full of the Holy Ghost** means filled with God's Spirit, and **much people was added unto the Lord** means many people came to the Lord. Read the verse together. Then one strip holder turns their strip around, and everyone reads again. Keep turning strips around until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves. Let new children hold the strips.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost, and he helped people come close to the Lord. God wants us to come close to Him too. Everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. God loves you very much. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: be a Barnabas. Find someone who is new, left out or sad, stand by them, and say a kind word that helps them keep going.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Barnabas word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/barnabas-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/barnabas-craft), or **Pass the Encouragement:** the kids sit in a circle and roll a soft ball to each other. Whoever catches the ball says one kind, encouraging thing to the child who rolled it ("You are a good friend!" "Jesus loves you!" "Thanks for sharing!"), then rolls it to someone new. Make sure every child gets the ball.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Barnabas, who stood by Saul and helped people stay close to You. Help us be encouragers: help us see who is left out and be kind to them. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

About Saul: keep it simple. Saul fought against the believers before he met Jesus (Acts 9:21), and later some people wanted to hurt him (9:29). The lesson does not go into more than that. Saul's own story is in the free Saul to Paul lesson at vbshq.com/bible-stories/saul-to-paul.

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