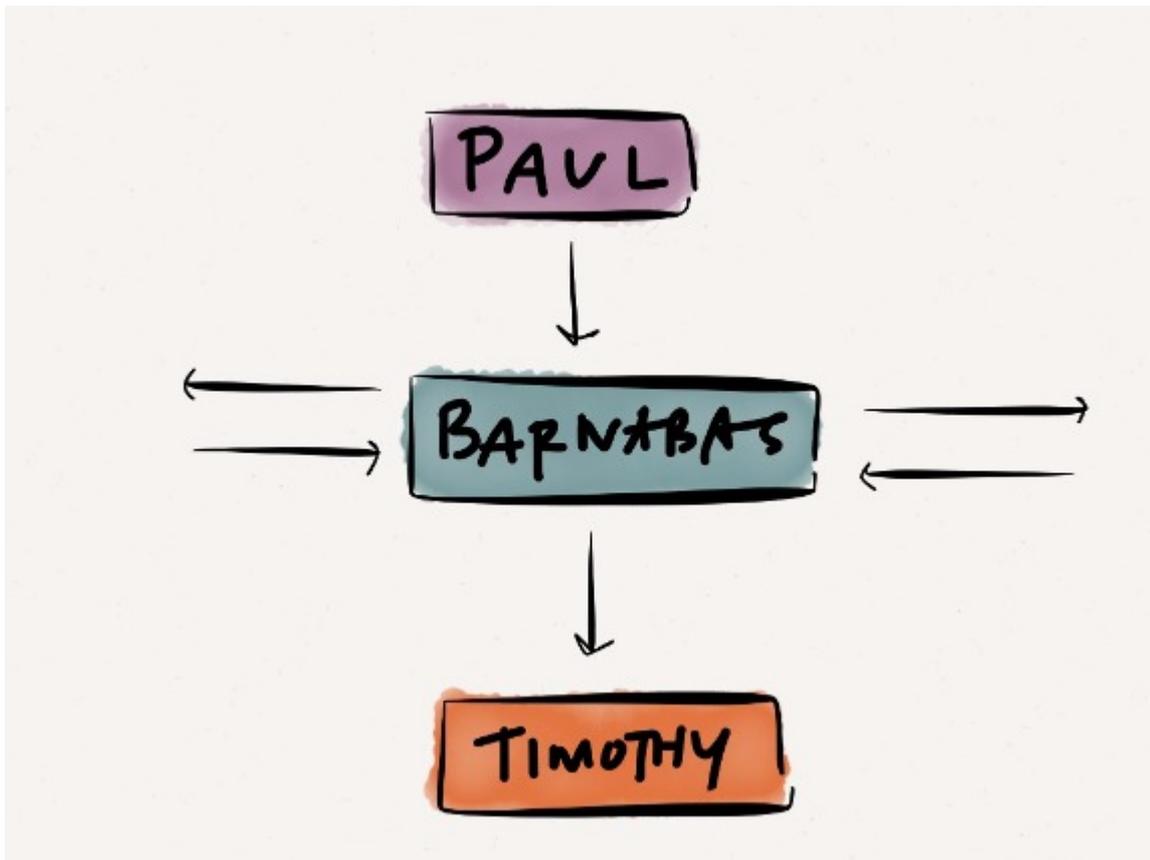


Three Relationships Every Man Needs

Last week's guest post from my original God Buddy, Bill Johnson revealed how our relationship came into being. While Bill was my first "GB" who helped me shape the God Buddy concept, his role has also been one of a mentor, which is one of three essential relationships that every man needs in his life.

In my previous post that describes **Jesus' Model for Friendships**, I explained that Christ had three close friends as part of His inner-circle. Another model found in the Book of Acts suggests three types of relationships, each serving a different purpose for our life.

Based on the example of the Apostle Paul, the model suggests our inner circle should include a Timothy, a Barnabas, and also a Paul in our life. Another way of explaining it is everyone needs an apprentice (Timothy), an associate (Barnabas), and a mentor (Paul). This model has a pretty simple meaning, but will be very transformative when used properly.



In upcoming posts, I will provide more detail on each of these relationships and how their characteristics are important to our development as godly men.

But first, its important to explain how these three men are inter-connected.

Saul, who became Paul

The Apostle Paul began his life named Saul of Tarsus and was a persecutor of early Christians. Saul was born to Jewish parents who possessed Roman citizenship, and was sent off to the school for Jewish learning to learn from the celebrated rabbi, Gamaliel. He spent many years in the elaborate study of Old Testament scriptures and their compliance with the Jewish laws. Saul is later introduced in **Acts 7** as someone seeking to

kill followers of "The Way" (Jesus' early teaching). He was also present at the stoning of Stephen, one of the first deacons in the early church.

Fast forward to the time of Saul's encounter with Jesus in **Acts 9**, when Saul encounters a bright flash of light that blinded him on the road to Damascus. Jesus famously says: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:8). After three days, Saul regains his sight, then begins to preach about Christ in the Jewish synagogues, but under the new given-name of Paul.

Paul Meets Barnabas

By this time, the church of Antioch in Syria (the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea in southwestern Asia) had become the scene of great Christian activity. The church leaders needed missionaries to preach to new believers and chose a great leader named Barnabas to go out with Paul. These two traveled together on the first of Paul's three missionary journeys. Paul and Barnabas became close peers and friends.

Barnabas' given name was Joseph but the apostles gave him the name of Barnabas, which means "*Son of Encouragement*" or "*Son of Exhortation*" (Acts 4:36). He was at Paul's side (Acts 9:26-30) and verified his conversion story so much so that the other believers accepted Paul. Due to Barnabas' encouragement, Paul became more confident in his new-found faith and spoke boldly about Jesus which helped the church grow quickly in numbers.

Later, Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement in their journey and they parted company. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus (Acts 15:39-41) while Paul headed to off

in another direction for his second journey, where he encounters his young apprentice.

Timothy Joins Paul

We first meet Timothy when Paul, based on the recommendation of several church members in Lystra and Iconium, decides to take the young man on his travels around to preach the Gospel (Acts 16:2-3). Timothy's biological father was Greek and his mother Jewish, but there no evidence that Timothy was a Christian. At the time, Paul was roughly 48 years old and Timothy just 33, so the young disciple serves as his apprentice.

The third journey of Paul and his team ventures along the upper coasts of Asia Minor, finally making stopping in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41) where he labored for the church for about three years. Paul sends other members of the team with Timothy as one of the main leaders. Paul's journey ends with his arrest in Jerusalem. He spends the bulk of his final 10 years in prison, writing letters of encouragement to Timothy and the other churches.

Paul essentially becomes Timothy's spiritual father. Paul's first letter to Timothy addresses him as "my true son in the faith." (1 Timothy 1:2). In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he points out that, *"you know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance..."* (2 Timothy 3:10-11). Paul challenges Timothy to learn by emulating his own lifestyle.

In these scripture passages, we see how these three men are a model for our relationships that will speak the truth in disagreements, provide encouragement during tough times, and invest in younger guys to help carry-on spiritual truths to future generations.

Stay with me for upcoming posts for more on these three types of relationships. In the meantime, feel free to comment below about how you have benefited by having a Timothy, a Barnabas, or a Paul in your life.

NOTE: I fixed a technical error so if you commented on any prior posts, please resubmit your Comments.
