

Barnabas Encourages Christians in Antioch Acts 11:19-26

Fifth- and sixth-graders are at an in-between stage of development, fluctuating between states of confidence and insecurity. One minute they may feel ready to conquer the world, and the next moment may find them afraid of impending ridicule by their peers. Use this lesson to teach them that regardless of how their peers treat them, God can encourage them in their faith, and they can encourage others to believe in Jesus.



► **Bible Point**
Encourage each other to believe in Jesus.

Key Verse

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13).


Weaving Faith Into Life

Preteens will encourage other Christians to stay strong in faith.

LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Go Team! <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Create cheers for the rest of the group.		
2 Bible Exploration	Scatter and Tell <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Scatter around the room and bop a beach ball to only certain people.	Bibles Teacher Pack: inflatable beach ball	Inflate the inflatable beach ball. Remove furniture and other obstacles from the center of the room.
	Detecting Encouragement <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Look for clues in the way Barnabas behaved.	Bibles, pens, Bible Buzz	Tear out the Lesson 12 pages from each Bible Buzz student book.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





LESSON	WHAT KIDS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Tough Stuff <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Talk about when it's hard to be a Christian in their own lives.		
	Soft as Clay <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Discuss the Key Verse, and learn how it relates to clay.	Bible Buzz, modeling clay	
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Buzz	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.	modeling clay	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



Barnabas Encourages Christians in Antioch

Acts 11:19-26

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Reason to Praise

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In the chapters leading up to today's passage, God revealed to Peter that the message of Christ is not only for Jews but for non-Jews as well. Peter then took that message to the household of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and God poured out the Holy Spirit on these non-Jews who then came to faith in Christ. The Jerusalem church had a hard time accepting that non-Jews could become believers in Christ, but after Peter explained everything that had happened, they praised God that he had granted even the Gentiles eternal life through Jesus (Acts 10:1-11:18).

Reason to Scatter

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In today's passage, we see that the early followers of Christ had been scattered from Jerusalem because of the persecution that began after Stephen was killed. The Jews had stoned him after he accused them of killing the Messiah, Jesus. But everywhere the scattered followers went, they told people about Jesus (Acts 7:1-8:4).

Spreading the News

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The believers who were scattered to Antioch, at that time the third largest city in the Roman Empire, began sharing the message of Christ not only with the many Jews who lived there, but also with the non-Jews. When Jerusalem's church heard that a great number of people had turned to the Lord, they were ready to accept these non-Jewish believers, and they sent Barnabas (whose name means "Son of Encouragement") to see what was happening and to contribute to the spreading of the gospel message.

Barnabas invited Saul (whom we know as the Apostle Paul) to Antioch for a year to help teach because the church was expanding so quickly. Barnabas had befriended Saul and defended him before the apostles

in Jerusalem after Saul had met Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-30).

What happened in Antioch was significant because it was, apparently, the first time Jewish and non-Jewish Christians joined together in fellowship. People there were accustomed to rubbing shoulders with people of different backgrounds and of different ethnic groups. The church in Antioch set a wonderful example for churches to follow in centuries to come.

The Jesus Connection

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As the text tells us, Jesus' followers were first called Christians in Antioch. It's significant that in Antioch this diverse group of followers took on a name that means "like Christ." As they lived out Jesus' example and encouraged others in the faith, people noticed. What a compliment it would be for others to consider us to be like Jesus!

Pray about how your life can reflect Jesus in a way that would help draw others to God. You can write your prayer here.





1 GETTING STARTED

Go Team!

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went.

Have kids form groups of three or four. Tell groups that they will have three minutes to create a cheer to teach the rest of the group. Explain that the cheers should encourage the other preteens in their faith. For example, a group might create a cheer similar to this one:

Two, four, six, eight,
Sharing your faith is always great!
One, three, five, seven,
Believe in Jesus and go to heaven!

After three minutes, call time. Say: **First group, let's hear the cheer!** Have the first group perform its cheer and teach it to the rest of the group. Have everyone perform the cheer. Then move on to the second group, and so on until everyone has shared.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- Why do sports teams have cheerleaders?
- Why do we like to be cheered on—or encouraged?
- Does encouragement come naturally to you? Explain.

Say: **Encouraging people doesn't always feel natural to us. But Christians can ► ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS. Let's hear about a man named Barnabas and how he was a great encourager.**

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Scatter and Tell

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Open your Bible to Acts 11:19-26, and show kids the passage. Distribute Bibles, and have kids turn to the passage.

Scatter and Tell Supplies

Bibles
Teacher Pack
inflatable beach ball

Scatter and Tell Easy Prep

Inflate the inflatable beach ball. Remove furniture and other obstacles from the center of the room.



Say: **Today's Bible passage comes from Acts 11:19-26. It takes place after Jesus had returned to heaven. It was difficult to be a Christian at that time. Non-Christians actually mocked those who believed in Jesus. Authorities threatened to arrest or harm them just because they believed in Jesus.**

Have a willing preteen read Acts 11:19-21 aloud.

Say: **Many of Jesus' followers had been scattered to different cities because of this persecution. Let's see what that might have been like.**

Have kids stand together in a tight circle in the middle of the floor, and say: **At one point, lots of Jesus' followers were all together, just like you are right now. But then bad things started happening to Jesus' followers—one man named Stephen was even stoned to death because of his faith in Jesus!**

Ask:

- **What would make people so afraid of Christianity that they would kill people over it?**

Say: **Many of Jesus' followers scattered to different cities and regions because they faced persecution. I bet they didn't waste any time getting to their new locations!**

When I flip the lights, that will be your signal that the authorities are coming after you because you're a Christian. You'll have to move quickly, just like the early Christians did. Ready? Scatter!

Flip the lights off. Count to five; then flip the lights on again.

Say: **Freeze! This is where you'll have to stop for a while to stay in hiding. While the persecuted believers were scattered, they shared their faith with others, which is a great thing to do. But in this case, there was one slight problem. Let's see if you can figure out what that problem was.**

Show kids the inflatable beach ball.

Say: **I want you to toss this beach ball to people near you—except for people wearing blue. You can't toss it to them.**

Hand the beach ball to one preteen, and let the game begin. Keep reminding kids over and over not to toss the ball to anyone wearing blue. When everyone not wearing blue has received and tossed the ball several times, call time.

Talk With Kids ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **For those of you wearing blue, describe how this game felt to you and why.**
- **What made Barnabas realize it was okay to tell everyone about Jesus?**
- **Who are some people that haven't heard about Jesus in today's world?**



Detecting Encouragement Supplies

Bibles
pens
Bible Buzz

Detecting Encouragement Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 12
pages from each Bible
Buzz student book.

Say: **We know that it's important to tell everyone about Jesus. But the persecuted Jews must have been terrified that telling anyone else about Jesus would lead to their deaths. Thankfully, we can ► ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS without fear of persecution.**

Detecting Encouragement

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have kids form groups of four, and give each group a Bible and pens. In their groups, have kids take turns reading the verses from Acts 11:22-26. Then distribute this week's Bible Buzz pages, and direct kids' attention to the "Super Sleuth" activity.

Say: **Now that you've read the passage, I'm going to give you about three minutes to complete the "Super Sleuth" activity on your Bible Buzz page. When I call time, compare your answers with those of everyone else in your group. Then we'll share our thoughts with everyone.**

Encourage kids to refer to their Bibles during this activity. After two minutes, tell kids they have one more minute to wrap up their discussions. After another minute or so, have kids share their responses with other group members. Circulate around the room, making sure everyone in each group is included and is participating. Then have kids answer these questions in their groups. After each question, invite willing preteens to share their groups' answers.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What could've happened in Antioch if Barnabas hadn't been such an encourager?**
- **Why do you think it's important that Christians encourage each other in faith?**

Say: **We all face times we need encouragement in our faith. That's why it's important for Christians to be there for each other—just like Barnabas was there in Antioch. But we also need to tell other people and ► ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS. Let's see what that looks like in our lives.**

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE



Tough Stuff

What You'll Do

Have kids get into pairs.

Say: **We don't necessarily face persecution like the people of the early church did, but we do face our own challenges that make it hard to be a Christian sometimes. With your partner, talk about a time it's hard for you to be a Christian. Maybe it's at school because people make fun of you because of your faith. Maybe it's when making a certain decision based on your faith will leave you out of something everyone else is doing. You'll each have about a minute or so to share. As your partner shares, offer words of encouragement.**

Give kids about two minutes to talk. Halfway through, tell kids to give their partners time to share. After two minutes have passed, call time. Invite willing kids to share their insights with the rest of the group.

Say: **Thanks for sharing your insights. I appreciate your willingness to let us know what you're thinking. Being a Christian can be tough stuff sometimes.**

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **How is what we just experienced similar to what happened in Antioch?**
- **Why does talking with other Christians help us in hard times?**

Say: **Telling everyone about Jesus was a new thing for Barnabas, but when he saw the Christians in Antioch doing it, he encouraged them to keep sharing about Jesus with the Greeks. And sometimes our friends need to hear it, too. That's why we can ► ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.**

Soft as Clay

What You'll Do

Tell kids to remain in their pairs, and have pairs number off from 1 through 6. (If there are more than 12 kids, have pairs continue numbering off, starting over with 1.) Direct kids' attention to the "Be a Barnabas" activity on their Bible Buzz pages.

Say: **We're learning to ► ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS. In your pair, read your situation and think of how you could encourage someone's**

Soft as Clay Supplies

Bible Buzz
modeling clay



faith in that situation. Be ready to act out your idea for the rest of the group. You'll have five minutes to think of your answer and get ready to act it out. Let me know if you have any questions.

After five minutes, call time. Let each pair read its scenario and act out its way of encouraging others in their faith. After each performance, lead the group in a round of applause and encourage the actors to take a bow.

Have kids find the Key Verse, Hebrews 3:13, on their Bible Buzz pages: "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

Ask a willing preteen to read the verse aloud as others follow along. Then have everyone repeat the verse with you several times.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What does this verse mean to you when you read it?**

Say: **This verse has a few interesting components. First it says to encourage each other daily. Let's take a closer look.**

Ask:

- **How often would you say you encourage another person in his or her faith?**

Say: **We usually see each other only once a week, here at church. Maybe we encourage each other's faith then. But maybe not, right? So that's maybe once a week that we encourage each other in this group. But the Bible says to encourage each other in faith every day.**

Ask:

- **How many of you feel that you need encouragement every day?**
- **What could happen if we put off encouraging each other's faith instead of doing it today?**

Say: **The last part of this verse talks about the consequences of not encouraging each other.**

Ask:

- **What do you think it means to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness?**

Say: **Well, *deceit* means "lying," so obviously sin is going to mislead us. And to figure out what it means to be hardened, let's use this.** Hold up the clay.

Ask:

- **What would happen to this clay if I left it out and uncovered for a day? a week? a month?**

Say: It might not happen all at once, but it would eventually harden if it's not taken care of. That's kind of like what this verse is talking about. It can be tough to be a Christian, and we need encouragement to keep going strong. If we don't get it, we may get discouraged and bitter. Our hearts may become hard over time, like this clay would.

But when we encourage each other, it's like putting a protective covering over each other, just as if we covered up this clay to keep it soft. Barnabas encouraged people in Antioch, and many people came to know the Lord. We, too, can ► **ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.**



4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do

Say: Let's think about how we can ► **ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on their Bible Buzz pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- Offer to pray for someone who's going through a hard time. (Then pray!)
- Write your favorite Bible verse on an index card, and give the card to someone this week.
- Tell one person about Jesus this week. Practice what you'll say before you say it.

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, place, and other ideas.

Say: Barnabas was a great encourager. Let's ► **ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BELIEVE IN JESUS** this week by following through on our Daily Challenges.

Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Buzz



Weaving Faith at Home Supplies

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modeling clay

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the commitment they made to encourage each other to believe in Jesus. Kids can also do the activities in the “HomeConnect” section of their Bible Buzz pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church’s families! Available at group.com/digital.

Have kids sit in a circle on the floor. Break off a small piece of clay for each person.

Say: **We’ll go around the circle, and each person will encourage the faith of the person to his or her right. After you say your word of encouragement, add your clay to the clay of the person on your right. For example, you might say something like “I’ll pray for you this week” or “Remember that Jesus is always with you.” I’ll give you a minute to think of what you’ll say. Then I’ll start.**

After a minute, encourage the person to your right and add your clay to his or hers. When the clay comes back to you, lead kids in a prayer similar to this one:

Pray: **Dear Lord, thank you for putting other Christians in our lives to encourage us in our faith. Help us each be the kind of encourager that Barnabas was. Don’t let our hearts become hardened by sin, but keep them soft and moldable by you. In Jesus’ name, amen.**