

Barnabas, John Mark

Memory Verse: *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing* (1 Thess. 5:11 NIV).

Background Helps:

Most teachers have been supplied with copies of the book by D. Edmond Hiebert, *In Paul's Shadow: Friends and Foes of the Great Apostle* (formerly, *Personalities around Paul*). The chapters on Barnabas and Mark (John Mark) will provide excellent, organized information and on these two characters.

Lesson Helps:

Teachers have a choice of building your lesson around the character of Barnabas or John Mark, depending upon what you perceive to be the needs of your class.

1. My aim is to teach my students about Barnabas, the “Son of Encouragement,” so that they will pursue a ministry of encouragement to others. Most of the material in this week’s readings deals with the character of Barnabas. When we are first introduced to him in the New Testament, we discover that his given name was Joseph, but he was renamed Barnabas by the apostles because of his ministry of encouragement to others (Acts 4:36). Study through the various passages on Barnabas in the week’s readings and each time ask the question, “How does this incident reveal his quality of being an encourager to others?” You could take this approach in small groups in the teen and adult classes or by means of storytelling in the children’s classes, each time concluding the story with the question, “How does this incident show that Barnabas loved to encourage others?” Include the week’s memory verse in your lesson. Explore the question, “How can we be a ‘son of encouragement’ to others this week?” Ask your students to write down one *specific* way in which they will seek to encourage a *specific* person this coming week. Next Sunday, invite your students to share testimonies of how it went. (You could also call your students or email them during the week with a reminder of this assignment.)
2. My aim is to teach my students about the failure and recovery of John Mark, so that they will recommit to serve the Lord after failure. There is much less material on the character of John Mark, but it is very instructive. Since the references are few, guide your students through a Bible exploration of Mark, tracing his early failure and his ultimate reinstatement to service. (Don’t forget to include the fact that he is the writer of the gospel of Mark! He may be the young man referred to in Mark 14:51-52.) Consider such questions as: (1) Why do you think Mark turned back on the first missionary journey? (2) Why do you think Paul did not want to take Mark on his second journey? Why do you think Barnabas did want to take him? (3) How do you account for Paul’s changed attitude toward Mark later?

(4) How was Mark used by God in his later life? Encourage your students, who may have failed God or dropped out of his service, that this very Sunday school lesson is giving them the opportunity to reenlist! Lead them in a time of prayer of confession and recommitment. Ask them to write down one *specific* way that they will seek to serve the Lord this coming week.

Assignment:

-  Read about Peter and James (personalities around Paul).
-  Memorize Acts 15:11.