



## Small Group Questions: The Barnabas Factor

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### Read

Acts 9: 26–31

### Reflect

In Acts 9: 26–31, Saul arrives in Jerusalem and attempts to join the disciples, but they don't believe he has changed. They are afraid of him. It is Barnabas—whose name means “son of encouragement”—who takes Saul to the apostles and relates his story of conversion. Barnabas takes a great risk bringing a well-known enemy of Christianity to them. What if it was a ploy to get to the key disciples? Why did Barnabas take such a risk? What if he hadn't?

Pastor Greg provides several insights into what keeps us from taking a risk on people:

1. Fear keeps us from taking a risk. Fear says, “they might hurt you.”
  - a. Have you taken a risk on a relationship and it didn't go well? What rules have you established in your life because of it?
    - i. What might cause you to make an exception? Have you made exceptions?
  - b. Have you taken a risk and had it turn out really well? How has that affected your willingness to take other risks?
2. Doubt keeps us from taking a risk. Doubt says, “they probably haven't changed.”
  - a. Regarding Saul, what doubts would you have had if you were Barnabas?
3. Cynicism keeps us from taking a risk. Cynicism says “they will hurt you and will never change.”
  - a. Can you think of a time when you allowed a preconception to prevent you from taking a risk and later, learned it might have been an opportunity missed?
  - b. Can you identify any preconceived prejudices that might harden into a protective armor, and serve as too much of a defense mechanism for you? Does that armor keep past hurts “in” as much as it keeps future ones “out”?

How can we be a Barnabas for others?

1. Take the time to hear their story.
  - a. Are you a good listener? Think of the people you listen to the most? Do they think like you? Or do their perspectives differ from yours?
  - b. How good are you at saying, “That's interesting. Tell me more.” Do you do it just to be polite? Has really listening to someone's story ever changed your views?
2. Verify the facts.
  - a. Has true repentance occurred?
  - b. Is there a willingness to make restitution?
  - c. Is there evidence of a changed life?
3. Trust in God's power.
  - a. Do you believe God can transform anyone? Does someone need you to take a risk on them? Did someone ever take a risk on you and be your Barnabas?

### Respond

What is your next step? Where is God leading you? How can your small group support you and hold you accountable in this?