



river west church

River West Church - Staying Faithful to the
Lord with Steadfast Purpose

Pastor Guy Gray
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My intention was to begin a new series of studies this morning: "The Gospel of Christ in the Book of Galatians." But that study will have to wait until next week. I just can't get Barnabas off my mind.

Last Sunday I shared a message about "the way forward" for River West Church. It wasn't a program and it didn't have to do with a new worship facility. It was about our hearts. I asked God to show me the way forward and He showed me a mostly overlooked disciple from the Book of Acts – Barnabas. That wasn't what I expected. But it's perfect! Barnabas was an encourager whose Christian life and ministry had the most profound impact on our world. That impact came largely through the lives of the believers that he encouraged. He "came alongside" others in a way that radically changed their lives and empowered them to walk with Jesus; to be used by Jesus. This was what he did for the Apostle Paul. He did this also for Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark. It's amazing.

But there is also that wonderful church at Antioch. There was a move of God's Spirit there and many came to faith in Christ in that city. The report came to the Apostles in Jerusalem. They needed to send someone to minister to the new believers. They sent Barnabas. It was a great decision. The church at Antioch, under the care and leadership of Barnabas, became the single most influential church for the impact of the Gospel in the first century!

So I want to take one more week with Barnabas. Or, maybe I should say, I want to take a week with the church at Antioch.

The truth is this. I want River West Church to have a much greater impact for the Gospel than ever before. I'm absolutely convinced this is what God himself wants for us. He has done so many wonderful things in our community of faith. But He has done these things for a reason, and it goes beyond us. God wants us to impact our world for Christ in the most profound way. We are already beginning to see this purpose unfold. But there is so much more. Barnabas and the church at Antioch can show us the way forward.

So this Sunday we need to focus on Barnabas and the church at Antioch. God wants to use them to show us the way forward for our church. Here is one of the great passages about Barnabas and the church at Antioch:

When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. (Acts 11:23-24)

There are many important things we need to learn from the church at Antioch. Perhaps the most important is that they "remained faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose". Barnabas showed them how. And what he showed them captures my heart for River West Church. It's not going to get any easier to have an impact for Christ and the Gospel in this world. Our culture is not getting more open to the cause of Christ or the truth of the Gospel. If ever there was a time for us to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, it's now! If we do, we

are going to be amazed at what God does in and through us. God will do extraordinary things through ordinary believers who are steadfast to walk in faith, learn the Gospel and live it out, worship in Spirit and truth, pray, love one other, and go out to a broken world with the truth of the Gospel and the transforming power of God's love.

This is the way forward.