Christ Folk

Have you known anyone who has left everything and everyone familiar to serve God in another place? Is it something you think you could do? This week we’ll read about two missionary pioneers, Paul and Barnabas.

At the end of a service with the believers in Jerusalem, one of the deacons said, “Friends, we received word today from those who left here because of persecution. Their teaching is being well received by the people in Antioch. I think we have the beginnings of another church!”

Everyone began speaking at once. “Praise God!” “That’s really good news!”

“I think it’s time to send someone to Antioch to help our brothers and sisters there,” he continued. “What do the rest of you think?”

“We’ve got to help them,” someone spoke up. “They’d do the same for us.”

“I think Barnabas should go,” someone else said. “He’s proved his ability to encourage new believers.”

“Yes, Barnabas is a good choice,” everyone agreed.

“Are you willing to accept this assignment, Barnabas?” the deacon asked, turning to him.

“I’ll go where I can help most,” Barnabas said. “I can be ready to leave tomorrow.”
After most of the believers had left, Barnabas talked with those remaining about Antioch. Someone asked what he knew about the city.

“It’s the third-largest city within the Roman Empire,” Barnabas said. “People come from all over the world to trade and do business there. Antioch is a beautiful place on the outside, but there’s a lot of corruption there too. The people worship the goddess Daphne.”

“It sounds as if you have your work cut out for you,” one of the apostles said.

“Yes, but it is God’s grace that can change people’s lives,” Barnabas said.

Arriving in Antioch, Barnabas found a place to stay and began searching for other believers. He found the reports about their devotion to the Lord to be true. Within a short time he, too, was teaching and leading people to Jesus.

One evening after a long day of...
teaching and preaching, Barnabas sat thinking. It’s exciting to see so many people accepting Jesus, but there’s more work here than I can do alone. Maybe I’ll ask Saul to come and help me.

The next day Barnabas left for Tarsus, where Saul, also called Paul, had been working. Paul immediately agreed to work with Barnabas. Back in Antioch, they began teaching the Gentiles about Jesus. Soon they were being called by a new name: Christians.

“Have you heard what they’ve been calling us?” Paul said to Barnabas one day.

Barnabas nodded affirmatively. “Yes. Christians. They think calling us ‘these Christ folk’ insults us. They have no idea what a great honor it is to be named after our Lord!”
Visitors came regularly to meet with Barnabas and Paul. One day some special guests—prophets from Jerusalem—arrived. Barnabas and Paul scheduled a meeting with them and all the other believers that night.

The group gathered that evening and listened as the men gave reports from Jerusalem, Phoenicia, Cyprus, and other territories where people were teaching about Jesus. Then a man named Agabus stood to speak. Barnabas motioned for everyone to be quiet and listen.

“Recently God has given me a distressing message,” he told the group. “There will be a drought in Palestine. Our friends in Jerusalem are going to have a very difficult time.”

As Agabus sat down, men and women started talking and planning. Barnabas raised his hand to silence everyone.

“It sounds as if you all have suggested...”
“Let’s hear them.”

“Let’s give as much as we can to help the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem,” someone suggested. Everyone nodded in agreement. Then one by one the believers brought money or pledged goods to be given to the community of believers in Jerusalem. When the gifts were collected, the believers handed them to Barnabas. “You and Paul should deliver our freewill offerings to the elders in Jerusalem,” they said.

Barnabas and Paul looked at each other and smiled gratefully. Barnabas spoke: “We’ll leave first thing in the morning.”
Start at “How” and end with “in unity” by drawing three straight connected lines without lifting the pen/pencil to find the verse that tells us the benefits of working together. Identify the verse by reading in order the words through which the lines go.

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