

# PAUL

## A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

### STUDY EIGHT

## The Pleasure of Being in Ministry Together

*Acts 11:21–30; 12:24–25*

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*My hope today is to convince you that not only are two better than one but sometimes three and four and more. Not only is it unbiblical to try to make it on our own . . . it is unhealthy.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**S**OLID partnerships enrich our lives. Going solo rarely makes us as deep and takes us as far than going together. Think about some partnerships that dot the landscape of history.

The musical chemistry between John Lennon and Paul McCartney was unprecedented. Many of us can't imagine a life without Microsoft products courtesy of Bill Gates and Paul Allen. Where would women's rights be without Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton? If not for the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, perhaps we'd still be driving everywhere, rather than flying.

They would all readily admit that it was their *partnership*—their *togetherness*—that propelled them to achieve their heights of success.

In Scripture, we see the same. Moses . . . Aaron. David . . . Jonathan. Jesus dispatching the Twelve . . . in pairs. In church history, you have the Wesley brothers—John and Charles—one a theologian, one a musician. More recently? Look no further than Billy Graham and George Beverly Shea—renowned evangelist and gifted musical soloist. Powerful ministers working *together* for the magnified glory of God.

God unites people into partnerships to accomplish His plans at a level they could never do alone.

In our last study of the life of Paul, we examined how God used suffering to fashion him into the kind of leader and person He wanted him to be. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we explore how God called upon Paul, still named Saul, to launch his ministry—not as a lone ranger but arm in arm with Barnabas, so the two of them would experience the pleasure of being in ministry together.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prepare to engage God’s Word today by meditating on the words of Solomon recorded in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. Thank God for the blessing of others He has placed in your life. Ask Him for guidance in your time in His Word today.

*Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We rejoin our study in Acts 11 where Luke recorded that a revival was sweeping across the ancient world. Beginning in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the revival had moved northward to the regions of Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. Locate these areas in a Bible map you can find here at [insight.org/maps](https://insight.org/maps). How far is Antioch from Jerusalem?



When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he realized he needed help, so he sought Saul who was in his hometown of [Tarsus](#). How far is Tarsus from Antioch?

Antioch was a large city (about 500,000 people). It was a strategic, cosmopolitan, maritime city in the Roman Empire, noted for both its commercial success and sinful reputation—like Corinth of its day. You can read about [Antioch](#) in the free, online *Holman Bible Dictionary* at [studylight.org](https://studylight.org).

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In the following charts, we explore the surrounding events of Barnabas' and Saul's partnership by combining observation and interpretation. For interpretation, use your Bible-study resources like *Constable's Notes* (netbible.org), *IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts* (biblegateway.com), and the *Holman Bible Dictionary* (studylight.org).<sup>1</sup>

<b>The Antioch Revival and the Spiritual Needs</b> <i>Acts 11:19–24</i>	
When they realized how the Spirit was moving across Antioch and the surrounding region, the church in Jerusalem dispatched Barnabas to strengthen and lead Christ's people.	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
Read <i>Acts 11:19–24</i> . Record your observations about the unfolding events in Antioch, Barnabas' character qualities, his reaction, and his responsibility.	Compare <i>Acts 4:36</i> with 11:24. List three reasons the Jerusalem church chose Barnabas for Antioch? Why was he instrumental?  Given your reading about the city of Antioch, what likely prompted Barnabas' reaction in 11:23? What did Barnabas encourage the believers to do, and what did he mean?

*These new believers had no teaching and very little understanding of Christ. All they knew is that they needed Him and they trusted Him. So the people of Jerusalem said, "Barnabas is the man, let's let Barnabas go."*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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*Acts 11:21–30; 12:24–25*

## Barnabas and Saul Form God's Team

*Acts 11:25–26*

In need of support and complementary giftedness, Barnabas sought, found, and brought Saul to Antioch.



### Observation



### Interpretation

Read *Acts 11:25–26* and record your observations.

Why did Barnabas need Saul in Antioch?

Based upon Barnabas' and Saul's relationship, which we looked at in prior studies, why do you think they complemented one another as a ministry team?

*Jews and gentiles are worshiping the same Lord, and this calls for help. Saul has been removed from Barnabas, but Barnabas hasn't forgotten Saul. Right in the middle of this exciting time at Antioch, God brings a man like Saul to work together with Barnabas. It's terrific and it makes sense.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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*Acts 11:21–30; 12:24–25*

## The Fruit Produced by God's Team

*Acts 11:26–30; 12:24–25*

Barnabas and Saul ministered together and produced abundant fruit to the glory of God.



### Observation

Read *Acts 11:26–30*. Record your observations about the ongoing events in Antioch.

Continue your observations by looking at *12:24–25*.



### Interpretation

According to Acts 11:26, what was the primary ministry of Barnabas and Saul? Why was Saul instrumental in that work?

What does 11:29–30 imply about the character of both Barnabas and Saul?

In 11:30 and 12:25, whose name was listed first and why is this significant?

*Why was it such a pleasure for Barnabas and Saul to work alongside each other? There was no competition between them. There were no ego battles. There was no disagreement in philosophy of ministry. There were no hidden agendas. There were no unrealistic expectations. There was no unresolved conflict.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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## Correlation: The Fingerprints of Barnabas and Saul

Barnabas and Saul formed a ministry dream team. Their “sum” was greater than their “parts.” Look at how their strengths complemented each other in the following diagram.

Barnabas	Saul
Jewish—from the island of Cyprus	Jewish—from the intellectual center of Tarsus
A natural encourager	A teacher and preacher
A man of compassion	A man of intellect
Reached those downtrodden	Held firm in faith and theology

Return to [Acts 11:26](#). Look up the word *Christian* in a Bible dictionary like this free one, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, at [studylight.org](http://studylight.org). How might the Barnabas/Saul ministry team have led to the first use of the term *Christian*?

*We have names today. We call them “Houstonians.” We call them “Bostonians.” Meaning they are people who represent that place or movement. People who represent Houston. People who represent Boston. These are “Christians.” They are people representing Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Look again at [12:24–25](#). How did Barnabas and Saul expand their “team” and why do you think they did so?

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Later in Paul's ministry, he encouraged the churches to work together according to each person's gifting. Read what he wrote in [1 Corinthians 12:12–26](#) and jot down three key points that stood out to you on the pleasure of doing ministry together.



## Application: Togetherness Truths

Three application principles emerge from our study on ministering together.

1. *Whatever God plans, He pursues.* Ministry is about Him—His plan, His purpose, His empowerment. In addition, God's plans frequently involve surprises.
2. *Whomever God chooses, He uses.* God graciously chooses to use us in ministry, despite our imperfections.
3. *Wherever God selects, He sends.* God is in the business of pursuing and rescuing a lost world, and He places His servants where He wills.

After reflecting on this study's biblical passages and the application points above, is there an insight that stood out to you more than anything else? What was it, and why is it especially relevant for you?

Think of the people God has placed in your life with whom you have served the Lord. Who are they? How did, or how do, they complement you? What fruit have you witnessed from your partnership?

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Is there someone God has placed on your heart to whom you can reach out and encourage or serve? How might you do that in some practical way?

*If you were to interview Saul or Barnabas, each man would identify himself as a servant of the living God, the Lord Jesus. Wherever we serve and in whatever capacity and however large or small the group, that's what is most important.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Thank You, Father, for Your sovereign work in me and among those with whom I serve. This is about You and Your work. Show us how to lead in such a way that we would truly lead, not control. That we exercise our gifts, not look for opportunities to be ambitious. Find us wherever we are, Lord, and then take us to wherever we need to be. We make ourselves available to You. I ask this believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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