



Other than Jesus, which person made the greatest impact in the New Testament? You'd have to say Paul, for sure. Paul spent almost twenty years traveling the known world preaching the gospel and planting churches. Paul wrote almost half of the New Testament. Paul trained up a legion of young pastors and church planters to help him and spread the gospel even further. The Holy Spirit specifically forbade Paul from ministering in Asia. He wanted to go but God said no. Then he spent a year and half in Ephesus training up men who then planted the other six churches in Revelation. There is no question--in terms of human figures, the New Testament is mostly about Jesus and Paul.

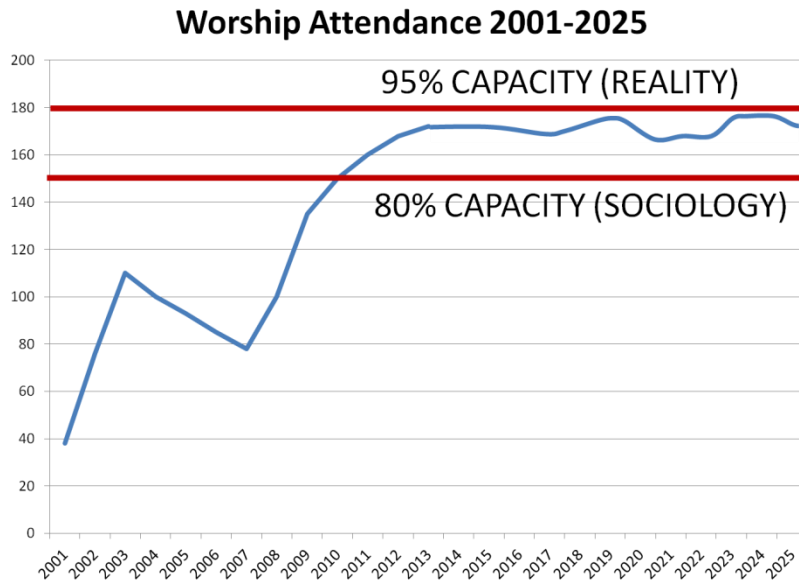
So then we should ask ourselves why Paul was able to have such an impact for the kingdom of God? There are actually many reasons we could list. We know that the number one answer is the power and grace of God. Saul was a zealous Pharisee and because of this, he was able to take his vast knowledge of the Scriptures and use it to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. He did this everywhere he went and he was really good at it. I'd love to take an evangelism class from Paul. He also had the personality for what he did. And there's one piece we often forget-time. Did you know that there were fourteen years between Saul's conversion and Paul's first church planting journey? Fourteen years! That's a long time so we shouldn't get overly discouraged when our spiritual lives seem to be crawling along at a snail's pace.

But perhaps the most overlooked impact upon Paul's life was Barnabus. If you are familiar with the book of Acts, you know that Paul and Barnabus had a sharp disagreement over John Mark. Barnabus wanted to take Mark, the deserter, with them on the second journey and Paul said "It ain't happenin' Barney." We also know that the incredible encouragement of Barnabus made John Mark into someone very special. At the very end of his life, Paul wrote this about Mark the deserter. "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). That's an amazing statement! We never actually hear Paul say, "I was wrong about Mark" but this is as close as we get. When Paul wrote this sentence about Mark, it is quite likely that Mark had already written his gospel. It's also quite likely that Mark was so useful to Paul because he had so much knowledge and insight about Jesus. Pretty cool, huh? And the lion's share of the credit goes to Barnabus.

But as I said, the man Barnabus impacted the most was Paul. And we rarely talk about this impact and why it is so important. Paul was better when he was together with Barnabus just as

Mark was better together with Barnabus. And so it is with all of us. God never intended us to be alone, to work alone, to serve alone. We are always better together.

As I did last week, I want to relate the book of Acts text to our vision, not for a second service

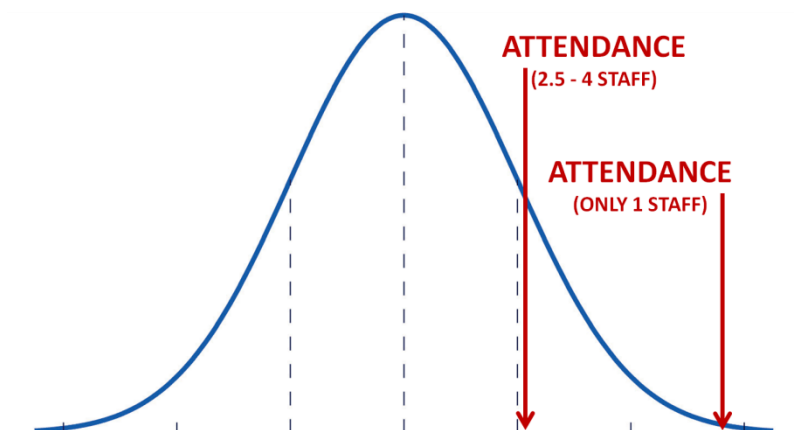


this time, but our vision for a second staff. Before Last Sunday we had not done a sufficient job explaining our vision for a second service and we haven't explained anything about our vision for a second staff. Let me give you a reminder from last week. Here is our past and projected attendance for the future. If we do nothing, we will either continue to hit against the barrier called reality or we will begin to decline. I hope I was able to explain why we feel it is the best decision to add a second service. If we had half a

million dollars we could think about adding on but in the absence of a half a million dollars, a second service is the best option.

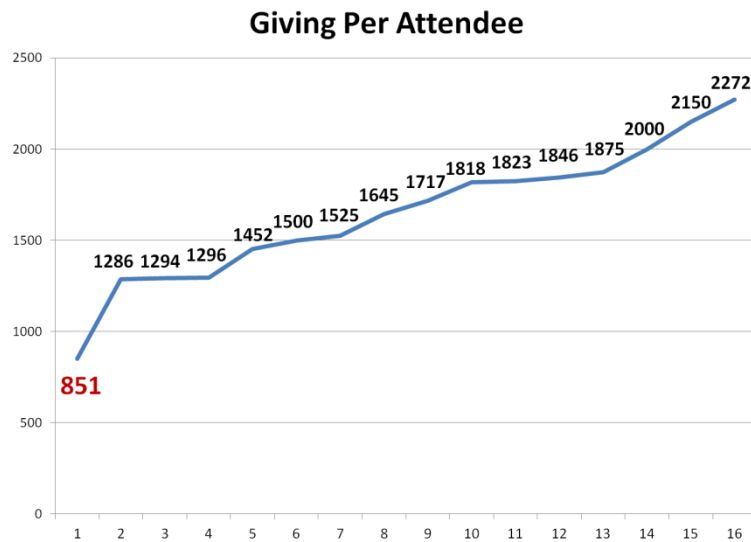
This next graph I am going to show you is based on a survey I did with 17 churches in the Forest Lakes District, which is the state of Wisconsin and the UP of Michigan. There were two criteria in the survey. The churches had to have at least two pastors on staff, the towns had to be similar in size to Viroqua. I was able to get data on every church in our district that met these two criteria and here is what I found.

**SURVEY OF 18 FLD CHURCHES
with 2.5-4 Staff**



These 17 churches all had 2 pastors but they also all had at least one part time office staff. Therefore, all 17--except our church--had between 2.5 and 4 staff on their church payroll. So out of these 18 churches, we have more people in attendance on Sunday morning that twelve of them. So on a bell curve, we are larger than 2/3 of these churches. We are literally ahead of the curve. The second interesting piece of data is that compared to all churches in the district that

only have one staff, we are the largest. No one has a higher Sunday morning attendance. We are at the very far end of the curve. What this points toward is that even though we are well ahead of the curve in attendance, we are well behind the curve in staffing. All of the churches that have at least 2 pastors on staff hired their second staff long before they reached the same average attendance that we currently have. It does not mean that we should therefore immediately hire a second pastor but at the very least, it certainly makes sense if we decide to move forward. The data is overwhelmingly pointing in that direction.



However, there is another important piece of data we need to consider. I asked these churches to provide 3 pieces of data.

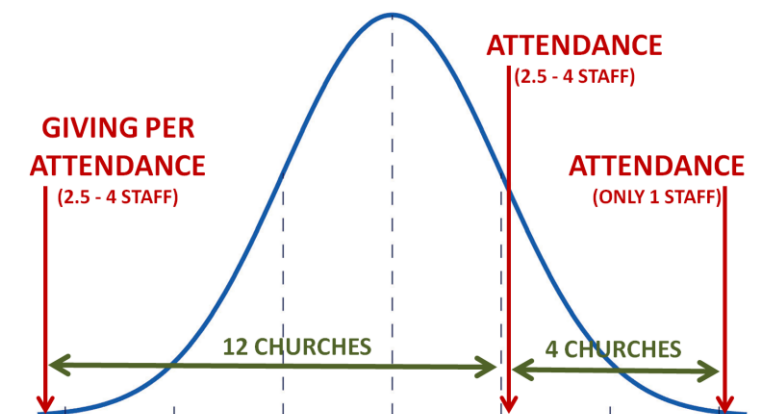
1. Their average attendance
2. Their total budget
3. Their total budget related to all staff

With this data I was able to graph a curve representing the amount of giving per church attendee. Remember that we are in the upper two-thirds of these churches in terms of attendance but in terms of giving per attendee, we are dead

last. We are less than half of the median giving out of 17 churches. I don't show you this to shame you into giving more. There may be many reasons why this is true. All of these churches have a good number of youth and children but I have the suspicion that we have a higher percentage of young people. So the obvious answer is that we have to get the 5-10 year olds to start pulling their weight, right?! Also, some of these churches are closer to larger cities so that gives them the potential for higher incomes. It was part of the survey so I wanted you to have the information but we also need to know it for moving forward. It's just good stewardship and proper planning to be aware of these kinds of things.

Jesus said, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish" (Luke 14:28-29). I realize that this was said as an illustration of counting the cost of following Jesus but the principle is still valid. We do have to be good stewards. On the other hand, there is faith. We did not

SURVEY OF 17 FLD CHURCHES with 2.5 - 4 Staff



have the money to build this building but we did step out in faith and God has blessed us as a result. So there is always the balance between faith and presumption in these decisions. If God commands us to do something then it is not presumptuous to believe it. In fact, it would be sinful not to believe it. But God has not commanded us to hire a second pastor so we have to have faith that God will provide if we move forward yet not be presumptuous and assume that he must help us. There is always a balance on matters that are not clearly revealed in Scripture. The good news is that you have already been generous on this matter for the past 3 years. By the end of the year we will already have \$30,000 set aside to give us a jump start on hiring new pastor. You have already demonstrated vision, faith and generosity, so that is a great start.

With that as a backdrop, let's dig into the text in Acts. I want to show you why Barnabus was largely responsible for Paul's success--why the two of them were "better together."

The first text is Acts 9.

*23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night **in order to kill him**, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.*

Right before this, Paul was radically saved by Jesus and then he immediately began to preach the gospel. As a brand new believer, he set out to share his faith. Not even attempted murder would stop him. This took place in 33 AD. It was 2-3 years before he met any of the apostles.¹ They were understandably afraid of him.

*26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were **seeking to kill him**. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus (Acts 9:26-30).*

Even today, secret house churches are always on alert for false believers sent to infiltrate and spy on them. This is one of the most important scenes in all of Acts. Right here, Paul was an outsider to the church in Jerusalem. In God's sovereignty, he would have been accepted eventually but from a human perspective, Barnabus is the instrument for reconciliation. Paul had been the church's greatest enemy and he will become its greatest friend, but only if Barnabus goes to bat for him.

Notice how the story played out. No one believed that Paul was a disciple. In other words, they called him a liar and a fraud. That's harsh. He probably earned those nasty names but for some reason, Barnabus chose to help Paul. But in the next verse Barnabus recounted Paul's conversion to the disciples. *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.*

On several different occasions, Paul told his own story of conversion, but this is the only time in Acts where someone else told his conversion story. Here's the key question-how do you get from verse 26 to verse 27? How do you make the transition from believing that Paul is a liar and a fraud to presenting him to the apostles as genuine and trustworthy? We breeze right through this story and fail to consider what happened between verses 26 and 27. Let me fill in the gaps for you.

The first thing that Barnabus did was listen to Paul. Do you think that Barnabus believed and trusted Paul when he first met him? Unless God told Barnabus in a vision or dream that Paul was the real deal, Barnabus would have been a fool to have immediately trusted Paul. He probably did not trust Paul but he was willing to listen. And he listened so well that he was able to report Paul's testimony to the disciples in Jerusalem. Good listening skills are a lost art. We hold a monthly leadership training group with the acronym of LEAD. At the first session of the year last Fall, we had a session on active listening. All believers should be good listeners but this is especially true of leaders. Being willing to listen to someone shows humility. If I am not willing to listen it means that not only do I feel that I am right but that there is nothing that anyone can tell me that would change my mind. That's a wicked level of pride that will damage those around you. Good listening doesn't mean you always have to agree with the other person but that you respect them enough to hear them out.

What do you think was the next logical step that Barnabus took? Did he believe Paul after listening to him? He may have but I would guess that he did a little investigation. Paul had been preaching for the past two years, almost since the first day he was saved. For whatever reason, the disciples were not familiar with Paul but all it would have taken was for someone to have checked out his story. If you were Paul, isn't that what you would have said? If someone doesn't believe something you have said or done, what do you tell them? You give them proof, don't you. If there was a witness to your actions, you give them the phone number of the witness to verify your story. You present facts and give them whatever kind of proof is needed to verify your story. And there would have been plenty of people that could verify the truthfulness of Paul's conversion, had they taken the time to look into it.

This is often called doing your "due diligence." Due diligence is the reason I conducted the survey with the churches in the district. It's what I always do when presented with a choice or a decision. I tend to be somewhat suspicious of what people tell me if it doesn't pass the sniff test. Do you know what I mean? If it smells a little funny, if it doesn't ring true, I check it out. I owe it to myself and to others to do so. A good example is one's basic beliefs. If you are not at least a little bit cautious then you can be tripped up by all manner of false teaching.

Barnabus listened, he investigated and then he supported and promoted Paul. Once Barnabus heard his story and made sure it was true, he went to bat for Paul before the apostles. No one else did that. Peter and John did not do that. Barnabus did that. He told them Paul's Damascus road conversion, how Paul had seen Jesus and how he had been boldly preaching in Jesus' name. Luke did not record the attempts on Paul's like but Barnabus may have told that part as well.

I have filled in the gaps between verses 26 and 27. I can't prove that this happened but something very much like it had to happen. Somehow you have to account for how the apostles

trusted Paul when at first they were afraid of him and wanted nothing to do with him. From the very beginning of their friendship, Paul and Barnabus were better together. Certainly Paul knew this.

The next text fast forwards a full ten years.

19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 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, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:19-26).

Jerusalem would forever be the Christian church for the Jews but Antioch would soon become the spiritual powerhouse for the Gentile church. But it wasn't like that when Barnabus arrived on the scene. It was a new church filled with brand new believers who desperately needed a pastor. Barnabus was their first pastor. He was a very Godly man and he busied himself with teaching and training these new believers.

And in the process they grew! *And a great many people were added to the Lord.* So what did Barnabus do? He knew he needed help pastoring this vibrant church so he went to look for Paul. Of course he couldn't call or email Paul but I find it interesting that Barnabus actually went himself. You would think he could have sent someone to find Paul but instead he went himself. maybe this says something about the importance of finding his old friend. Once he found Paul, they had the privilege of shepherding the young church together for a year. Once again, they were "better together" than they were apart.

Let's look at one final text in Acts to cap off this story. This took place after Paul and Barnabus pastored together for a year.

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).

These three verses are the main turning point in the entire history of the early church. The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabus and Paul for a great work; a missionary work; a church planting work. These three verses are the very first step in the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. In the next ten years Paul would make three missionary trips and every time he would start and end his trip at the church in Antioch. Barnabus and Paul shepherded the

church together and then the same church sent them off on a journey that would have an incredible and an eternal impact.

So do you see the vital influence that Barnabus had upon Paul? Humanly speaking, Barnabus was the chief instrument of Paul's success. He stuck his neck out for Paul before the apostles. He pastored the most important church in the New Testament together with him. And finally they were hand-picked by the Holy Spirit to be the first people to take the gospel to the world. Clearly, Paul and Barnabus were better together.

But some of you are thinking, "But what about their disagreement over Mark?" That was certainly a turning point and it must have been devastating to have separated from one another but the reason it happened was because Barnabus couldn't help being Barnabus. At that point in time, Mark needed Barnabus more than Paul needed him. Paul had Silas and Timothy but Mark had no one. So Barnabus stuck his neck out for Mark and because of that, we have the Gospel of Mark, the very first gospel ever written and the one that Matthew and Luke patterned themselves after. You could make a strong case that Barnabus had almost as much or maybe even more impact on the New Testament than Paul, when you consider how he impacted those whom he served with and mentored.

If you haven't yet, let me make the connections to our own church.

First, as we know, we are a growing church. The survey of all similar sized churches shows that even though we are well ahead of the curve in terms of attendance, we are behind the curve when it comes to staffing. Barnabus needed help shepherding the young church in Antioch so why shouldn't we seek help as well?

But then we need to define who actually needs help? Why did Barnabus find Paul and bring him to Antioch? the obvious answer is because he needed help. But did Barnabus need help or did the church need help? Barnabus knew that he could not possibly shepherd all of the people so in reality it wasn't Barnabus who needed help but the church who needed help.

I have heard people say, "We need to hire someone to help Rich" or "we need to hire someone so Rich won't get burnt out." I want you to know that I really appreciate that sentiment. I know that you voted to give me a raise for this year even though I asked you not to. I had asked that extra funds be directed toward the "New Staff" area of the budget. But you voted to increase the new staff budget and to give me a raise. That really was kind of you to do that. I think in that decision you showed that you care about me and you have a vision for the future.

But I also want you to think of helping yourself. Fundamentally, hiring a second pastor is not for my benefit, but for yours. I can always work a little smarter and more efficiently, there's no doubt about that, but I can't possibly work hard enough to effectively shepherd this growing church. In fact, I won't work that hard. I absolutely love my job but I don't plan for it to put me in the grave early. But a growing church needs help. If you want, you could say it's both--the church needs help and I need help to help the church. But any way you slice it, adding a second pastoral staff is at least, if not more crucial than adding a second service. And if we do add a second service, then that's all the more reason we need a second staff. We don't just want bodies

in this church. We want believers who can come and grow so that they can go and tell the good news.

Finally this text shows very clearly that a team approach makes both people better together. All throughout their long friendship there was a high level of mentoring and collaboration going on. At first, Paul needed Barnabus and then Barnabus needed Paul. What they did together was so much more powerful than what they could have done apart. I have always been fortunate to have had such a wonderful team of elders at Grace. There have been times that we disagreed but since we elected our first group of elders, there has not been the slightest conflict between us. You may not realize how truly rare that is, how fortunate we all are. And we collaborate and work together very well. We most certainly are better together. But with their full time jobs, there is only so much time they can commit to our ministry. Next Sunday I plan to flesh out in more detail how such a staff person would help all of us.

Rich Maurer
February 8, 2015

¹ Then *after three years* I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. Galatians 1:18 (**AD 35**)