



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Stuck / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

You're not as stuck as you think you are.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that sometimes it's healthy to move on from certain relationships.

SCRIPTURE

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord (Acts 15:36-40 NIV).

Only Luke is with me. **Get Mark** and bring him with you, **because he is helpful** to me in my ministry (2 Timothy 4:11 NIV, emphasis added).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

When Paul and Barnabas found themselves in a situation that made it difficult to move forward together, they parted ways gracefully. There are no recordings of them bashing each other and there's no record of them holding a grudge or resentment toward each other. When we find ourselves in a similar relationship, we can take our cue from Paul and Barnabas and part ways gracefully.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

How do you feel about group projects? Everyone has feelings about those, don't they?

TENSION

This series is all about getting UNstuck. Whether it's from a person, situation, behavior, or feeling, we all want a way out from the things that make us feel trapped.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

There are, of course, people you're stuck with in life that you can't do anything about.

But there's also another group of people: not the people you *have* to be around, but the people you *choose* to be around.

With some of these people, there are times when things get complicated.

Someone doesn't have to be a bad person for you to feel like it's time to move on, make new friends, or break up.

TRUTH

Here's a reality: If you're in a relationship where you feel a little stuck, it probably won't be the last time.

Today we're going to talk about two great friends who were part of the earliest group of Jesus-followers, Paul and Barnabas.

Paul and Barnabas were the dynamic duo: ride-or-die friends on a worldwide mission to help people understand what Jesus did for everybody.

So they were planning their next trip and Barnabas wanted to take John and Paul wasn't having it.

Both Paul and Barnabas were following Jesus, but they had different ideas about how to handle the situation.

The once dynamic duo parted ways, went different directions, and potentially never saw each other again.

One big takeaway? They didn't stay when it was time to go.

For Paul and Barnabas, the mission was too important. The life God had called them to, and the story He was writing, mattered too much to be stuck in a situation that wasn't right for them.

They didn't bash each other. They may have parted ways, but Paul and Barnabas didn't let their disagreement turn into an "us" versus "them" war.

From his letters, we can assume that Paul continued to cheer for his friends, even after the separation.

APPLICATION

It's important to know that while God wants you to love everybody, He doesn't require you to walk alongside someone who is holding you back from where He wants to take you.

For those of you who *do* feel stuck, here are a few things to remember:

1. God has a unique story just for you.
2. God has a story for them.

LANDING

This week, I want you to take some time to think about who you're doing life with.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Stuck / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

YOU'RE NOT AS STUCK AS YOU THINK YOU ARE.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

How do you feel about group projects? Everyone has feelings about those, don't they? None of us are neutral when it comes to doing a research paper, science project, or Spanish presentation with other people.

We either love working in groups or we hate it. Either way, we know that WHO is in our group is a big deal.

When I was in 11th grade, this became super clear to me. I took an English class where we had to read ancient literature and then give presentations with a partner on what it meant. There was one guy in my class who wasn't exactly easy to work with. In fact, he didn't actually do any work . . . ever. Instead, he drew pictures of scary clowns. Which, honestly, seemed a little weird. I'm not saying he was a bad guy. I'm just saying he wasn't my first choice for a partner. So of course, when it came time to be assigned partners, I got him.

It wasn't easy. I was no English class genius, but at the same time, I didn't want to fail. So I did all the work: made the poster, wrote the notecards, and gave our presentation. He did zero things (except, you know, draw clowns). Thanks for the help, clown guy!

Amazingly, the project went really well. In fact, my teacher approached me after class and thanked me for being willing to work with a guy who she knew *wouldn't* be easy to work with.

A normal person would've said, "Thanks," and walked away. Instead, I saw this as an opportunity to show my teacher what a great person I am and score some points in her mind for the future. So I said, "It was great working with him! I think we learned a lot!"

Big mistake. And yes, big lie. My teacher was so delighted to have someone who didn't complain about working with this guy that she said, "Oh, that's great to hear! I didn't know you guys were friends. I'll make sure to pair you up in the future!"

And just like that . . . I was stuck with him. For the rest of the year.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

Maybe you've been there. You got stuck in a situation, on a team, in a class, or in a club with a person that you wish you could get away from. And if you *haven't* been there, you will one day.

This series is all about getting UNstuck. Whether it's from a person, situation, behavior, or feeling, we all want a way out from the things that make us feel trapped.

Today is all about people and relationships.

There are, of course, people you're stuck with in life that you can't do anything about. For the most part, we're talking about *family*. But you can also add people like your soccer coach, Physics teacher, boss, and people who may be assigned to the seat next to you. You generally have 0.0% control over who these people are.

But there's also another group of people: not the people you *have* to be around, but the people you *choose* to be around . . .

- The people you hang out with after school
- The people you text when you get concert tickets
- The people you date (even though you don't use the word "dating")
- The people who follow your fake Instagram account and get all your jokes

. . . Having these people in your life is awesome! Until it's not awesome.

Because with some of these people, there are times when things get complicated. Whether it's an old friend, a new friend, a could-be friend, or a person you're kinda-dating, sometimes things change, people change, there's a sudden shift, or you start seeing things in them you've never seen before. And the relationship becomes way less than awesome. Why?

- **They stress you out.** Maybe you feel like things are *always* tense around them, like you're always trying to fix a problem, resolve a conflict, or avoid saying the wrong thing. It's like walking on eggshells.
- **They're on a different path.** Maybe you guys used to have the same goals or the same values, but now they're making destructive and hurtful decisions.



TEACHING SCRIPT

- **You feel like you can't be you.** Maybe you feel like you have to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, or act a certain way when you're around them. And you're tired of playing a character that isn't you.
- **You've outgrown them.** There's nothing wrong with them at all, but your interests are changing, and you don't have as much in common with them as you did before.

This list could go on and on, but the point is this: **Someone doesn't have to be a bad person for you to feel like it's time to move on, make new friends, or break up.** *Sometimes it's just time.*

But what do you do? Do you just walk away? Ghost them? Stop answering texts? And does that make you a bad person if you do?

TRUTH

5 MINUTES

Here's a reality: If you're in a relationship where you feel a little stuck, it probably won't be the last time. For the rest of your life, you'll be in a series of friendships, dating relationships, roommate situations, and work relationships that will have twists and turns, and sometimes even come to an end. Not because something bad happened, but because that's just the way it goes. It's not a Christian thing . . . it's a *people* thing.

And that's why, no matter what you believe about God or church, what we're talking about today and in this whole series will be helpful, both now and down the road.

Today we're going to talk about two great friends who were part of the earliest group of Jesus-followers, Saul and Joseph.

- Saul was a Jewish leader who hated Christians until he met Jesus. This encounter made such an impact on Paul that it changed his entire life. It even changed his name—to Paul.
- Joseph was called "Barnabas" by his friends because it means "Son of Encouragement." They called Joseph that because he was such a nice guy.

These two guys met and became great friends. (If you met another person who changed his name like you, wouldn't you *immediately* become pals?) Paul and Barnabas were the dynamic duo: ride-or-die friends on a worldwide mission to help people understand what Jesus did for everybody.

And that's where we pick up their story.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work (Acts 15:36-38 NIV).

TEACHING SCRIPT



So they were planning their next trip and Barnabas wanted to take John (the third guy in this story with a nickname . . . of course!). Maybe because they were cousins and Barnabas looked out for his family. Maybe Barnabas had more grace for John and saw potential in him despite his past mistakes.

Either way, Paul wasn't having it. Getting abandoned on a missionary journey back then was no small matter. People were often in dangerous and life-threatening situations. So you HAD to be surrounded by people who would look out for each other and stick together. John had royally failed at this, so you can see Paul's point.

Barnabas was trying to be nice. Paul was trying to be smart. Neither option was *wrong*, because there wasn't a *right* one. Both Paul and Barnabas were following Jesus, but they had different ideas about how to handle the situation.

The Bible goes on to tell us:

They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord (Acts 15:39-40 NIV).

And that was it. The once dynamic duo parted ways, went different directions, and potentially never saw each other again. And while that sounds sad, there are a few things we learn from their story that might be incredibly helpful to us as we figure out when to stay and when to go in our friendships and dating relationships.

One big takeaway? **They didn't stay when it was time to go.** That sounds obvious, but think about it:

- For most of us, we KNOW when a friendship or a relationship is keeping us from who God wants us to be.
- We KNOW when it's time to go . . . we just don't do it.
- We stay longer than we should because, even though a relationship isn't good for us, it can hurt when it ends.
- We put it off and tell ourselves things like, *"They may hold me back long-term, but it won't hurt to hang with them this weekend."*

But for Paul and Barnabas, the mission was too important. **The life God had called them to, and the story He was writing, mattered too much to be stuck in a situation that wasn't right for them.**

They didn't bash each other. They may have parted ways, but Paul and Barnabas didn't let their disagreement turn into an "us" versus "them" war. It ended well. There is no record of them bashing each other. There was no Instagram back then, but we have to assume there wouldn't have been a #teamBarnabas or a #ByeJohnMark. Nope. In fact, in other letters Paul mentions both Barnabas and John Mark positively.

Check out what Paul writes later in a letter to his friend, Timothy.

*Only Luke is with me. **Get Mark** and bring him with you, **because he is helpful** to me in my ministry (2 Timothy 4:11 NIV, emphasis added).*

From his letters, we can assume that Paul continued to cheer for his friends, even after the separation. In other words, things were okay.

APPLICATION

3 MINUTES

Yes, this story happened a long time ago. But some of you feel like you can relate to it today. You feel stuck in a relationship with someone who may be holding you back or making decisions that you know you shouldn't be making. **They're a good person, but they're not good for you right now.**

Here's what I want you to know about relationships:

You're not as stuck as you think you are.

Is it possible to go separate ways and still be okay? Paul and Barnabas did it. You can, too. And I think their story is helpful for everybody, but especially for those of you who are Christians.

For Christians, it's important to know that while God wants you to love everybody, He doesn't require you to walk alongside someone who is holding you back from where He wants to take you.

Maybe you're here and you don't feel stuck with anybody right now. All of your relationships are helping you grow in the right direction. That's great! Put this message in your mental pocket for later.

But for those of you who *do* feel stuck, here are a few things to remember . . .

1. **God has a unique story just for you.** Part of that story will include walking alongside people for a season, but not for forever. And that's okay. If you're following Jesus, trust that He is taking you somewhere. He is writing a story for you. And even if the people in your story change, He won't leave you alone. Barnabas found John Mark, and Paul found Silas. Ask God to help you find the right people for you to do life with right now.

Think about where you want to be in five, ten, or 15 years. Then ask yourself: *Who **should** be on this journey with me? Who is headed in **that** direction? Who encourages me?* Then ask yourself: *Is there anybody who might be pulling me **away** from God's plan instead of toward it?* If you're not sure about how to answer that, ask your Small Group Leader. They can probably see some things about you and your friends that you can't.

2. **God has a story for them.** You may need to walk away from someone, but that doesn't mean God will. He will continue to care about them. Even if they're



TEACHING SCRIPT

making bad choices in life, their story isn't over. And while you may need to walk away, you should still treat them well!

Getting unstuck doesn't have to mean you have to be unkind. You can cheer for them and refuse to say bad things about them. That isn't always easy. When you move away from a friend or break up with the person you're dating, there will be people who *try* to get you to say negative things. Gossip is entertaining, but I want to challenge you *not* to be that person. You can show that you believe God has a story for them by how you talk about them and treat them.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

This week, I want you to take some time to think about who you're doing life with. Because **the people you hang out with will influence your direction every time.** And if you need to adjust your relationships to move in the right direction, that's okay. Because **when you're walking with Jesus, you're never as stuck as you think you are.**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
