

Sharp Disagreement | Acts 15:36-41 | Dave Cover Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Icebreaker: Do you consider yourself okay with conflict or conflict-averse?

Recap

Read:

[Acts 1:8](#)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

This verse is the big theme of Acts: the call to be a witness. In John 17, Jesus prays for the church's unity and connects it directly to her witness to the world. To show the world the goodness of Jesus, the church must be committed to work towards unity—working through conflict, being humble, being quick to listen and slow to anger, etc. However, it's easy to be idealistic about what Christian unity should look like. In last week's passage, after Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, the church worked through what could have been a major conflict and division. This tells us unity isn't always going to be easy. But the passage today tells us that some disagreements won't be resolved.

Discussion

1. What disagreements do you see within the broader church today? How do they make you feel?

Read:

[Acts 15:36-41](#)

³⁶ 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."

³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

2. Why does Paul not want to bring John Mark?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Read the following passages that tell us about the kind of man Barnabas was that shed light on why he wanted to take John Mark with them:

Acts 4:36-37

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 9:26-28

²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! ²⁷ Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus. ²⁸ So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.

Acts 11:25-26

²⁵ Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶ When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

3. What do these verses show us about Barnabas and why he wanted to bring along John Mark?

How did John Mark's story play out? He didn't just drift into anonymity. He not only went on to write the Gospel of Mark, but was mentioned by Peter in one of his letters, and even in Paul's later letters.

Read:

1 Peter 5:13

Your sister church here in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Philemon 1:24 (Paul writing)

So do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers.

2 Timothy 4:11 (Paul writing)

Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry.

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4. Who was right about the decision about Mark: Paul or Barnabas? How does this shed light on some of the disagreements we have in the church today?

Deeper Discussion (Optional): What are some more important issues that we should hold with more confidence and urgency? What issues should we hold more humbly and as less of a priority?

Did Paul and Barnabas completely break off their relationship after this? Paul mentions Barnabas in a letter not too long after this.

1 Corinthians 9:5-6

⁵ Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

5. What does Paul mentioning Barnabas this way show about how Paul felt about Barnabas after the separation?
6. What can we take away from this passage to help us when we feel disillusioned by disagreements in the church?
7. What would be required in our own hearts to disagree or even to separate and to maintain unity?
8. How can we cultivate those kind of humble hearts?

Sharing and Prayer:

Have an open time of prayer as a group:

- Confess ways we have brought unhealthy division (e.g. bitterness, slander, and self-righteousness) in the church
- Pray for ourselves that we would be peacemakers in the church
- Pray for unity amongst Christians in our city, country, and world
- Pray for other churches or ministries in Columbia

Passages for the next two weeks:

- March 1: Acts 16:1-15
- March 8: Acts 16:16-40

Feel free to do your own study to prepare for our next study.