Grace Baptist Church Singapore (17 Sep 2000), UBTC Mongolia (2000) Dr. Rick Griffith

Crossroads International Church Singapore (9 May 2021) Message 15 of 23

NIV 30 Minutes

Title

**When Christians Disagree**

***Acts 15:36–16:10***

College

China

Stop Light

Map

Chess

Coke Can

**Topic:** Relationships

**Subject:** Why do disagreements happen even among godly believers?

**Complement:** Disagreements leading to a separation may be God's means to expand His work.

**Purpose:** The listeners will look constructively at so-called “splits” from God’s viewpoint.

**Attribute:** God of Surprises

**Meditation:** Isa. 55:9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

**Reading:** Acts 15:36-41

**Benediction:** 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

**Songs:** Oh, How Good It Is (Getty);Make Us One

Introduction

### Interest: [I once disagreed with my elders on God's direction for my life.]

#### While I was in college in California, I had the privilege of attending a great church. Looking back, warm memories flood my mind—especially the opportunities I had to be involved in the music ministry of the church.

#### But at my graduation from the business school, the opportunity of a lifetime came up. I was accepted to sing and play trombone for two and a half years with Campus Crusade’s music team in Asia called the Crossroads. The group was to live in the Philippines but have an international ministry of sharing the gospel in 12 Asian nations to hundreds of thousands of people.

#### You can imagine how excited I was to present this proposal to the elders of my church one Wednesday night after the service. We all sat around the conference table; every eye turned upon me as I excitedly shared this ministry. They had fully supported me with another Campus Crusade music team in another state the previous summer, so I didn’t anticipate any problems…

#### But then the elders began to systematically tear down my vision before my eyes.

##### “Rick, we would rather see you as a youth intern here at the church…

##### “Rick, we have our doubts on the effectiveness of traveling music groups…

##### “Rick, we know you are still living at home, which means that you should become a businessman like your parents suggest…”

#### I was crushed. I didn’t realize I would be on trial. I stepped out into the cold night, crawled into my car, and the tears began to flow as I cried to the Lord.

##### “Lord, can’t they see that my heart is right?

##### “These leaders have prepared me for music ministry, and now they are trying to discourage me from using that talent where I’m needed far more!

##### “Lord, who is missing your will here? Surely if we are both walking with you then we can’t disagree like this—can we?”

### Need: Have you ever disagreed with another Christian?

#### Of course you have. Perhaps that person was very ungodly in his or her dealings with you.

• Antioch

• Journey

• Council

MP

Map

• Tarsus

#### But haven’t you ever had a time when you felt that you were walking with the Lord and so was the other person, but you still just couldn’t come to a meeting of the minds? You had different ideas on how to do a ministry, who should be involved, how money should be spent, or whatever. Acts is Good News—but it is opposed externally and internally.

Series

### Subject: Why do disagreements happen even among godly believers? What’s the reason for differences in discerning God’s will even among spiritual Christians?

Subject

### Background: As much as I thought my experience that cold winter night in California was unique, incompatible goals emerged in the early church as well. So today we're going to look at two godly men in Scripture who remained united through many difficulties and yet divided over a seemingly trivial matter.

Fights

Paul & Barnabas

#### The men, as you could tell from our Scripture reading, are Paul and Barnabas.

#### These two men both walked with God and with one another very closely.

##### Barnabas had reached out to Paul when Paul came to Jerusalem as a new Christian. The church shunned Paul, not believing that he had really converted from his previous life of persecuting Christians—but Barnabas stuck with him.

##### When the church at Antioch in the north needed assistance, Barnabas traveled back to Paul’s hometown to bring him to Antioch as a teacher.

##### Then they traveled for two years as missionaries to plant at least ten churches.

##### In fact, they had remained united through tremendous obstacles and brutal persecutions.

##### In Acts 15:1-35, Paul and Barnabas were united against the false teaching on grace by the believing Pharisees in Jerusalem.

#### But in Acts 15:36-41 we see their own unity fractured. In fact, they disagreed on a relatively minor matter.

### Preview: We'll see three things in this account: **why** they disagreed (the issue), **how** they resolved it (the solution), and **what** resulted (the outcome).

Preview

### Text: Notice in Acts 15:36-38 **why** they had a conflict…

# Paul and Barnabas disagreed whether to take John Mark on the second missionary journey (15:36-38).

 [Even these godly apostles disagreed on ministry issues—this one concerning personnel.]

## This disagreement came about because they agreed to revisit the newly established churches in Galatia. These churches were only two years old and needed additional follow-up, especially since false teachers had infiltrated them since Paul and Barnabas were there.

## But the problem came as to whether they should take along John Mark.

John Mark

### John Mark was a young, Jewish Christian from an important family in Jerusalem. In fact, he was Barnabas’ cousin. Acts 12 says that the Jerusalem church met in his home.

### But John Mark had one blot on his record—he flunked out on his first short-term mission trip!

#### While accompanying Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, Acts 13:13 says he left them and went home to Jerusalem. Why? The text doesn’t say, but if you overheard the private conversation between Paul and Barnabas before that journey, it might have gone something like this:

Key Decisions

Who Was Right?

MP

Map

What to do?

Rope

#### “Come on, Paul, I really do not see what the big deal is. Sure John Mark left us before, but now he is a new man. He has matured. He is different. I have no doubt he is ready this time.”

Gloves

#### “Look, Barnabas, he had his chance before, but he could not handle it. You know how tough it is out there. You know the costs. We cannot afford the risk of taking someone with his track record.”

#### “But Paul, he’s not a failure, he just needs encouragement—the kind of support I gave you when you were a new Christian to the Jerusalem church—the kind of support you and I can provide. John Mark needs a second chance.”

#### “Second chance, my eye, Barney! He needs the discipline of the Lord. Maybe staying home this time will help him see that he cannot be both a quitter and a bondservant of Christ at the same time. Besides, if we accept him, how will that look to the other qualified young men? The work has got to go on.”

## So they disagreed. This was not an easy issue to hammer out—even after such unity at the Jerusalem Council.

### Barnabas was committed to take him.

### But Paul didn't want him to come due to his earlier desertion.

(Who was right? Both men had good points…)

## Luke is careful not to tag the blame on either one.

### Both of them felt that to do otherwise would dishonor God—so they held their ground.

### Both of them felt that compromise or resolution was not possible—so they each did what they felt would honor God the most.

### It’s just that while Paul saw the task, Barnabas saw the man.

(This brings up the question: What do you do in these kinds of disagreements between believers? What did *they* do? The next verse shows how they solved their disagreement. Here we see that…)

# The best solution to an irreconcilable disagreement is separation (15:39a).

[The honorable, right way to solve a stalemate where you would have to violate your own convictions is to go our own separate ways.]

## Paul and Barnabas agreed to go their own separate ways.

### The author, Luke, doesn’t sugar coat this conflict. He says the two men had a “sharp disagreement” (NIV). This is a strong word.

### We can hardly imagine how difficult this separation would have been for these men who had traveled hundreds of kilometers together and endured much persecution for the cause of Christ.

### Frankly, in an age when it seems that too few leaders have strong convictions, it tells me a lot about both of these men—obeying God is more important than obeying men.

### Obviously, the ideal in any conflict is reconciliation. But when you feel that following another’s conviction violates your own standards, which you have received from God, you can’t go on.

About You?

My Sharp Disagreed

#### Barnabas felt that in good conscience he couldn’t abandon John Mark.

#### Paul felt he couldn’t honor God by taking him.

#### So what other option was left? They had to separate.

## [I believed my only choice was to go to Asia.]

### When I disagreed with the elders at my church, we explained our viewpoints so that no stone was left unturned. I had so many discussions with these men over the next four months that I can’t think of any questions that I wish I had asked.

### Yet our goals continued parallel—they wanted me to take a pastoral intern position but I was convinced that to change directions would be to dishonor God. So did they.

### Disobedience to authority is clearly wrong. I had always obeyed them. But when convictions differ to the extent that you believe you will sin if you do not do what you believe God has placed in your heart, then you must remove yourself from that authority—not go against that authority but remove yourself out from under it.

### I had to make a choice—that choice was to separate from my church and obey God’s voice to come to Asia.

#### To this day, this was the most difficult thing I have ever done.

#### I *agonized* over this for months. I filled my journals trying to sort out whether others could make these decisions for me.

#### Finally, I went through the book of Acts in a single day and studied every time someone was led of the Lord to do something. To my surprise, the general rule was that people responded without the approval of authorities.

#### Soon I had taken a plane to the Philippines where I began my ministry.

(Well, what about you?)

## Inevitably in your walk with God an issue will come up that you cannot support.

### When this happens, we need to ask God whether this is really a big deal. Sometimes people leave churches or ministries or employment for the silliest of reasons—the colour of the carpet, the pastor’s accent, or whatever.

### But some issues matter so much to us that we must either support our leaders or leave.

#### Some of us feel strong enough about *women’s roles* in the church that we have left another church to come here.

#### Others of you have disagreed over *gifts of the Spirit* so you came to this church.

#### Maybe you felt the *ministry direction* of another Christian community or organization was not compatible with your convictions.

### If it’s not a minor issue but major—significant enough that to support it would be going against God—then you cannot support it. What to do?

#### By all means, work towards reconciliation! Talk, listen, pray together, seek counsel, study the Word together… work toward unity.

Map

• 2 Assistants

Who Was Mark?

MP

• 2 Journeys

Reconcile

#### But if, after a sufficient time of prayer and discussion, there is no meeting of the minds, you have to act. Even to do nothing is to act.

#### Don’t act by disobeying authority—separate yourself from it.

##### I knew full well that my decision to go against the counsel of my elders would remove myself from the membership of the church, so I changed authorities by becoming a member of another church in the Philippines where I ministered.

##### In another incident I was in the leadership of an organization when a few members tried to steer us from our Christian stance. I committed myself to leave the organization if this minority group was successful.

(So what happened to Paul and Barnabas? The end of verse 39 and following reveals the results of their separation—and a surprising principle…)

# Disagreement leading to separation may be God's way to expand his work (15:39b–16:10; Main Idea).

[God is big! He sometimes uses our “going different ways” to lead more people to Christ.]

(So what happened? Division? No, multiplication!)

## Did you know that Paul and Barnabas' separation actually furthered the gospel?

### Two missionary journeys resulted from the separation.

#### Paul went north to his homeland area of Tarsus and Galatia to follow-up on the new churches that brought Timothy into ministry (15:39b–16:5).

#### Barnabas had his own missionary journey to Cyprus—an area that also needed follow-up from the first journey.

### Two new apprentices received training for Christian service.

#### Paul chose Silas to accompany him. I doubt Paul would have taken Silas if he had Barnabas as his right-hand man.

##### Silas ended up going on—not one, but—*two* more missionary journeys with Paul. As a Roman citizen like Paul (16:37), he undoubtedly was an asset in the evangelization of the Roman Empire.

##### Silas even co-authored three NT letters (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12).

Silas
• 3 slides

#### John Mark went with Barnabas.

##### Good thing Barnabas stayed with John Mark, for Paul himself also nurtured him eleven years later in Rome!

###### He encouraged the church in Colossians 4:10 to welcome Mark in AD 61.

###### And six years after that, there in Rome, Paul made a significant statement in 2 Timothy 4:11—“Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.” Mark was the last person Paul requested Timothy to send with him before his execution!

NT Overview

##### Also, there in Rome, Mark composed our second gospel. Think of how deficient our understanding of Christ would be without his gospel.

Map

Egypt

Furthered

Barnabas

1 Cor 9:6

##### One church tradition even says, “Mark is said to have been the first man to set out for Egypt and preach there the gospel… and the first to establish churches in Alexandria itself.” (Eusebius, quoted by Fernando, 435)Wow, Alexandria was the key city in Egypt that boasted the largest library in all the Roman Empire—a strategic center to reach intellectuals for Christ—and Mark was our man of the hour there!

##### What if Barnabas had dumped him in Acts 15 like Paul wanted? I can’t say for sure, but possibly Mark would have never developed as he did.

#### Galatian churches grew stronger and larger (16:5) as another progress report.

Europe

Progress Report

Acts 16

Map

• Prohibited

(A third way their separation actually furthered the gospel is that…)

### Paul got confirmation of the gospel going to Europe.

#### Paul tried unsuccessfully to minister in Asia and Bithynia so had to leave Turkey (16:6-7)—but should he go east to the Far East? God said no.

#### God called him to Macedonia as the Lord wanted Europe to first hear the gospel (16:8-10).

Paul to Philippi

#### What would have happened without a Macedonian call (16:9)?

##### God alone knows, but Paul had to either go left toward Europe or right toward the Far East.

##### God’s sovereign plan was for Europe to embrace Christ through Paul, as others preached in the East at this same time.

(A final way their separation actually furthered the gospel is that…)

### Paul and Barnabas still remained friends.

#### Six years after their disagreement, Paul spoke positively about Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6.

#### Evidently, their different opinions didn’t sour their friendship.

#### You have to hand it to Paul. He later admitted that Barnabas was right about John Mark after all.

## The gospel is furthered today in some separations between godly believers.

### After my disagreement with my church over God’s direction in my life, my church experienced God’s blessings.

#### Instead of me being youth leader, a high school friend of mine came. This man named Doug Tegner eventually became a nationally known youth leader.

• Grew

• Doug

#### The church grew from 300 to the nearly 2000 members after I left.

• Support

#### And after 14 years of watching my ministry from afar, the church joined our support team in 1994! Even to this day the church gives monthly to us.

### My going to Asia had several good results on the Asia side too:

#### Our music team reached almost 200,000 with the gospel—and we counted on comment cards at least 10,000 decisions for Christ!

Crossroads

#### My discipleship ministry bore fruit—three men whom I discipled ended up in full-time ministry.

Susan

MI

#### And most significantly for me? I met my wife, Susan!

Subject

(So why does disagreement happen even among godly believers?)

Conclusion

### Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (MI repeated).

### Have you experienced your own painful disagreements with other Christians?

• Hand

Pain

#### How do you see God’s sovereign and gracious hand in it all?

• Blessed both?

#### How has God blessed both sides of the debate?

### Scripture never encourages us to look for conflict—we're to seek unity. Martin Luther declared, “Peace if possible. Truth at all costs.” Seek reconciliation but not at any cost.

Truth Over Peace

#### But we are to seek unity only to the extent that we do not violate what we believe to be God's will.

#### If we're fully convinced that we are following God's plan, let's also be fully convinced to humbly follow exactly what we believe God wants us to do—and leave the results to God.

#### We might see just another example of how God can expand His work even through our weaknesses.

### Prayer

Prayer

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

**Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?**

### Luke records how God prevented a potential split into Jewish and Gentile churches over grace.

### Paul and Barnabas continued to serve in Antioch but with the issue of Gentile requirements resolved.

**Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?**

### Believers need to know what to do when issues cannot be resolved.

### This text shows the benefits of separation.

**Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?**

### Paul and Barnabas were united against the false teaching on grace by the believing Pharisees in Jerusalem.

### But in Acts 15:36-41 we see their own unity fractured.

**Questions**

### Did the church at Antioch support Paul or Barnabas (15:40)?

#### The believers seem to support Paul since he and Silas were “commended by the brothers to the grace of God.”

#### But it may argue too much to say that they felt that Barnabas was sinful in his support of John Mark.

### Why did Paul circumcise Timothy right after such a huge issue over circumcision at the Jerusalem Council just before this (16:3)?

#### The Council did not address whether Jews needed circumcision.

#### Since Timothy’s mother was Jewish, Paul did not want to cause unnecessary offence.

### What would have happened without a Macedonian call (16:9)?

#### God alone knows, but Paul had to either go left toward Europe or right toward the Far East.

#### God’s sovereign plan was for Europe to embrace Christ through Paul, as others preached in the East at this same time.

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Text

**Outlines**

### New Testament Survey (Rick Griffith)

**III. Believers should witness to all the world because God expanded the kingdom message to Rome to reach the end of the known world (Acts 9–28).**

## God saved Saul who preached even beyond Judea and Samaria in Damascus of Syria as God's tool to reach Jews and especially Gentiles (9:1-31).

*Progress Report #4: “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (9:31).*

## God protected believers in Samaria and in Gentile cities of Caesarea and Antioch despite Jerusalem church racism as he was committed to the uttermost part (9:32–12:24).

### Peter reached Gentiles in Joppa, Lydda, and Caesarea [all in Samaria] despite racist Jerusalem believers as God’s kingdom message is for all (9:32–11:18).

### The Gentile church in Antioch alleviated famine in the Jerusalem church to show God's blessing on its ministry (11:19-29).

### God avenged Herod's murder of James and imprisonment of Peter at Jerusalem in Peter's miraculous escape and Herod's death by worms (12:1-24).

*Progress Report #5: “But the word of God continued to increase and spread” (12:24).*

## God expanded the church to Asia Minor in Paul and Barnabas’s two missionary journeys and the Jerusalem Council approved witness to Gentiles (12:25–16:5).

### The first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas extended the kingdom message to Cyprus and Asia Minor (12:25–14:28).

### The Jerusalem Council decision not to require the Law for Gentiles was directed by God to expand the kingdom message through the Roman Empire (15:1-35).

### The second missionary journey of Paul and Silas strengthened Asia Minor churches and Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus due to a ministry conflict (15:36–16:5).

(Note: Second Missionary Journey = Acts 15:36–18:22)

*Progress Report #6: “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew in numbers” (16:5).*

## God extended the church to the Aegean area after keeping Paul from Asia so he could first evangelize Macedonia and Achaia (16:6–19:20).

### Paul was called to Macedonia after Phrygia and Galatia but kept from Asia by the Spirit as God planned the kingdom message first to reach Europe (16:6-10).

### The second missionary journey became the third as God directed Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy to extend the church into Macedonia, Achaia, and Ephesus (16:11–19:20).

#### The end of the second missionary journey extended the church into Macedonia and Achaia (16:11–18:22).

##### Luke helped Paul plant churches in the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (16:11–17:15).

##### Paul evangelized Athens and Corinth in Achaia and then left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus while he returned to Antioch (17:16–18:22).

#### The third missionary journey began by confirming churches in Galatia, Phrygia, and Ephesus with miracles and exorcisms (18:23–19:20).

*(Note: Third Missionary Journey = Acts 18:23–21:16)*

*Progress Report #7: “In this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20)*

## God extended the kingdom message to Roman rulers after Paul’s third missionary journey led to his trip to Rome as a prisoner (19:21–28:31).

### Paul’s third journey had Luke and started no new churches but strengthened Aegean area believers, especially in Ephesus, until it ended in Jerusalem (19:21–21:16).

#### The uproar at Ephesus proved Christianity innocent of wrongdoing but idolatry useless (19:21-41).

#### Paul bade farewell to the Ephesian church by exhorting the elders to care for the flock in light of future apostasy (20:1-38).

#### Paul continued to Jerusalem despite prophecies of suffering ahead of him (21:1-16).

### Paul's journey to Rome had three captivities where God extended the kingdom message among rulers to Rome as a sending base to the end of the world (21:17–28:31).

#### Paul's Jerusalem captivity spread the gospel to his own Jewish people, a Roman officer, and a new Sanhedrin with Roman protection to Caesarea (21:17–23:22).

#### Paul's Caesarean captivity extended the kingdom message to Governor Felix, Porcius Festus, and King Agrippa II all under Roman support (23:23–26:32).

#### Paul's captivity in Rome extended the gospel to Gentile passengers and Malta dwellers en route to Jews and Gentiles unhindered in Rome (Acts 27–28).

*Progress Report #8: “For two whole years Paul stayed there [in Rome] in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:30-31).*

### Toussaint, “Acts,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*

**Possible Illustrations**

### For Grace Baptist in 2000: Can I ask a very direct question? What’s your view on the FCBC separation from GBC in 1986? I wasn’t at GBC then, but I’ve seen enough of these situations to know this was a difficult time. It was very painful to disagree. But I wonder if we now have God’s view on this, seeing how God has blessed both ministries.

#### God has sustained GBC over the years. We have sent out missionaries, seen fruit with people coming to Christ, and retained our doctrinal and ethical integrity.

#### But I think we can also see God’s blessing on FCBC and Lawrence Khong as well. Few of us would claim that 10,000 members and a paid staff of 400 have come about purely from human effort.

#### Maybe it’s time to recognize God’s blessing on both ministries and move on.

**When Christians Disagree**

***Acts 15:36–16:10***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:***

# The problem that threatened God’s expansion of the church was that Barnabas supported John Mark on the second journey while Paul did not (15:36-38).

## Paul wanted to revisit the churches of the first missionary journey with Barnabas (15:36).

## Barnabas agreed to go but wanted to take John Mark (15:37).

## Paul thought it unwise to take Mark due to his earlier defection (15:38).

# The solution to the dispute between Paul and Barnabas was to separate (15:39a-b).

## Paul and Barnabas had a huge argument over Mark (15:39a).

## They decided to part company (15:39b).

# The result of the separation was God’s expansion of the gospel into Europe (15:39c–16:10).

## Two missionary trips results (15:39c-41).

### Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus (15:39c).

### Paul took Silas to Syria and Cilicia with the blessing of the Antioch church (15:40-41).

## Timothy joined Paul in Lystra and helped the Galatian churches grow (16:1-5).

## Paul received his call to Europe after being prohibited from further ministry in Turkey (16:6-10).

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

**When Christians Disagree**

***Acts 15:36–16:10***

Introduction

### Interest: I once disagreed with my elders on God's direction for my life.

### Background: We tend to think that ministry differences never happened in the early church, but today we're going to look at two godly men in Scripture who remained united through many difficulties and yet divided over a seemingly trivial matter.

### Subject: Why do disagreements happen even among godly believers? Why do godly believers sometimes disagree?

### Preview: We'll see three things in this account: **why** they disagreed (the issue), **how** they resolved it (the solution), and **what** resulted (the outcome).

# Paul and Barnabas disagreed whether to take John Mark on the second missionary journey (15:36-38).

## They agreed to revisit the newly established churches in Asia Minor.

## They disagreed whether to take along John Mark.

### John Mark had gone home early on their first missionary journey (13:13).

### Barnabas desired to take him.

### Paul didn't want him to come due to his earlier desertion.

## Luke is careful not to tag the blame on either one.

### Both of them felt that to do otherwise would be to dishonor God.

### Both of them felt that compromise or resolution was not possible.

(Let's look at the next verse to find out how they solved their disagreement…)

# The best solution to an irreconcilable disagreement is separation (15:39a).

## Paul and Barnabas agreed to go separate ways.

## I believed my only choice was to go to Asia.

(The end of verse 39 and following reveals the results of their separation…)

# Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (15:39b–16:10). (Main Idea)

## Paul and Barnabas' separation actually furthered the gospel.

### Two missionary journeys resulted from the separation.

#### Paul went north to his homeland area of Tarsus and Galatia to follow-up on the new churches that brought Timothy into ministry (16:1-5).

#### Barnabas had his own missionary journey to Cyprus—an area that also needed follow-up from the first journey.

### Two new apprentices received training for Christian service.

#### Paul chose Silas to accompany him. I doubt Paul would have taken Silas if he had Barnabas as his right-hand man.

#### John Mark went with Barnabas.

### Paul got confirmation of the gospel going to Europe.

#### He tried unsuccessfully to minister in Asia and Bithynia so had to leave Turkey—but should go east to the Far East (16:6-7)?

#### God called him to Macedonia as the Lord wanted Europe to first hear the gospel (16:8-10).

### Paul and Barnabas still remained friends.

#### Six years after their disagreement, Paul spoke positively about Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6.

#### Evidently, their different opinions didn’t sour their friendship.

#### You have to hand it to Paul. He later admitted that Barnabas was right about John Mark after all.

## The gospel is furthered today in some separations between godly believers.

### After my disagreement with my church over God’s direction in my life, my church experienced God’s blessings.

### My going to Asia had several good results on the Asia side too:

#### Our music team reached almost 200,000 with the gospel—and we counted on comment cards at least 10,000 decisions for Christ!

#### My discipleship ministry bore fruit—three men whom I discipled ended up in full-time ministry.

#### And most significantly for me? I met my wife, Susan!

Conclusion

### So why does disagreement happen even among godly believers? Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (MI repeated).

### Have you experienced your own painful disagreements with other Christians?

#### How do you see God’s sovereign and gracious hand in it all?

#### How has God blessed both sides of the debate?

### Scripture never encourages us to look for conflict—we're to seek unity.

#### But we are to seek unity only to the extent that we do not violate what we believe to be God's will.

#### If we're fully convinced that we are following God's plan, let's also be fully convinced to humbly follow exactly what we believe God wants us to do—and leave the results to God.

#### We might see just another example of how God can expand His work even through our weaknesses.

### Prayer

**When Christians Disagree (Short Outline)**

***Acts 15:36–16:10***

Introduction

Issue: Why do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ happen even among godly believers?

# Paul and Barnabas \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ whether to take John Mark on the second missionary journey (36-38).

# The best solution to an irreconcilable disagreement is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (39a).

# Main Idea: Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ His work (39b–16:10).

Conclusion

Blanks Completed

Introduction

Issue: Why do disagreements happen even among godly believers?

# Paul and Barnabas disagreed whether to take John Mark on the second missionary journey (36-38).

# The best solution to an irreconcilable disagreement is separation (39a).

# Main Idea: Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (39b–16:10).





**Rick Griffith**

9 May 2021

Message 15 of 23

**When Christians Disagree**

***Acts 15:36–16:10***

Introduction

### I once disagreed with my elders on God's direction for my life.

### Why do disagreements happen even among godly believers?

# Paul and Barnabas disagreed whether to take John Mark on the second missionary journey (15:36-38).

## They agreed to revisit the newly established churches in Asia Minor.

## They disagreed whether to take along John Mark.

### John Mark returned home early on their first journey (13:13).

### Barnabas desired to take him.

### Paul didn't want him to come due to his earlier desertion.

## Luke is careful not to tag the blame on either one.

### Both of them felt that to do otherwise would be to dishonor God.

### Both of them felt that compromise or resolution was not possible.

# The best solution to an irreconcilable disagreement is separation (15:39a).

## Paul and Barnabas agreed to go separate ways.

## I believed my only choice was to go to Asia.

# Disagreement leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (15:39b–16:10 = Main Idea)

## Paul and Barnabas' separation actually furthered the gospel.

### Two missionary journeys resulted from the separation.

#### Paul went north to his homeland area of Tarsus and Galatia to follow-up on the new churches that brought Timothy into ministry (16:1-5).

#### Barnabas had his own missionary journey to Cyprus—an area that also needed follow-up from the first journey.

### Two new apprentices received training for Christian service.

#### Paul chose Silas to accompany him. I doubt Paul would have taken Silas if he had Barnabas as his right-hand man.

#### John Mark went with Barnabas.

### Paul got confirmation of the gospel going to Europe.

#### He tried unsuccessfully to minister in Asia and Bithynia so had to leave Turkey—but should go east to the Far East (16:6-7)?

#### God called him to Macedonia as the Lord wanted Europe to first hear the gospel (16:8-10).

### Paul and Barnabas still remained friends.

## The gospel expands now in some separations of godly believers.

### After my disagreement with my church over God’s direction in my life, my church experienced God’s blessings.

### My going to Asia had several good results on the Asia side too:

Conclusion

### So why does disagreement happen even among godly believers? Differences leading to separation may be God's means to expand His work (MI repeated).

### Have you had painful disagreements with other Christians?

#### How do you see God’s sovereign and gracious hand in it all?

#### How has God blessed both sides of the debate?

### Scripture encourages us to look for unity—not conflict.

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