

Disagreement Between Paul & Barnabas / Timothy Joins Paul & Silas



What "break-up" was hardest for you and why: Moving? Losing your first girl/boyfriend? Empty nest? Closing shop?



Acts 15:36-16:5

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."



1. Role play how you think Paul and Barnabas split up. With which one would you have sided? Why?

2. Given the decision in Chapter 15, why did Paul circumcise Timothy? How could this be justified (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)?



15:38 he had deserted them. While the word used to describe Mark's leaving in Acts 13:13 is a neutral one that implies nothing negative, the word used here is related to the word for apostasy. Luke does not tell us why Mark left, but Paul certainly viewed it as a serious deficit and was unwilling to let him try again.

15:39-40 a sharp disagreement. This is a strong word used in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament to describe God's anger at the idolatry of Israel (Deuteronomy 29:28; Jeremiah 32:37). Barnabas' concern may have been motivated in part by the fact that Mark was his cousin (Colossians 4:10), but it is characteristic of Barnabas. Years before, it was he who insisted that Paul be given a chance to prove himself to the apostles (Acts 9:27) and who recognized Paul's gifts for ministry (Acts 11:25-26). On the other hand, Paul was concerned about the immediate needs and demands of such a rigorous journey. Undoubtedly Mark's earlier departure placed increased demands on Paul and Barnabas, and he was unwilling to risk that again. While the ongoing action focuses on Paul and Silas, Barnabas and Mark also left Antioch on a missionary trip as they returned to Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12). Early church tradition teaches that Barnabas remained there until his death. Paul's letters reveal that he and Barnabas were later reconciled (Colossians 4:10) and that Mark was counted by Paul as a valuable assistant (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24).

16:1-3 As the son of a Jewish woman, Jewish law said Timothy ought to have been circumcised as an infant. Perhaps his Gentile father (who apparently was dead at the time of Paul's visit) had forbade it. Since there is no mention of a synagogue in Lystra, his mother had not been able to

practice the Jewish traditions very seriously (her marriage to a Gentile was also a violation of Jewish law). At any rate, for Paul to allow Timothy, a Jew, to accompany him apart from following the age-old Jewish custom of circumcision would communicate to other Jews that he had no regard whatsoever for their honored traditions. To avoid that offense, Timothy was circumcised. This is a further illustration of his (and Timothy's) willingness to accommodate himself to cultural sensitivities.

Caring Time

1. When have you given up your "rights" in order to better represent Christ to others? How can you do so now?
2. Have you ever lost a friendship because of a religious dispute? What happened?