



THE LIFE OF
PAUL

FAMILY DEVOS

Splitting Up

Scripture: Acts 15:36-16:5 (See also Acts 13:13)

Memory Verse: Psalm 133:1

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

For My Family:

In our last two studies, we looked at the events of Acts 13-14, which are known as Paul’s first missionary journey. In these chapters, we saw how God used Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel and plant churches throughout the land of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Paul and Barnabas made a great team, and on this missionary journey, God was able to use them in powerful ways to lead many people to Christ.

Eventually, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch to tell their home church about the great things the Lord had done on their trip. But after they had been there a while, the Lord put it on their hearts to go back to the mission field. Barnabas went to Paul and asked if he wanted to go back to the churches that they had started to see how they were doing. Paul agreed, and it appeared as though this great team would be out sharing the Gospel again. Unfortunately, there was a problem.

On their first trip, Paul and Barnabas had brought along Barnabas’ cousin, Mark (also known as John Mark). However, in Acts 13:13, we read that Mark had abandoned Paul and Barnabas and had left in the middle of their first missionary journey. The Bible doesn’t tell us why he left, but apparently Paul was not happy about it. Barnabas insisted that they bring Mark with them again for their second journey, but Paul refused. After Mark had let them down once already, Paul was not going to allow him to do it a second time.

What happened next was tragic. Rather than being able to sort the issue out, the argument between Paul and Barnabas was so severe that they ended up splitting up and forming two different teams. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, while Paul went with a man named Silas and went to Lystra and Derbe (the cities we learned about in our last devotion). While there, he met Timothy, a young man who also joined Paul’s team.

This story shows us two things. First, it is an absolute tragedy when Christians argue and fight with one another. The issue of whether or not to take Mark on their journey was an important one, but it certainly wasn’t worth ruining the friendship and unity Paul and Barnabas had formed. We might not always agree with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but as Christians, it is important to maintain unity and continue to love one another even when we disagree. The second thing to notice is that God can use everything, both good and bad, for His glory. It wasn’t a good thing that Paul and Barnabas fought and split up, but God used it for good, and as a result, there were now not one but two missionary teams spreading the Gospel.

Questions for Young Children:

What were Paul and Barnabas fighting about?

Who did Barnabas take to go on his missionary journey? Who did Paul take?

Have you ever got into an argument with another Christian? What happened? Was the fight resolved? How?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Was the discussion of whether or not to bring John Mark along an important issue? Was it worth fighting over? Why or why not?

Why do you think it's important for Christians to be unified?

God used Paul and Barnabas' disagreement to spread the Gospel further. Has God ever used a mistake you made or a problem you had for good?