

“Journeys and Destinations – Kingdom Teams”
Pastor Wally Contreras
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“And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.” (Acts 15:36-16:5)

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Let’s get ready to play Family Feud! Paul and Barnabas are getting ready to head out on the road again to “visit the brothers”. Travel during this time was a big deal. Knowing that there are no “rest areas” along the highway and no hotels, or fast food joints along the way, what might be important or prudent to consider before heading out on such a trip and why?

Regarding the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, John Piper pointed out that “Barnabas seemed to focus on the need and potential of Mark. Paul seemed to focus on the demands and potential of the larger cause of the gospel and the honor of the mission. I don't think we should see this as all bad. It's the rancor and bitterness and resentment that are bad. But is it bad that one mission agency perceives wisdom in one strategy and another agency perceives wisdom in another strategy, so that two mission agencies are formed?...The point here is simply this: most of our life and ministry is made up of those kinds of decisions—the application of biblical principles to situations not explicitly dealt with in the Bible. And therefore complete agreement in these areas will not happen in the body of Christ until we no longer see through a glass darkly. And I suggest that we not too quickly assume that our different strategies for Christ are a bad thing.” How often do we see disagreements within the church as being right or wrong (good or bad) as opposed to two good ideas that are just different and why?

What can I learn from the dispute between Paul and Barnabas?

Do I receive others' opinions as a threat to me/my ego? Explain.

Do I honor God's work in others, even when we have opposite opinions? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Piper went on to say that "'Sons of encouragement' are vulnerable to minimizing the importance of truth for the sake of relationships. In other words, their very strength—the inclination to stand up for people—this very strength can lead to weakness. I think this is what happened in Galatians 2. Why did Paul not get sucked into the hypocrisy while Barnabas did, when Barnabas was the older, more experienced Christian? I suspect it was because Paul did not feel the same emotional empathy with the Jews who came from Jerusalem that Barnabas did. Paul didn't feel the same tug that Barnabas must have felt from the Jerusalem brothers. Paul's orientation to the ministry was so gospel-centered that the emotions and opinions of other people did not have the same importance to him that they did for Barnabas. (Review Galatians 1:8,10) This kind of disposition probably did not make Paul the same "son of encouragement" that Barnabas was. But it did keep the gospel pure for another hundred generations of Gentile believers...Every strength is vulnerable to its corresponding weakness." What are some ways in which being an encourager can be vulnerable to attack?

How about a person who is gifted to teach others? How might that person be vulnerable?

What about someone who is gifted in serving others or in giving? How might these people be vulnerable?

Jesus sent the disciples and the seventy-two out "two by two" (Mark 6:7 and Luke 10:1), Paul and Barnabas went out together on their first mission trip and even after the split, Paul and Barnabas did the same ("Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed..." (Acts 15:39b-40a). This would seem to be a very "wise" practice when setting out on a mission...a ministry. Why ?

Pastor Wally pointed out that there is no goof-up that I can make that God can't use. Praseie Goad that His cause will triumph regardless of my weaknesses and failures. Describe such an incident in my life where God made lemonade out of my lemons.

Paul did finally reconcile with Mark and even mentioned what a help Mark was to him (2 Timothy 4:11). It's important to remember that peace does not come by avoiding conflict—but rather by resolving it. How are my reconciliation skills? Explain.

When it came to Barnabas' desire to take John Mark with them, Paul probably quoted the words of Jesus, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) Paul didn't want to take someone who had previously bailed on them (see Acts 13:13). Let's face it...Christian service can be demanding, tough work. Pastor Wally said that John Mark probably realized that he had volunteered for something that was much tougher than what he thought he had signed up for. Has that ever happened to me and how did I handle it?

Timothy agreed with Paul that it was probably best for the ministry that he be circumcised to remove any possible stumbling block to the Gospel message being preached and received before setting out. Pastor Wally asked what my obstacle was from being "all in" for the Kingdom. And???

Pastor Wally said that "Christian unity starts with personal humility"...living a life where others are more important than me. He referenced 1 Peter 5:5b: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" John MacArthur said that "God hates, the old Authorized version [KJV] said, "a proud look." The NAS says, "haughty eyes." The actual Hebrew is "lofty eyes" - that is to say, looking from above down with disdain on those who are beneath you in value and significance. It indicates a swelling kind of pride that fills the heart and shows disdain for others, as if they were of less significance." What that passage does NOT say is that God gives victory or peace or even strength to the humble, but rather He gives His "grace". So, what does/should humility look like when there is a disagreement between two Christians?

Acts 16:5 tells me that "...the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily." Is there a connection between churches being "strengthened in the faith" and churches increasing "in numbers daily"? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally also said that Christian unity requires patience which Webster's 1828 dictionary defines to mean "[t]he suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or other evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness." The definition does not include a timeframe. Does my definition of patience tend to include a timeframe? If so, how long does my patience tend to last? If not, why not?