

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### ACTS 15:36-41 | WHEN GOOD PEOPLE GET SIDWAYS

#### KEY TERMS

**Every city** - In his first missionary journey, Paul travelled to the island of Cyprus and through many of the major towns in southern Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). On this next journey, Paul will travel through southern Asian Minor, visiting the churches he helped plant, before continuing on to Macedonia and Achaia (modern day Greece), including the cities of Philippi, Athens, and Corinth.

**John called Mark** - John Mark was an early Christian who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on missionary journeys and wrote the Gospel of Mark. He and Barnabas were cousins (see Colossians 4:10).

#### DID YOU KNOW?

This is the last we hear of Barnabas in the book of Acts. Church tradition describes Barnabas being stoned for his faith while John Mark looked on, but there's little evidence to support this story.

#### BACKGROUND

After spending time in their home base of Antioch, Paul suggests to Barnabas that they return to the churches they've planted in Asia Minor and see *how they are* (v. 36). Barnabas presumably agrees to go with Paul, but he also wants to take John Mark with them and Paul, recalling when John Mark left on a previous journey (Acts 13:13), does not. This leads to a *sharp disagreement* (v. 39) between Paul and Barnabas and the two decide to go their separate ways. Barnabas and John Mark set sail for Cyprus (v. 39), while Paul takes Silas and heads north to Syria and Cilicia (vv. 40-41). Although Paul initially suggested visiting churches he had previously helped plant, this missionary journey would take Paul through southern Asia Minor all the way to modern day Greece where he would help plant many more churches including the church in Philippi and Corinth.

The issue at hand in this story seems to be that Paul doesn't trust Mark because he left them prematurely on their last journey and that the work Paul wants to do could be at risk if Mark prematurely leaves them again. Though Paul and Barnabas disagree and separate, there's no reason to believe they left on bad terms. Despite the split, Paul leaves Antioch being *commended* (v. 40) by the church and we know from 1 Corinthians 9:6 that Paul and Barnabas worked together again and that Paul later even accepts Mark as a friend and fellow worker in gospel ministry (see Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11).

#### GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 and Philippians 2:2-8. Is the disagreement in Acts 15 different than what Paul has in mind when he writes about unity and disagreements elsewhere? What reasons does Paul give for exhibiting unity? How can Christians remain unified in spirit though disagreements arise?



## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

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*Reflection questions are available when Redemption Groups are meeting. Groups will begin meeting again in June. To sign up for a group, go to [redemptionokc.com/groups](https://redemptionokc.com/groups) or email Chace at [chace.ifland@redemptionokc.com](mailto:chace.ifland@redemptionokc.com).*