



# Shepherd's Path

## A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

### Mission Adventure Series, Lesson 54

**Lesson Title:** Paul and Barnabas Separate

**Take Home Point:** God works even when we disagree.

#### Warm-Up:

I grew up in a small Christian denomination that was started because of a disagreement in a larger denomination that was started because of a disagreement in a larger denomination that was started by a...well, you get the idea. It is sad but true that the history of the Christian church is rampant with disagreements regarding teaching, people, and direction. Think about how many different denominations and sub-groups there are just where you live. Sometimes these disagreements were caused by truly serious issues, such as whether Jesus truly lived as a real human being. But more often, it was a lesser topic that caused separation, and the stubbornness we all have only made it worse. And the world outside the church is watching. What matters more than our disagreements is how we handle them. Do we remain unified in Jesus as prayed in John 17? Or do we allow sinful pride, anger, and prejudice to get in the way?

**Read:** Acts 15:36-41

#### Observation (What happened?):

What caused the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas?

How did God work to bring good from the disagreement?

#### Interpretation (What does it mean?):

How do you think the individuals in the local church handled the situation?

Why do you think it was right or wrong for the two men to have such a disagreement?

#### Insight:

What makes this brief reading so fascinating is what went before and after. For example, Barnabas was from the island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Paul and Barnabas had taught together there already (Acts 13). Cypriots helped start the church in Antioch, and Barnabas went there to help it become strong (Acts 11:20-24). Barnabas was highly regarded by the church (Acts 4:36; Acts 11 and 12), and was a close partner to Paul (Acts 13-14). Mark was a cousin to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), involved very early in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:12-25). Of course, Mark wrote one of the four gospels. And later in his life, Paul came to trust and depend on Mark a great deal (2Timothy 3:1 and 4:11). It seems clear this disagreement was handled with love and grace. Remember what the goal was – to visit all the towns in which they had preached. That goal was accomplished even as the two great men split up to go in different directions.

#### Application (What does it mean to me?):

What disagreement do you have with another Christian? How are you handling it spiritually, emotionally, and mentally?

Take a moment to thank God that he uses even our disagreements to advance his kingdom.

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