



WEEKLY STUDY

How to Deal - Week Three

Over the last few weeks in the Book of Acts, we have learned a variety of ways to deal with conflict and division in the world and especially among believers. We have learned that some situations call for shaking the dust off and moving on. Other times, when we are in deep covenant with a person we disagree with, we may have to compromise. This week we saw an amicable separation take place between two key leaders in the mission to spread the gospel. You may reflect this week on some necessary endings that you have experienced in your life. Hopefully you will be able to consider how God's purpose for your own life remains primary even in the midst of difficult endings.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for someone who is struggling to say goodbye to something or someone that is holding them back from God's purpose for their life.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 15.36 (NIV)

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

- It is possible that this “some time later” was an indicator that winter had ended and a season more conducive to travel was upon them. According to Paul, it was time to return to the mission field. After an important time in Jerusalem, the work of spreading the gospel was waiting for Paul and Barnabas. Have you ever sensed a shift of seasons in your life when you knew it was time to move on or return to a calling that God has for you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15.16)**
- *God, you have set the course for my life and you have called me for a purpose. Prompt me through the changing of seasons to follow your lead. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 15.36-41 (NIV)

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.”³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them,³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

- Break-ups are hard. We often avoid them at all costs, and sometimes to our own detriment. Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement over John Mark. John Mark had deserted them earlier and Paul was not about to give him a second chance at this point in the missionary work among the Gentiles. Barnabas felt differently. It’s important to note that Barnabas and John Mark were cousins. Could the family tie have been part of Barnabas’ motivation to include him again? Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways, but God would use this moment to multiply the movement. Has God ever used a parting of ways to bring growth in your life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6.8)**
 - *God, I place your mission over the status-quo. Help me to see where you are leading me today, and give me the courage to follow. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: PHILEMON 1.22-25 (NIV)

And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

²³ *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.* ²⁴ *And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.*

²⁵ *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

- Mark was once again a co-worker with Paul. It's one of those details that raises some questions. Had they had a conversation? Did they confirm that their missions aligned? Did Mark apologize for abandoning Paul and Barnabas? We would love to know. What we can be sure of is that as time went on, the importance of the gospel for a world in need of salvation rose above any personal divisions or quarrels. Have you ever experienced reconciliation in an important relationship? How did that come about? What did reconciliation cost you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4.32)**
- *God, you have designed me for community and in that, you call followers of Jesus to live in unity. Where there has been division, would you create a path to healing? Amen.*

THURSDAY: JOHN 17.20-23 (NIV)

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

- The unity that Jesus was praying his disciples would experience was not a call for them to travel together and stay connected simply as friends. It was a desire that, no matter where they went, or who they chose to take with them, they would remain one in Jesus as Jesus is one with the Father.

Are there people who you rarely see yet feel deeply connected to? Are there friends and family that are on the “other side” of some dividing line whom you still love deeply?

- **Prayer Prompt: Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12.14)**
- *God, there are things of this earth that cause strife and division. But your way is higher. Hold your people together in unity. Amen.*

FRIDAY: PHILIPPIANS 4.2-3 (NIV)

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel...

- Paul addressed a specific situation in the church in Philippi. There was obviously some division between two women, Eudonia and Syntyche. “Eudonia” means a “prosperous journey.” “Syntyche” means a “pleasant acquaintance”. You could say that they were not living into the meaning of their names! But Paul pleads for unity in the Lord. Is it possible to have differing opinions but the same mind in the Lord? What practices help you to remain connected to people with whom you disagree?

- **Prayer Prompt: if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5.23-24)**
- *God, teach me to seek to find the common focus on you with those whom I disagree, especially my brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.*

SATURDAY: COLOSSIANS 3.13-14(NIV)

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

- It can be so easy to hold a grudge. Because you are right! And they are wrong, right? But God seems to call us to a higher view. When we “put on love” over the grievances we have, we find unity. Perfect unity. With whom do you share this kind of perfect unity?

- **Prayer Prompt: How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! (Psalm 133.1)**
- *God, there are very few things I experience in this life that I would call perfect. Your love for me is perfect, and perfect unity is possible because of your love. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

God can use endings to produce even greater results. Have you had to face an ending that seemed impossible to endure? Walk through the points of Jacob’s sermon from Sunday to discover where these elements have proven themselves true in your life.

Situation that may require an ending: _____

Endings are natural.

Endings are normal.

Endings are necessary.

- When have you experienced pain with a purpose? Pain for no good reason?
- Can you think of an ending that you have faced in life that was healthy (with no grudges held, respect maintained, and maybe the possibility of reconciliation)?