

## How does God lead through Conflict?

Acts 15:36-16:15

October 4, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

**Acts 15**<sup>36</sup> 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." <sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**Acts 16** Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup> The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. <sup>3</sup> Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

<sup>6</sup> Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup> When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup> So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>11</sup> From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

<sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup> One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup> When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

## 1. Conflict

Acts 15:36-41

*Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.*<sup>41</sup> *He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.* Verses 15:40, 41

### A. Dispute

Acts 15:36-39

Paul's continuing concern for disciples/churches  
Mad about Mark (Acts 13:13)  
One journey becomes two (we only follow one)

More about Mark: The Gospel of Mark was likely written by this Mark; Mark 14:51, 52 might be Mark. Other mentions include: 1 Peter 5:13; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11. "The one who was once a coward and a quitter had become a trusted writer and a reliable coworker."<sup>2</sup>

**Sharp disagreement** παροξυσμός (*paroxysmos*) A Greek noun used only twice in the NT. (Acts 15:39 and Hebrews 10:24) Here it means an intense argument, sharp contention implying exasperation. In Hebrews 10:24 it means to stir up, encourage, challenge others. The root of the word is 'sour wine' (vinegar) which adds some sense to the meaning.

Translated: NIV, ESV, NASB, NLT, Sharp Disagreement; NKJV, KJV Sharp Contention

### B. Decision

Acts 15:40, 41

**Silas** met him in Acts 15:22, 32 and will leave him by 18:5  
Commended by the believers  
Purpose: to strengthen churches/brothers (sisters too)  
*God leads by his word – standing orders or rules of engagement*

God does not need to give us much direction when we are following his Word and when we are doing precisely what he intends for us. There are times when what seems obvious or clear to us is not what God intends, it is at those times when God tends to create or permit a barrier or detour. The real challenge for us is to discern whether an obstacle we face is a test of our resolve and if we are to persevere through it. Or is the barrier an actual way to redirect or guide us in a new way.

## 2. Confluence

Acts 16:1-5

*Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.* Verse 16:1

### A. New team member

Acts 16:1-4

Timothy – a Jewish follower of Jesus

Travelling with Timothy: Mentored by Paul, 1 Timothy 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:2. Mentioned by Paul in Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Philemon 1.

"But while Paul stoutly resisted any imposition of circumcision and the Jewish law upon his Gentile converts, he himself continued to live as an observant Jew and urged his converts to express their Christian faith through the cultural forms they had inherited (cf. 1 Cor 7:17–24). As for Timothy, because of his Jewish mother, he was a Jew in the eyes of the Jewish world. Therefore, it was both proper and expedient for Paul to circumcise him. As Paul saw it, being a good Christian did not mean being a bad Jew. Rather, it meant being a fulfilled Jew."<sup>3</sup> Check Galatians 5:6

<sup>2</sup> Pinter, D. (2019). *Acts*. (p. 364): Zondervan.

<sup>3</sup> Longenecker, R. N. (1981). *The Acts of the Apostles, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: (Vol. 9, p. 455): Zondervan

## B. Luke's seal of approval

Acts 16:5

*God leads through a conflict – redemption, forgiveness, mercy*

### 3. Conclusion

Acts 16:6-12

*"After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."* Verse 6:10

#### A. Direction

Acts 16:6-9

Where were they heading before things changed?  
Prevented by Jesus but invited by a vision

Who is in charge around here? Sometimes we suppose the book of Acts is all about the Holy Spirit and being 'Spirit filled' (a good thing to be sure) However the book of Acts refers to Jesus a little more and God the most. There is a 'trinity' of leading in Acts: the power of the Spirit, the person of Jesus and the program of the father. These are the numbers:

The Spirit	65 occurrences in Acts
The Spirit of Jesus, or Jesus	76 occurrences in Acts
God	180 occurrences in Acts

## B. An interesting 'conclusion'

Acts 16:10

Silas is a respected prophet (Acts 15:22, 32)  
Paul seems to be sensitive, rational, collaborative and cautious

**Concluding** συμβιβάζω (*symbibazō*) A Greek verb used rarely in the NT (7 Times all either by Paul or in events surround him, 3 in Acts 9:22, 16:10; 19:33) It has a range of meaning from unite, gather, conclude to prove or instruct. The sense of the word being a gathering of thoughts or ideas leading to a certain conclusion or outcome.

Translated: NIV, ESV, NASB, NLT, NKJV, Concluding/ed; KJV, Gathering

## C. A new team member

Acts 16:11, 12

This person is from Troas  
'He' is hiding in the grammar 'we'  
What does the trip to Troas add to this ministry?

*God Leads by barriers, vision and collaboration*

### 4. Conversion

Acts 16:13-15

*"When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house."*

*And she persuaded us."* Verse 16:15

#### A. An interesting meeting place

Acts 16:13

A synagogue needs ten men to be formed  
The river is a traditional place of Jewish prayer

## B. A New Disciple

Acts 16:13, 14

The first solo woman, and she is probably rich too  
God's act in response to the message  
God's affirmation of the new direction

## C. An Unusual Decision

Acts 16:15

A gentile's home  
A woman's home  
A rare time when Paul is out manoeuvred

*God leads by affirming his direction*

### How does God lead through failure or conflict?

God did not design the **conflict** but recreated a new outcome  
Paul does not nurse the conflict, grudge or feud  
Two mission journeys are established

Paul remains faithful to his calling and God's word  
By continued ministry  
By openness to reconciliation  
Mark is recovered for ministry – through Barnabas

God may **redirect or refocus** us through a barrier  
Paul was cautious and circumspect facing the detour  
God affirmed his leading at Troas and Philippi

God knows we need affirmation and provides it to us  
Effectiveness in our calling and gifting

