

Disagreement Among Brothers

36 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.” 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

After 13 years of a great friendship, and many years of working together. Paul and Barnabas separated because of a disagreement.

G. Campbell Morgan, the preacher of the early 1900s, “I’m thankful for the revelation of the humanity of these men. If I had never read that Paul and Barnabas had a contention, I should have been afraid. These men were not angels, they were men.”

They were human, just like you and me, trying their best to do what was right, and found themselves with irreconcilable differences.

In studying this text, I believe we have 2 options.

1. We could join the debate and pick sides.
2. We could glean some life lessons about disagreements.

Rather than join the debate, I'd like to learn from it.

CHRISTIANS, WHEN DISAGREEING WITH EACH OTHER, CAN DISAGREE WITH GRACE.

The question is how? I think there are 4 lessons we can learn to help us disagree graciously.

Lesson #1 - Expect it: Expect the reality of disagreements - even among Christians.

Disagreements happen. We cannot avoid them. No one on Earth is sinlessly perfect, and no one on Earth thinks the same way.

If Paul and Barnabas could not live life without disagreeing with each other, then we shouldn't expect to either. If you spend enough time with someone, and eventually, you will disagree with that person on something. A husband and wife will have disagreements. A parent and a child will have disagreements. Friends will disagree. Members of a church will disagree.

How can we disagree with each other the right way?

“In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity” - Rupertus Meldenius

There are several essential doctrines of Christianity that we must not budge on.

- The way of salvation: Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.
- The authority of Scripture: The Bible is our authority for life and doctrine.
- The Triune nature of God: God is Father, Son, and Spirit.
- The deity of Christ. Jesus is fully God.

But then there are non-essentials. The debate over Mark was a non-essential.

“In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity (love)”

Lesson #2 - Accept it: Accept the fact that differing viewpoints can both have good points.

In any disagreement, two people have two different pairs of eyes, two different sets of experiences, and two different personalities.

Warren Wiesrbe said, “Paul looked at people and asked, “What can they do for God’s work?” while Barnabas looked at people and asked, “What can God’s work do for them?” Both questions are important to the Lord’s work, and sometimes it is difficult to keep things balanced.”

What we learn from Paul and Barnabas is that both men had valid points. Both men brought good points to the table. In most disagreements, both parties have a good point to make. So here’s the advice: **Try your**

best to understand the other viewpoint. Try to see through the lens of their life and their experience.

Lesson #3 - Reject it: Reject the temptation to sling mud, sin, or grow bitter.

Heated arguments and strong disagreements get very emotional. When you care about something, you take it personally. The temptation is to lose your composure - to be controlled by your flesh rather than God's Spirit. Reject that temptation. I believe Paul and Barnabas did.

Lesson #4 - Direct it: Direct the focus on the next step for the glory of God.

Disagreements can be disappointing. Disappointment can end in depression. When someone is depressed, they hardly want to do anything. If the enemy had his way, I think he'd of wanted the disappointment of the disagreement to stop them dead in their tracks, making them useless for the Lord's work.

Chuck Swindoll's wise advice is fitting at this point:
Get over it!

They didn't spend their life licking their wounds. They directed their focus on the one friend who would never leave them nor forsake them. They focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, and God was able to take a tough situation and make the most of it. Instead of one missionary team, now there were two. The division didn't stop God, and it didn't stop God's men