

# Lesson 20- Acts 15:36-16:13

## On the Road Again

Most of us don't enter conversations with people trying to get them angry. Sometimes we may try to give them a little bit of a hard time by joking with them, but we are not usually trying to create a conflict. However, even when our intentions are not to start an argument, things still may not go the way that we would like. Sometimes strife and tension enter even the most dearly held relationships. [TM note: stimulate in Hebrews is the same word from Acts 15:39 translated "sharp disagreement." One in the positive sense, one in the negative. Our prayer should be that when we interact with fellow believers we would consider "how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).]

Disagreements arise over all sorts of issues. The reality is that arguments can happen among believers, even leaders in the church like Paul and Barnabas. Our study for today describes a disagreement and even the surprising way that God worked things out for good in spite of the disagreement. [TM note: reference Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28]

### Circumcision

Circumcision was introduced back in Genesis 17 when God made His covenant with Abram, speaking about him becoming the father of many nations and calling him Abraham. From that time the Lord set apart the people of Israel through circumcision, reminding them that God's promise was to come through Abraham's line.

The early Christians grappled with how to think of circumcision after the coming of Jesus Christ. The council meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15) debated the issue and recognized that to demand circumcision added a burden that God has not required.

Paul responded to this issue in two different ways with his companions. His Greek helper, Titus, was among the followers of Jesus who believed circumcision was required. Paul strongly spoke against that and wrote in Galatians 2:3: "But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised."

The other response is recorded in Acts 16. There was not a declaration that it was required for salvation. However, Paul was concerned about Timothy's fitness to serve. Timothy, also a Greek, had not been circumcised. This could have stirred up the prejudices and caused the Jews to reject the message Paul and Timothy were preaching. Therefore, Timothy was circumcised so that nothing might hinder the proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 16:3).

### Into the Word: Acts 15:36-16:13

After spending some time in Antioch, preaching and teaching the Word to the believers there, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return to the cities in which they had preached to see how the believers were faring (v.36).

1. What difference of opinion arose? vv.36-38 Barnabas wanted to take along John (Mark); Paul didn't want him to come along because he had deserted them on a previous trip (ref: Acts 13:13)

2. In verses 39-41, the result of their disagreement is the end of the partnership between Barnabas and Paul. There is a split, forming two missionary teams. Trace their routes on your map.

- Barnabas and John Mark go to *Cyprus*
- Paul and Silas go to *Syria and Cilicia*

These verses contain the last scriptural reference to Barnabas. Barnabas had been a constant companion and mentor to Paul, but from this point forward the details of his life and death are unknown. However, God quickly provides Paul with a new source of encouragement and partner in ministry.

3. Acts 16:1-2 introduces the disciple Timothy.

- He is from *Lystra*
- His mother was a Jewish believer and his father was a *Greek*.
- He had a good reputation in his home town.
- He was circumcised “because of the Jews,” so that he could minister to the Jews along with Paul.

4. As a result of delivering the “decrees” or the decisions agreed upon at the conference in Jerusalem (vv.4-5), the churches were being *strengthened in their faith and were growing in numbers*.

5. Paul and Silas would have gone to Asia, but the Holy Spirit prevented them (vv.6-8), so they went to the Phrygian and Galatian region instead. Then they tried to go into *Bithynia*, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them, so they went to *Troas*. Trace the route on your map.

6. Describe what happened to Paul in verse 9.

*In the night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia standing and begging him to come to Macedonia and help them.*

As soon as Paul saw the vision, he began to prepare for the journey (v.10). Notice the pronoun “we” is used. Luke, the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke, has joined Paul and Silas. Colossians 4:14 reveals Luke’s profession, a doctor.

Trace the route in verses 11-12 on the map.

7. Where did Paul usually go to preach the Word when he came to a new town? Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1

*He always began at the synagogue*

8. In Philippi it was different. Instead of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath, they went out of town to a riverside “supposing” the place they went to would be a place of prayer. It seems there was no obvious established place for the Jews in the area to gather for worship. What audience did they find there? v.13

*The women assembled there.*

## New Character:

Timothy

In Acts, we find out that Paul wanted a young man named Timothy to accompany him on his missionary trip. Paul describes Timothy as his “true child in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2). Timothy was raised in a family in which his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice believed in Jesus (II Timothy 1:5). Later in his life, he would become a pastor in the congregation at Ephesus. The letters of I and II Timothy were written by Paul to help his young friend faithfully share the Gospel.

Some of the instructions Paul gives to Timothy include:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| I Timothy 1:3-5   | <i>He charges them to not teach any false doctrines; the aim is love; pure heart, good conscience</i> |
| I Timothy 4:11-12 | <i>Set a good example, etc.</i>   |
| II Timothy 2:1-2  | <i>Be strengthened by the grace of Christ Jesus; be able to teach others also.</i>                    |

Paul knows that ministering to the church will not be easy. Some may question Timothy’s youth, depart from the faith, or teach false doctrines. But, Paul encourages Timothy to continue in what he has learned and believed, for “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

## Memory Verse

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed,  
accurately handling the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

### Extra Memory Challenge

Romans 14:13

*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore,  
but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*

### Discussion Questions

*Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.*

1. In this lesson we learned that Paul and Barnabas separated ways. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Discuss the good things that came from this separation.

*All of the areas that they visited on their first missionary journey were revisited to encourage and build up each congregation, Barnabas to the churches in Cyprus and possibly beyond but this is unknown, Paul went to Pisidia, Lycanoia, and Galatia, and beyond into Macedonia. Also as Paul and Barnabas went, they took new men with them—John Mark, Timothy, Silas, and Luke. This was a wonderful opportunity to teach and train these men for ministry.*

2. Acts 16:1-2 makes a simple comment about Timothy's reputation—people respected him! His actions reflected his profession of faith. Jesus said that a person's actions spring from what is in the heart. Discuss some of the character qualities and actions that you would like to see in yourself or would expect to see from someone calling themselves a Christian.

*Answers will vary, honesty, integrity, trustworthy, careful with the language they use, mindful of the places they go, the crowd they choose to affiliate with, respectful to teachers and parents.*

3. Paul knew that God had called him to ministry in the Gentile world as well as to the Jews living there. He prayerfully sought the Lord's guidance through the Holy Spirit about where he should go. Paul and Silas first planned to go east into Asia for their second missionary journey. But God led them in another direction, west into Macedonia (modern-day Greece). Describe the qualities or attitudes shown by Paul and Silas in their response to the Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-10).

*They showed a ready mind to be easily redirected by the Lord. Their humble and trusting attitude acknowledged God's wisdom and guidance. Paul and Silas were eager to follow Him. Could also discuss: How would you respond if God stopped you from going where you thought you should go and called you to go somewhere else?*

### Daily Devotions

Sunday:	I Timothy 1:1-8
Monday:	I Timothy 1:12-16
Tuesday:	I Timothy 3:1-7
Wednesday:	I Timothy 3:8-16
Thursday:	I Timothy 4:8-16
Friday:	I Timothy 5:17-22
Saturday:	I Timothy 6:17-21

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE AFLC

### \* Fundamental Principle 7

According to Fundamental Principle 7, the free congregation gladly works together with other congregations to reach other people for Jesus—through evangelism and missions. Congregations need each other. We have a common work and testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. List the different areas where congregations were established in Acts 14:21-28.

*Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Perga, Attalia, and Antioch. Congregations were formed in each place, established and gathered by God's Word. Together they had worked for the salvation of souls.*

2. What was their common concern? (Acts 14:21-22)

*Their common concern was bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ and strengthening the faith of those who were already believers.*