

GROW:

OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONE



Disagreement & Differences in the Midst of Growth

Senior Pastor Beh Soo Yeong

Acts 15.36-16.5

Episode 1 (recap): Dispute (15.1-35)

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1.8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



Theological/ Biblical disputes (e.g. basis of salvation)

1. Dispute and dialogue
2. Discuss and discern
3. Decide and disseminate

Episode 2: Disagreement (15.36-41)

³⁶ 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.

Episode 2: Disagreement (15.36-41)



13.13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

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How could 2 godly leaders used by God split ways? Who was right and who was wrong? Sinful? Sad?

Episode 2: Disagreement (15.36-41)

1 Cor 9.6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

2 Tim 4.11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

- 2 missionary teams
- Mark associated with Apostle Peter
- Mark suitable for other ministries?
- Mark likely the writer of Gospel
- God of second & many chances!

Reflection & Application

How do we deal with disagreements, esp. with regards to ministry approach and philosophy?

1. Do we make effort to dialogue and clarify in the attempt to maintain unity?
2. Do we discuss and discern, considering all the facts, esp including what the Spirit is showing and Scripture is saying?
3. Even when we cannot agree, can we agree to disagree respectfully and continue to minister? Find arbitrator or mediator?



Episode 3: Differences (16.1-5)

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. ²The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. ³Paul 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. ⁴As they travelled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Episode 3: Differences (16.1-5)

Disciple named **Timothy**:

- Jewish mother, Eunice & grandmother, Lois, both believers.
- Greek father.
- Other disciples spoke well of him.
- Paul circumcised him and took him as his apprentice.
- They travelled from town to town, delivered the decisions reached by the Jerusalem Council.
- Served with and was very close to Paul.
- Pastor at Ephesus.

What is the problem/ issue?

Episode 3: Differences (16.1-5)

- Council of Jerusalem: circumcision was not needed for salvation.
- Another apprentice: Titus
Gal 2.3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.
- Why was Timothy circumcised?
- Double standards?

Episode 3: Differences (16.1-5)

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.² The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.³ 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.⁴ As they travelled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

The Growth of the Church

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The gospel spreads, the church grows:

1. 1.1-6.7 Gospel spreads in Jerusalem
2. 6.8-9.31 Gospel spreads to Judea & Samaria
3. 9.32-12.24 Gospel spreads to the Gentiles
4. 12.25-16.5 Gospel spreads to the Gentiles in Asia



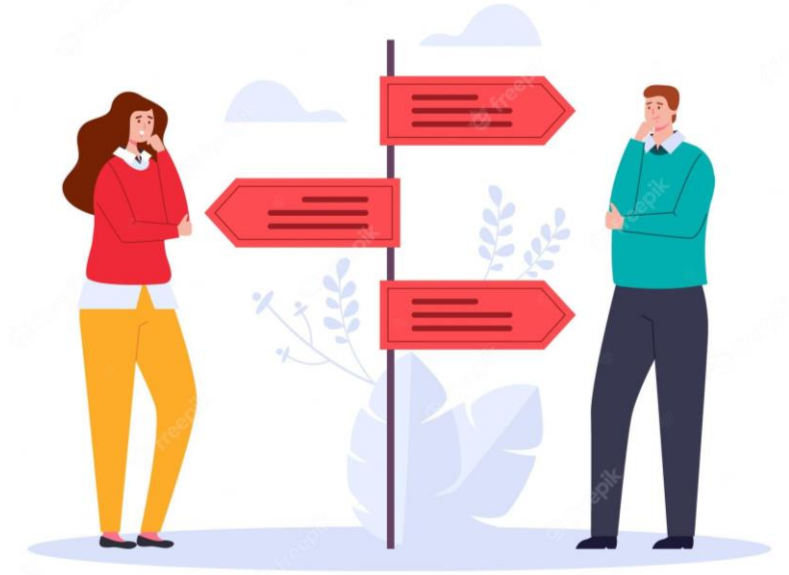
Acts 16.5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Reflection & Application

How do we deal with differences due to different contexts?

1. Do we make effort to dialogue and understand the different contexts?
2. Do we discuss and discern what the Spirit is showing and Scripture is saying?
3. Unity does not mean uniformity. Can we differ in approaches while agreeing on fundamentals?

Example: Nepal



Reflection & Application

Overall (at the risk of simplifying) ...

1. Do we differentiate between disputes that are fundamental and disagreements/differences due to personalities, convictions or context?
2. Do we dialogue, discuss, discern what the Spirit is showing and Scripture is saying?
3. Do we agree to disagree, find alternative courses of action?
4. Who & how do we decide & disseminate?

On major issues, clarity and unity. On minor issues, charity and diversity. In all issues, faith, hope and love!