

February 15, 2009
Acts 15:36-41
At the Crossroads

The Call of Christ into His Mission: The Reorientation of Vocation

Encouragement

Consolation

Comfort

To inspire with courage, spirit or hope

Lifting up what is good about someone

Comes naturally

Word oriented

Mercy

To show kindness or good will towards the miserable and the afflicted

Compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power

Lifting up someone despite what's not good about them

Involves risk and sacrifice

Action oriented

Your Story

Who has been an encourager to you?

Has someone ever given you a second chance?

Describe a time when someone stood up for you.

Discuss the definitions of encouragement and mercy. Read the statements in the column to the left. Compare and contrast.

God's Story

Read Acts 15:36-41

In what ways did Barnabas go beyond being an encourager to show mercy to John Mark? What did Barnabas sacrifice and risk for the sake of John Mark?

What evidence do you see that God used this situation to accomplish his purposes? Describe other situations when you have seen a split or division become a good thing.

Jesus & Us in The Story Together

Are you more like Paul or Barnabas? Which one would you have sided with in the decision about John Mark? What do you learn from the interaction between these two men that informs us about the different perspectives we bring to our relationships within the body of Christ?

Paul – apostolic; sees the big picture; more product oriented; considers the needs of many in making the decision about John Mark

Barnabas – shepherd; more people oriented; considers the needs of the individual in making the decision about John Mark

In what ways are you like John Mark?

John Mark - A frog who isn't so cute, cuddling and easy to love

How have your attempts to follow Jesus failed? Have you ever been tempted to give up and go home (or did give up and go home)? How have you experienced God's mercy through these situations?

In what ways can you be like Barabas?

Barnabas – an encourager with the capacity to show mercy

Who is a frog in your life?

Is there someone who isn't easy to encourage?

Is there someone who did something to break your trust in them?

Is there someone who doesn't deserve a break – the trouble they're in is because of bad choices they've made?

How can you encourage this person?

How can you show mercy to this person?

Pray Together!