

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 5

Fight to Forgive

Acts 15:36-41 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

Many of us would agree that it's not only hard to forgive, it's a FIGHT to forgive, especially so when it involves those who have wronged us greatly or stabbed us in the back. Yet God tells us throughout the Scriptures to forgive one another, without even naming any conditions or exceptions. Why would God tell us to do something that is nearly impossible to do? Read Acts 15:36-41.

Background (v. 36-38)

- What did Paul and Barnabas disagree about? What is the reason for this disagreement?

Christians will have disagreements and arguments (v. 36-41)

- How did the Bible describe the argument between Paul and Barnabas? Read the verses again carefully. Did the Bible tell us who was right? Why is this observation significant?

- Do you think Christians immune from arguments and disagreements, or that arguing among believers is sinful? Why do you think so?
- Observe how Paul and Barnabas handled their disagreement (v. 39-41). What good thing came out of their parting?
- Have you ever disagreed with a fellow Christian at home, at work, in school, or in church? How did you handle it?

Remember the forgiveness of God in our lives (1 Timothy 1:12-15; Ephesians 1:7)

- How did Paul describe himself in his letter to Timothy? Did he deserve to be forgiven?
- Before you think about forgiving someone else, think about your own life and think through your own relationship with God. How many times have you abandoned Him, stabbed Him in the back, broken your promises, and done other sinful things over and over again? Then think about how many times He has forgiven you. Do you deserve to be forgiven? What makes God forgive you? (Eph. 1:7)
- Forgiveness is foundational to the Gospel message, but does it mean we should forget as well? When God forgives us of our sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, does He forget what we have done? What does it mean to forgive others as God forgave us?
- Is there someone whom you're finding difficult to forgive because you think you need to forget what that person has done? Does it encourage you to forgive the person, knowing that God has already forgiven you? Why or why not?

In view of Christ's forgiveness, we need to forgive one another (Colossians 3:12-13)

- What happened to Paul and Barnabas? Did they ever work together again in ministry (1 Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10)? What about Paul and John Mark (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11)?
- Paul and John Mark wronged each other; Paul by underestimating John Mark's spiritual potential and John Mark by abandoning Paul and Barnabas. However, the Bible tells us that they reconciled. What does reconciliation mean? What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation? How can true forgiveness and true reconciliation happen?

- Going back to the question of if there is someone whom you're finding difficult to forgive. As a follower of Jesus, there is a reason why we should forgive. What is that reason? (Colossians 3:12-13)
- What are the repercussions of an unforgiving spirit, especially for a follower of Jesus?

REFLECT

Forgiving someone who has greatly wronged you is impossible to do on your own, but through Jesus Christ who paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins, we CAN forgive. You can start the process of forgiveness today by asking God to help you to forgive.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me about how essential forgiveness is to a Christian. Without forgiveness, I wouldn't be called a Child of God. Thank You also for reminding me that forgiving ___ is impossible to do on my own. And so I ask You to help me to forgive as You have forgiven me. Help me see him/her through the lenses of Your grace and mercy. I do not want to be an ineffective Christian because of unforgiveness, and so Lord I lay down the hurts, the pride, the fears that I've been carrying. I pray, Father, that this may be the start towards our reconciliation. Work in both our hearts, but I give you complete control over mine. May it please and honor You, in Jesus' name. Amen.