



Mentoring Hearts, Changing Lives

—AN ATHLETE STUDY OF 2ND TIMOTHY

WEEK 11



FORGIVENESS & TRUST

Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:21–22).

This question launched Jesus into a parable known as “The Unforgiving Servant.” The story goes that a servant owed an immense debt to the king—more than multiple lifetime’s wages. The king took pity and forgave the servant this impossible debt. That servant went out and found another man who owed him about three month’s wages. When the second man couldn’t pay, the servant had him thrown in prison. The king found out and severely punished the unforgiving servant.

Considering the infinite debt of sin canceled by Christ on the Cross for those who place faith in him, there is nothing a person can do to us that compares. Three months wages was no joke—in the same way, a person may hurt us deeply. We must acknowledge the truth of the hurt. Yet, the Bible is clear, we must forgive...and keep on forgiving. However, as we will see in today’s passages, forgiveness and trust are *not* the same thing.

ACTS 13:13
¹³ Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

ACTS 15:36–40
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 ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.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.

2 TIMOTHY 4:11
¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“I’m not doing this Christian thing right, and I know it... do something in my life to jerk it right side up because I’m living this life wrong.” When Joni Eareckson Tada prayed this prayer as a graduating senior, she had no idea how God would answer it.

We don’t pick and choose when and how to surrender to the Lord. If we surrender, he gets the whole thing—and it won’t be easy. But, scan the QR code to hear a story of surrender and how God turned tragedy to triumph.



DISCUSSION

What’s your favorite “Dad Joke”?

1. Where did Paul and his companions go and where did John (Mark) go? (13)

2. What solution did Paul and Barnabas decide to settle their dispute? (39–40)

3. Who did Paul want Timothy to bring with him and why? (11)

4. How should a leader balance trusting someone who has let them down versus developing them into a dependable disciple?

5. Who is your “Barnabas,” that invests in you no matter what?

6. Who is your “Mark,” that you can build up?

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

God designed the Church as a family. Even if our parents were great, they’re not perfect. If you’re not connected to a local church body and want to know more, talk to your Coach today!



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STUDY NOTES HOW TO WIN

Philosophizer and boxing legend, Rocky Balboa, said, “It ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you get hit and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done.” Well actually, Rocky is a fictional character, but the quote sounds good. It echoes what Lou Holtz once said, “Show men someone who has done something worthwhile, and I’ll show you someone who has overcome adversity.”

When Paul began his missionary journeys, he traveled with a friend and mentor, Barnabas. Barnabas was a leader in the church from the earliest days. However, it didn’t take long before Paul’s aggressiveness and raw leadership talent propelled him to the fore. Previously in *Acts*, every mention of this dynamic duo referred to them as “Barnabas and Saul (Paul).” However, the order shifts as Dr. Luke (the author of *Acts*) states, “**Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia.**”

Along with his rise to prominence, or maybe because of it, this missionary team faced a major setback as **John left them and returned to Jerusalem.** As with many guys in the Bible, John often went by another name that you may recognize, “Mark.” Yeah, the guy that wrote the Gospel of Mark. Mark may have had his reasons, even good reasons, but at the end of the day, he bailed on a team that depended on him.

MENTORING ONE BROKEN HEART CAN REACH MANY

Paul and Barnabas faced extreme adversity before returning back to Jerusalem. In *Acts* 14, Paul was stoned and dragged outside the city because they supposed he was dead. Nope. He got up, dusted himself off, and marched back into the city. Mark’s decision to leave wasn’t dumb from a safety perspective. Paul was like that crazy friend we all have that’s fun to be around but chances are someone’s getting hurt or arrested.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem, **they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them** (*Acts* 15:4). Perhaps it was this success that gave Mark the courage to rejoin the missionary efforts. **Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.** Mark was, after all, Barnabas’s younger cousin. **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.**

It’s often been said that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Although Paul likely fulfilled Jesus’ command to *forgive* his brother 77 times, he didn’t *trust* Mark. When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles for the first time, he said, “*Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*” Paul understood that although he was commanded to forgive, he was also advised to be wise about who he trusts. Forgiveness and trust are *not* the same thing. Forgiveness doesn’t mean fellowship and certainly doesn’t mean you then trust that person with your life and well-being.

Paul and Barnabas were both tough personalities and strong leaders and **there arose a sharp disagreement.** They finally concluded that the dynamic duo split. **Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed.** Although Paul saw in Mark an unfaithful disciple, Barnabas saw a young man that needed development. He was willing to take a risk in order to see him thrive.

Out of this challenging circumstance, we turn from *Acts* 15 to *Acts* 16—which, we studied in Week 2. Paul had his new ministry partner in Silas, but in *Acts* 16 he found a worthy disciple named Timothy.

BROKEN PATTERNS MUST BE CORRECTED

Last Week we studied the first eight verses of 2 Timothy 4. Since the second half of chapter 4 is so personal to Paul’s circumstance, it’s not the most beneficial use of our study to go too in-depth. Instead, as Paul asked Timothy to come see him, we wanted to bring insight into verse 11 that says, **Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.**

Mark’s failure didn’t define him. Yours don’t either. Failing doesn’t make you a failure. Sometimes we need older mentors to understand that. God used Barnabas, and later Peter, in Mark’s life to increase his “usefulness.” We aren’t all born to godly parents, but God designed the Church as a family so we can still learn from first-hand examples.

Nobody is beyond redemption and God never wastes your hurt. Hopefully, you’ve found a mentor in your life who has or can walk with you through hard seasons. Certainly, as you move from disciple to mentor, you can be that for others.

So, was Paul wrong for not wanting to take Mark? We can’t say. It’s one of the hardest leadership decisions we may face. All we can say reflecting on this story is that broken patterns were corrected and amidst the adversity, everyone won in the end.

