

Acts 15:36-16:10

November 23, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?
- What Scripture has been shaping you recently?
- Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?
- What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?
- What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?
- What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?
- What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Thanksgiving "This or That"

- 1.Designate one side of the room as "This" (choice one) and the other as "That" (choice two).
- 2.Read each pair of choices aloud.
- 3.Students should move to the side of the room that matches their preference.
- 4.Optional:
Ask a few students to explain their choice after each round!

Food Round Choices:

- Turkey or Ham
- Fried Turkey or Smoked Turkey
- Mashed Potatoes or Sweet Potato Casserole
- Cranberry Sauce or Gravy
- Pumpkin Pie or Apple Pie
- Dressing or Mac & Cheese
- Buttered Rolls or Plain Rolls

- Green Bean Casserole or Green Bean + Bacon Bundles
- Pecan Pie or Chocolate Cake

Activity Round Choices:

- Watching Football or Playing Football
- Thanksgiving Parade or Thanksgiving Nap
- Board Games or Card Games
- Going for a Walk or Watching a Movie
- Hosting at Home or Traveling to Family
- Helping with Dishes or Dodging Dish Duty
- Early Morning Black Friday Shopping or Sleeping In

Teaching Moment:

Today we played this or that, Thanksgiving edition. We didn't always agree! In fact, some of us strongly disagreed with one choice or another. Disagreements happen in the body of Christ. Today, we'll read a story about a sharp disagreement that happened between Paul and Barnabas in Acts and we'll see how God worked through it.

DISCUSSION

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 15:36-16:10.

What was the source of the disagreement in Acts 15:36-41, and what ultimately happened?

What does this teach us about disagreements in the body of Christ?

Why might this be surprising in the context of what was happening with Paul and Barnabas and the early church right before this passage?

What details stand out to you in Acts 16:1-5?

We just learned that circumcision wasn't necessary to be a Christian. Why might have Timothy submitted to this custom?

What can we learn from Paul's actions with Timothy about discipling new leaders in the body of Christ?

What might be surprising in Acts 16:6-10?

How do you see God at work here?

What can we learn from Paul about following God's will in our own lives?

GOING DEEPER

What types of disagreements do we see in the body of Christ today?

How should we react when disagreements happen?

APPLICATION

How have you seen God work through disagreements in your own life?

What can we learn from Paul about what it means to make disciples of Jesus? What about when we face unexpected obstacles in ministry?

How is God calling you to continue the spread of the gospel today?

PRAYER

Thank God for having a good plan for our lives. Ask for wisdom and guidance as we seek to make disciples. Ask for His help trusting God's plan. Pray for grace in handling conflict with humility and for strength to obey God's call — even when it leads us somewhere unexpected.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue our study of Acts next week.

November 30, 2025 --- Acts 16:11-40

COMMENTARY

Acts 15:36–16:10

15:36 This verse marks the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey. Out of a sense of responsibility, Paul wanted to visit the converts in every town they had evangelized to see how they were progressing in the faith.

15:37–40 That Paul and Barnabas parted company over John Mark shows that even within the apostolic fellowship, perfect unity was not always obtainable. Sometimes God's workers have to agree to go separate ways, but there is always hope for reunion (Col 4:10; 2Tm 4:11; Phm 24). Paul took with him Silas, one of the men who had carried the Jerusalem letter to Antioch (vv. 23–34). Barnabas is not mentioned in the book of Acts after this incident.

15:41 Rather than going to Cyprus to strengthen the believers there, Paul and Silas went to Syria and the region of Cilicia, entering the province of Asia Minor.

16:1–3 Paul and Silas continued to retrace the first missionary journey by reentering Galatia. At Lystra, Paul invited a young disciple named Timothy—son of a Jewish woman and Greek man—to join him. Paul circumcised Timothy not because he was caving in to pressure from “believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees” (15:5), but rather to show respect for Jewish law and identity given the fact that Timothy was half-Jewish. If Timothy had remained uncircumcised, it would seem to many Jews that he had rejected not just the Mosaic law but also his Jewish ethnicity. Paul's continuing mentorship of Timothy throughout his ministry resulted in, among other things, the writing of the letters 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

16:4 Besides evangelizing, Paul and his ministry partners conveyed the decisions of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about circumcision and Gentile converts (see note at 15:19). Paul wanted to make clear that Gentiles could believe in Jesus without adhering to Jewish rites.

16:5 No doubt one of the reasons the churches in this Gentile-dominated region were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers was that the Jerusalem Council had decided to minimize the burden imposed on Gentile believers (see 15:19, 20).

16:6–8 Paul and his companions passed through the region of Galatia (probably visiting Iconium and Antioch), and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. They were also prevented by the Spirit of Jesus (i.e., Holy Spirit) from turning north into Bithynia. So they passed through Mysia and arrived at the coastal city of Troas in Asia. Luke did not indicate why the Spirit constrained Paul's plans or by what method he made known the restrictions. The reader is left with questions, but see v. 9; also see 15:32.

16:9 God gave Paul a vision to communicate his will for the direction his ministry should take, just as he had done with Peter (chap. 10). Paul saw a Macedonian man plead with him to cross over the Aegean Sea to Europe and help them. Thus it seems Paul was restricted from preaching in other places because God planned for him to “preach the gospel” (v. 10) in Macedonia.

16:10 This is the beginning of the first “we” section in the book of Acts. It extends until v.17. The “we” passages are vv. 10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; 28:1–16. The “we” likely indicates that Luke joined Paul’s journey at these points. When connected together, the “we” passages form a continuous geographically joined narrative. This indicates a single unified source for these narratives, most likely Luke’s own memory or the notes he took.