



Mark

Always Eager To Do The
Right Thing

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Overview

JOHN MARK WAS EAGER TO DO THE RIGHT THING

John Mark's story is told in Acts 12:23-13:13 and Acts 15:36-39. He is also mentioned in Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13.

Mistakes are effective teachers. Their consequences have a way of making lessons painfully clear. But those who learn from their mistakes are likely to develop wisdom. John Mark was a good learner who just needed some time and encouragement.

Mark was eager to do the right thing, but he had trouble staying with a task. In his Gospel, Mark mentions a young man (probably referring to himself) who fled in such fear during Jesus' arrest that he left his clothes behind. This tendency to run was to reappear later when Paul and Barnabas took him on their first missionary journey. At their second stop, Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

It was a decision Paul did not easily accept. In preparing for their second journey two years later, Barnabas again suggested Mark as a traveling companion, but Paul flatly refused. As a result, the team was divided.

Barnabas took Mark with him, and Paul chose Silas. Barnabas was patient with Mark, and the young man repaid his investment. Paul and Mark were later reunited, and the older apostle became a close friend of the young disciple.

Mark was a valuable companion to three early Christian leaders—Barnabas, Paul, and Peter. The material in Mark's Gospel seems to have come mostly from Peter. Mark's role as a serving assistant allowed him to be an observer. He heard Peter's accounts of the years with Jesus over and over, and he was one of the first to put Jesus' life in writing.

Barnabas played a key role in Mark's life. He stood beside the young man despite his failure, giving him patient encouragement. Mark challenges us to learn from our mistakes and appreciate the patience of others. Is there a Barnabas in your life you need to thank for his or her encouragement to you?

A nephew of Barnabas

Col. 4:10

Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he comes unto you, receive him ;)

Aristarchus was a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey. He was with Paul in the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:29). He and Tychicus were with Paul in Greece (Acts 20:4).

Aristarchus went to Rome with Paul (Acts 27:2). Mark started out with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25), but he left in the middle of the trip for unknown reasons (Acts 13:13). Barnabas and Mark were relatives, and when Paul refused to take Mark on another journey, Barnabas and Mark journeyed together to preach the Good News (Acts 15:37-41).

Mark also worked with Peter (Acts 12:12-13; 1 Peter 5:13). Later, Mark and Paul were reconciled (Philemon 1:24)

A disciple of Jesus

Acts 12:12

After a little thought, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer.

John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. His mother's house was large enough to accommodate a meeting of many believers. An upstairs room in this house may have been the location of Jesus' last supper with his disciples (Luke 22:8ff).

Mark travels with Barnabas to Antioch.

Acts 12:25

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch, taking John Mark with them.

John Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Col. 4:10). His mother, Mary, often opened her home to the apostles (Acts 12:12), so John Mark would have been exposed to most of the great men and teachings of the early church. Later, John Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but for unknown reasons, he left them in the middle of the trip.

John Mark was criticized by Paul for abandoning the mission (Acts 15:37-39), but he wrote the Gospel of Mark and was later acclaimed by Paul as a vital help in the growth of the early church (2 Tim. 4:11).

Mark assisted in preaching.

Acts 13:5

There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. (John Mark went with them as their assistant.)

Located in the Mediterranean Sea, the island of Cyprus, with a large Jewish population, was Barnabas's home. Their first stop was in familiar territory.

Mark returns to Jerusalem.

Acts 13:13

Now Paul and those with him left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

No reason is given why John Mark left Paul and Barnabas. Some suggestions are:

(1) he was homesick;

(2) he resented the change in leadership from Barnabas (his cousin) to Paul;

(3) he became ill (an illness that may have affected all of them—see Galatians 4:13);

(4) he was unable to withstand the rigors and dangers of the missionary journey;

(5) he may have planned to go only that far but had not communicated this to Paul and Barnabas.

Paul implicitly accused John Mark of lacking courage and commitment, refusing to take him along on another journey (see Acts 15:37-38). It is clear from Paul's later letters, however, that he grew to respect Mark (Col. 4:10), and that he needed Mark in his work (2 Tim. 4:11).

Paul and Barnabas contend concerning

Acts 15:36-39

After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return to each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are getting along."

Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not shared in their work.

Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyp.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed sharply over Mark. Paul didn't want to take him along because he had left them earlier (Acts 13:13). This disagreement caused the two great preachers to form two teams, opening up two missionary endeavors instead of one. God works even through conflict and disagreements.

Later, Mark became vital to Paul's ministry (Col. 4:10). Christians do not always agree, but problems can be solved by agreeing to disagree and letting God work his will.

A convert of Peter

1 Peter 5:13

Your sister church here in Rome sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Babylon has been broadly understood by believers to be a reference to Rome. Just as the nation of Israel had been under captivity to Babylon, so the Christians as the new Israel were exiles in a foreign land.

Mark, also called John Mark, was known to many of this letter's readers because he had traveled widely (Acts 12:25-13:13; Acts 15:36-41) and was recognized as a leader in the church (Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24). Mark was probably with the disciples at the time of Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:51-52). Tradition holds that Peter was Mark's main source of information when Mark wrote his Gospel.

Fellow-worker with Paul at Rome

Col. 4:10-11

Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. And as you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way.

Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish Christians among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been!

Mark's presence is requested

2 Tim. 4:11

Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me.

Mentioning Demas reminded Paul of more faithful co-workers. Only Luke was with Paul, and Paul was feeling lonely. Tychicus, one of his most trusted companions (Acts 20:4; Ephes. 6:21; Col. 4:7; Titus 3:12), had already left for Ephesus.

Paul missed his young helpers Timothy and Mark. Mark had left Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, and this had greatly upset Paul (Acts 13:13; Acts 15:36-41). But later Mark proved to be a worthy helper, and Paul recognized him as a good friend and trusted Christian leader (Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24). Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Mark serves as a coworker.

Philemon 1:24

So do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers.

The evil spirit knew at once that Jesus was the Holy One of God. By including this event in his Gospel, Mark was establishing Jesus' credentials, showing that even the spiritual underworld recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

Strengths and accomplishments:

Wrote the Gospel of Mark

He and his mother provided their home as one of the main meeting places for the Christians in Jerusalem

Persisted beyond his youthful mistakes

- Was an assistant and traveling companion to three of the greatest early missionaries

Lessons from his life:

- Personal maturity usually comes from a combination of time and mistakes
- Mistakes are not usually as important as what can be learned from them
- Effective living is not measured as much by what we accomplish as by what we overcome in order to accomplish it.
- Encouragement can change a person's life

Key verse:

“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry” (Paul writing in 2 Tim. 4:11).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary