

WHAT IF . . . ?

What If You Need a Second Chance?

Acts 13:2–5; 15:36–41



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Each of us can remember a time when we failed to do something we said we would do. We started strong. We had every intention to follow through. And others were relying on us to stick to our commitment. To make matters worse, we gave them our word that they could count on us. And then, somewhere along the way, our good intentions got sidetracked. Circumstances became difficult. And we failed to follow through. Those who counted on us were disappointed in us, and we felt guilty. At that point, two things likely happened: 1) having lost trust in us, some of the disappointed people determined to never rely on us again, and 2) having had time to think about how we would handle things differently, we longed for a second chance. The Bible includes several examples of people who blew it and later longed to be reinstated. Peter needed a second chance after he was disloyal the night of Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:66–72). Jonah needed a second chance after he ran from the Lord's command to carry His message to Nineveh (Jonah 1–2). The adulterous woman needed a second chance to prove her character (John 8:1–11). Esther needed a second chance to respond to Mordecai's plea to help their people (Esther 4:10–17). And as we'll learn in this lesson, young John Mark needed a second chance to prove himself to Paul and Barnabas after deserting them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13; 15:37–38).



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Familiar Situations in Everyday Life: Second Chances Are Often Needed

Where would any of us be without second chances from virtually everyone in our lives? The chilling answer is hard to swallow: we would all be isolated and alone, cut off from community with others. Second chances are vital, a truth that Scripture makes clear time and again.



Quotable

Without a second chance, we would never grow to maturity.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. An Example from the First Century: John Mark with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:3–4, 13–14; 15:36–41)

Saul, also known as Paul (Acts 13:9), and Barnabas were two prominent teachers in the Antioch church whom God called to minister in other places (13:1–2). But these two men didn't go alone. They brought as an assistant young John Mark, who was also called Mark (12:12 NASB).

After ministering on the island of Cyprus, the travelers sailed for Asia Minor and landed in a port called Perga. There John Mark left the group (13:13).

In his record of the event, Luke told us nothing of Paul's immediate reaction to John Mark's leaving. However, we do know how it affected Paul later. Sometime after their return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas explored the idea of returning to the churches they had started on their previous journey. Both men were excited by the prospect, aside from one thing: John Mark. Barnabas wanted to bring along his cousin again; Paul would have none of it.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Just as we'll all stand in John Mark's shoes from time to time, we'll all also slip on Paul's and Barnabas' sandals. People will fail us. And when that happens, we must decide what to do. How do we determine—amidst others who might disagree—what to do with the individual who failed? Here are four guidelines to help you navigate those treacherous waters and make the right choice.

- First, *when in disagreement, work hard at seeing the other point of view.*
- Second, *when both sides have excellent support, seek a wise compromise.*
- Third, *when conflict persists, care enough to work it through rather than stomp it out.*
- Fourth, *when you can't reach a resolution and you must disagree, try not to become disagreeable.*

Do you disagree or have you recently disagreed with someone about offering a second chance? Describe the situation.

