

## **Forgiveness, The First Step to Restoration**

**By Mark Harris, Founder/CEO of 4Tucson**

How long did it take Paul and Barnabas to forgive and restore their relationship?

In Acts 15:39 the Bible says that the contention between Paul and Barnabas “*...became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.*”

I have studied most of the Bible references concerning the ongoing relationship between Paul and Barnabas after their split. While we only get glimpses here and there, it does not appear that their sharp disagreement with each other was over a doctrinal matter. Rather, their conflict was about how best to accomplish the work of the mission. Their strongly expressed personal views do not appear to have distracted either of them from their roles as missionary leaders. They both remained focused on advancing the gospel through the work of the local church. In spite of strong differences there was a sense of mutual respect and a spirit of on-going cooperation. The relationship between Paul and Barnabas should serve as a great example for all Christian leaders.

This past week, through the help of our consultant, TJ Addington, along with Glen Elliot and Jim Weisert; representatives of the Board of Directors of both J17 and 4Tucson respectively, Dave and I met to seek resolution of our sharp conflict. Our issues are not about doctrinal issues, but rather how best to accomplish the mission to which God has called us. In our meetings last week, Dave and I both asked for, and received from one another forgiveness in areas where we have each said or done something that has harmed the other. This is a significant first step in the restoration process.

We are both profoundly aware that the church is a community that works together as one. We both believe that within the body of Christ, individual differences, when resolved in a healthy way, ultimately serve to strengthen our unity as followers of Jesus. Healthy resolution of conflict often provides new opportunities, new approaches and new initiatives to develop common work for the advancement of the gospel.

The Bible does not say how long it took Paul and Barnabas to reconcile. I do know that it has taken Dave and I several uncomfortable months to take the first step in the process of reconciliation. I am encouraged to share with you, that in spite of our past differences, we have each committed to work together with a sense of mutual respect and in a spirit of on-going cooperation. It may take us additional time to fully heal our relationship. However, this week, we have both taken a significant first step in that direction.

Thank you for your genuine concern for us over the past several months. I do not believe this first step would have happened without your faithful prayers. While it may have been very reasonable to do so, I thank you for not giving up on the mission of biblical city transformation through the unity of the body of Christ. I also want to thank you for

not giving up on either Dave or me as leaders in our city. And most importantly, I want to thank Dave for being willing to meet with me for the restoration of our relationship.

By committing ourselves to following the example of Paul and Barnabas and by applying ourselves to forgiveness and reconciliation, we should now expect to see God bringing forth new opportunities, new approaches and new initiatives for His glory in our city. I am ready, how about you?

(You can read previous blogs here: <https://www.4tucson.com/category/blogs/ceo-blog/>)