

INTRO

- How do you typically respond to conflict: fight, flight, freeze or face?

READ

Acts 15:1-11,19-21

Acts is about the mission and ministry of Jesus continuing through his Spirit and his Church, and followers of Jesus today are called to participate in this unstoppable movement Jesus began.

REFLECT & RESPOND

What began as a small Jewish Messianic Movement increasingly becomes diverse, creating tension between Jewish & Gentile Christians. Some Jewish Christians argued it was necessary for Gentiles to become culturally Jewish in order to be Christian. This leads to a sharp dispute in the early church. Acts 15 is often referred to as the Jerusalem Council as it was here where gospel clarity and purity is at stake: what makes you a Christian? What distinguishes the people of God?

Qu: can you think of additional requirements we can sometimes place upon people to be seen as Christian? (e.g. politics, beliefs, behaviours)

Three things the council affirms that holds relevance for us today:

1. Gospel Truth: we are saved by grace alone, therefore we are recipients of grace.

Grace—the undeserved and inexhaustible favour God shows us—is the basis of the Christian faith.

Qu: why do you think it is important for the church then and now to fight for a gospel of grace?

2. Gospel Principle: As recipients of grace, we are to be extensions of grace to others.

“We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God” (v19).

Qu: what’s the connection between receiving and extending grace? Why is this so important?

3. Gospel Practice: we extend grace to others through practical expressions of grace.

Grace empowers us to express and restrict our freedom in Christ in loving, winsome ways for the sake of unity/fellowship within the church, and the witness of the church.

Qu: Qu: how could we apply this practically to life, ministry and our church today? How willing are you to adapt/restrict your lifestyle for the sake of others?

Our cultural, national, and ethnic diversity is to be celebrated. But, they should never become the primary way we view and judge others as followers of Jesus. Through Grace, we are saved, liberated, and empowered towards centring our lives around Christ.

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray for a renewed understanding and encounter with God’s grace
- Pray for opportunities to extend and express grace to others in the week ahead