

**Date:** March 24, 2019

**Text:** Acts 15:20-16:5

**Title:** Freedom to Love

**Big Idea:** The Gospel gives us freedom to love God and others, even when it restrains our freedoms.

**Context:** *If needed, read Acts 15:1-19 to remind yourselves of the context of the dispute that is addressed at the Jerusalem Council.*

### **A Collaboration of Discernment**

Who is involved in discerning God's will and the right course of action (see verses 22, 25 & 28)?

Do you think there are any principles for decision making in the church that we can see taking place here?

### **The Pursuit of Peace and Unity**

How do they preserve unity when the conflict could potentially create a major split in the church? (See verse 22, 24-27, 30-35) What was the outcome (verse 31-33: joy, strength, peace).

How important is unity in the church? Are we known for fighting for unity in the church?

### **The Four Abstentions**

Read verses 20-21 & 23-29. Discuss how this sits with you when you read it, and what you think is happening here.

### **The Gospel Gives Freedom to Love God**

All four of these abstentions would have been recognized as activities practiced in pagan idol temples. Why then would it be important for Gentile Christians to stay away from these things?

Repentance (turning to Jesus) and faith (trusting in Jesus) are the only entrance requirements for salvation. Do you think God *requires* that we love him through obedience once we have been saved? Discuss the implications of this.

### **The Gospel Gives Freedom to Love Others**

Read Matthew 22:34-40; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; and 1 Corinthians 8:9-13. How do these texts fit in with what is being asked of these Gentile Christians in Acts 15.

Read Acts 16:1-5. How do you think Paul would explain the decision to circumcise Timothy?

### **Application**

- What are you currently doing to fight for unity within the church?
- How are you growing in your *sanctification*—becoming more like Jesus through increased obedience? How does the Gospel give us the ability to obey it?
- What does “freedom” mean to you? How important are your “rights”? Are there times currently in your life where it would be best to lay down your “rights” and “freedoms” in order to love others?