

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 4

Right and Wrong

Acts 15:1-35 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

In this world where right and wrong is considered relative and where sin is justified, we often struggle not only with *doing* what is right, but even more so with *determining* what is right and wrong. Read Acts 15:1-35. This passage gives us four guiding principles for how to determine right and wrong so that we can do what is right, be a witness to the world, and glorify God.

Background (v. 1-6)

- What was the wrong teaching that the Jewish Christians claimed, which contradicts the sufficiency of Jesus' death alone to save us?
- What practices or beliefs do some Christians add to the gospel?
- Although contextually the issue is theological, note HOW the Jerusalem Council resolved this issue.

Be guided by the FACTS (v. 7-12)

- What was Peter's explanation, which Paul and Barnabas also believed and upheld, with regards to the fact that Jews and Gentiles were saved in the same manner?
- When dealing with difficult issues, why is it always wise to consult an adviser or someone who is knowledgeable about the facts of the matter to resolve the problem?
- Why is it important to be guided by the facts versus your feelings to discern what is right and wrong? Discuss the implications.

Be guided by the SCRIPTURES (v. 13-21)

- How did James back up the facts that Peter presented?
- Why is it important that when it comes to what is right and wrong, it should be defined by what the Word of God tells you or defines for you, and not how you define it yourself?
- How did James conclude his argument in verses 19-21? How would his argument be able to maintain the Gentile Christians their testimony and not stumble or offend the Jewish people?
- Why must the Scriptures be the standard for what is right and wrong instead of the majority opinion of people or the subjective cultural norms?
- Share how you have used the Word of God in responding to an issue brought to you by someone. How did it go?

Be guided by GODLY PEOPLE (v. 22-25)

- What was the unanimous, Spirit-led conclusion that the apostles and elders in the church have decided to do regarding this matter?
- Do you have a trusted godly person in your life that you could go to for advice and counsel, someone who has the courage to tell you the truth, even if it may not be what you want to hear? How is this person guiding you? Why is it important that you should seek his/her or their advice and not their agreement?

Be aided by EDIFYING OUTCOMES (v. 30-35)

- How did the Christian Gentiles in Antioch receive the decision of the Jerusalem Council from the delegation?
- Do you always agree to what the Word of God says?
- Do you agree that God's standard of right and doing the right thing in His eyes will always lead to an edifying outcome? Share an

experience on how your or someone you know's obedience to the Lord's Word has blessed you or that person.

REFLECT

When discerning what is right and wrong and doing the right things, examine yourself:

- Are you being guided more by the facts or your feelings?
- Are you being guided by what Scripture teaches or by your own or other people's standards?
- Do you seek the advice of a godly person who has the courage to tell you the truth, even those you don't want to hear, or do you gravitate towards people who tell you only what you want to hear?
- Do you have personal experiences or at least personal knowledge of how obedience to God led to edifying outcomes and blessings? Do those experiences or knowledge encourage you to do what is right, or do you tend to look more at the success and accomplishments of those who do what is wrong?

Do you struggle with any of the four principles? What do you find most challenging? Are there any attitudes or behaviors that prevent you from following these godly principles? What action steps do you need to do to correct them?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word that teaches me the way of salvation and on how I should grow as Your child. Your Word corrects me when I am wrong and leads me back to what is right. Help me to be faithful in learning more from Your Word as I walk and live for You. In Jesus' name. Amen.