

## Acts 15:1–35 - Theological Disagreement

### 1. Theological Dispute 1–4

- a. Different theological viewpoints created dispute and debate among the believers in Antioch.
- b. The issue at hand touched on soteriology (how is someone saved), ecclesiology (who is part of the church), Christology (the nature of the incarnation and extent of his sacrifice) and pneumatology (who receives the Holy Spirit and when).
- c. Because of the significance and wide application of this particular issue, the disciples chose to consult the greater church community.

***When theological/doctrinal differences arise and threaten church unity, it is important to address these differences with the appropriate level of leadership.***

#### Questions:

Some theological differences can be overlooked, while others need to be addressed. How can we tell the difference?

Share a time when you experienced a theological difference with someone and chose to overlook the difference and/or a time the difference needed to be addressed.

### 2. Theological Engagement 3–21

- a. Both sides of the debate were permitted to present their position.
- b. Tools for Theological Engagement:
  - i. Church History – What happened “some time ago”?
  - ii. Reason – Is it reasonable to expect ...?
  - iii. Experience – Here is what we experienced/witnessed.
  - iv. Scripture – How does God’s word speak to the issue?

***Engaging theological issues requires us to be able to hear each other out, and present our position in relation to church history, human reason, past experience and Holy Scripture.***

#### Questions:

Consider a recent or current situation that you experienced or are experiencing. Take some time to reflect on how the four tools of theological reflection relate to that situation.

1. How has the church/Christians responded to similar past situations?
2. Thinking about the situation and the possible solutions/decisions, what might be reasonable/logical solutions?
3. What has been your experience regarding this or similar situations?
4. What scripture might relate to the situation and how you respond?

### 3. Theological Unity 22–35

- a. Recognizing the need for unity, the church leaders included the “whole church” in the decision making and sent their own delegates to the Gentile churches.
- b. The Jewish church leaders intentionally used familial and endearing terms to address the Gentile churches.
- c. The restrictions presented addressed issues of unity and morality.
- d. The result increased church unity and mutual affection.

***When a decision is reached, church leaders need to make sure that they address all parties with respect and affection, focusing on resolving the issue in a way that promotes unity and holiness which will result in strengthening the church body.***

#### Main Idea

In the life of the church, theological disagreement will happen.

**Addressing the disagreement needs to start by assessing its scope and impact.**

**Larger issues will need to be addressed by church leaders who will listen to all sides, evaluate based on the four criteria of theological reflection and come to a Spirit-led decision that promotes unity and holiness.**

**Questions:**

Consider whether or not you have theological views or doctrinal positions that are contrary to the main teaching of Elliott Heights Baptist Church.

Does this need to be addressed? If so, at what leadership level? Do you need to talk to a close friend or WEE Group facilitator to help with this assessment and plan who to approach and how to approach?