

## Church is Changing.

Week 5

### Roof – Over arching ideas.

Acts 15:22-35

1. *Acts 15:22. Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church,*

It is interesting looking at this passage. This is a case of leadership, and church confirming a direction. There was an issue. We talked about it last week. The issue was whether the church thought that Christians had to follow Jewish legalities or whether God's grace had a different flavour. Notice this verse has some points for us.

1. **Church meeting – congregational.** The meeting was deciding if gentiles, which is everyone other than Jews, could know about Jesus and be saved. Our answer is of course, but these guys were just working it all out. Notice they had a meeting, not only the theological big wigs but all the Christians around and available. Confirmation of the conclusion to the debate. Notice it says "All agreed. Notice – **It seemed good.** That is not a conclusive statement or a this is the only way statement but a what seemed good to the group statement.

My assumption is that the Holy Spirit worked in each person there to come to a consensus.

Now our assumption is that the Holy Spirit works in each person's life and brain to work through the issues and we think the same with our church meetings. Again, the assumption is that God is working in people's lives and we come to a consensus about what direction we take. WE then need to be really careful not to criticise church decisions as the Holy Spirit has been part of it. (Hey some people will have differing opinions on this point)

But notice too the consensus was apostles, elders and whole church. It was a direction from top down and bottom up. The apostles had an opinion, as did the elders as did the church as a whole. What would have happened if any one group felt something different? We don't know.

A couple of things here. **Congregational government is the Baptist denominations greatest strength but also it's greatest weakness.** Let me explain that statement.

We allow all members to vote. All those people who have made a commitment to be part of the processing of decision making within our church. Others can have their say within reason but it those who have made that commitment to the church who make the decisions. The problem is, that each member on the day may or may not be in fellowship with God. The system is reliant on people's spiritual connectedness with God. Those who have a different agenda, or perhaps not are not where they should be spiritually get exactly the same vote. See, great strength and great weakness. So before our meeting in a fortnight – we need to prepare ourselves spiritually. I have always believed that Church meetings are church. They are the gathering of God's people and He is in the midst of it all. IN a church meeting our worship is working together for God's purposes. So we need to be aligned with God.

Look where the verse takes us next.

**to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,**

2. **Choose those to send** – This is significant. They chose the people who have the right credentials to go. Look at it: Paul was an academic, a former Pharisee and a theological leader of the church, Barnabas had a history of being able

to be a peacemaker, and the two other guys were leading figures in that church. Picking people to do a job. That's what we do with our elections – pick people to do them job. We need to continue to pick the people who have the credentials to do the work. Now, here is the thing, sometimes we need to look more at spiritual credentials rather than logistic credentials. Notice too is says choose from among them. In other words – choose people who are involved, part of the church. In our case, we choose people from our congregational membership to leadership positions. We need to keep choosing. WE have needs of a children's deacon, a worship deacon, a finance deacon, a admin deacon and a few elders. Why did the early church choose these people – because they had the skills to do it. I read in one commentary recently "Were they asked if they wanted to go? Possibly not, the expectation was they would jump at the chance to be involved in the amazing things God was doing". MM, are we not expectant enough. I will leave that with you.

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3. **Leading** – respected men. Leading men does not imply the most educated but the ones who were wise. Now wisdom in the bible is different from today. Today it is more about what you know, in the bible it was more about knowing how to use what you know.  
Why is it so important to have wise guys? Well this was a contentious issue with some people. Tricky politically, so wisdom was vital. They chose the people to do the job. Wise guys to do a tough job.
4. **Credibility** – Leading men among the brothers.  
Note here that the last two guys chosen were firstly from the congregation and secondly guys with credibility. Leaders by track record.

Now how do we take this passage on board as a church, how do we implement these aspects into our everyday church governance.

a. We already have a system in place that caters to this format.

We choose people, we look to place people in ministry who have credibility, we expect those in leadership roles to do the leading. Our system nearly expects this passage to be a template for us.

Interestingly, some have said that the system fails us. Sorry, systems don't fail, people not letting the system work do. The reason the system isn't functioning at full potential is we have a lack of people to fill the positions. That is not the systems fault. It is not the documents fault, it is ours. If all those positions are full and we struggle we adjust – the document says we can. But let's not blame a piece of paper let's look at why people aren't willing to lead.

b. We need to continue to choose to send people into ministry. In our case at least place people in ministry. Hang on we are looking very shallow here. We are only looking at getting this congregation serviced. What about sending some of us to mission or external ministry. Why are we so inward thinking.

We tend to expect them to put their hand up. Perhaps we should be choosing them. Identifying those with the skills needed and choosing to put them forward for ministry and leadership roles. Maybe we need to be saying – Hey, I believe in you, have you thought of this ministry or that. (We do have the potential for this to happen – if people nominate people of perceived skill, talent and gifting but also recognise people's further potential to assist the Kingdom of God AS WELL as our church)

c. We choose our leaders. Pastors, voted for, eldership, voted for, deacons, voted for. What is hard when we do the choosing is staying focussed on letting them lead when they don't lead as we want. We want to choose someone else who is more palatable to our understanding of leadership. We need to back away from that.

Make the assumption the Holy Spirit has lead us to select the leaders and release them to lead as God designed them. Some of them have differing leadership styles.

But again, God made them that way and the Holy Spirit lead people to vote them in or select them.

Process

Recycled Church - Carla Robinson