

“BIC Lead Day”

(Tim Geddert, November 14, 2024)

Presentation 2



Outline:

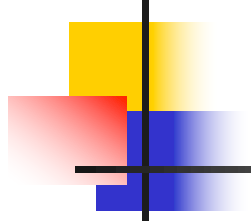
Unity in Diversity (reflections on Paul)

Introducing test cases

I Choose the Jesus Way

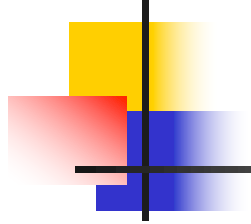
Principles of a Jesus-Centered Christian Ethic

Application to test cases



Unity in Diversity

(reflections on the perspectives of Paul)



Introducing test cases



Cohabitation before marriage

- Is the Bible clear?
- What does “porneia” mean?
- The “problem” of inconsistent accountability



Cannabis usage

- Do any Scriptures seem relevant?
- Does it matter whether it is legal or illegal?
- Is alcohol usage a relevant analogy (or is drunkenness)?
- What kinds of “recreation” do Christians endorse?



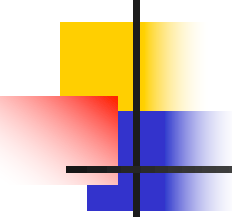
LGB (Same-Sex Marriage)

- The appropriateness of “a denominational position”
- Is the real issue biblical obedience? biblical authority? biblical hermeneutics?
- Sincere believers disagree: Is that relevant?
- “Loving Well”



I Choose the Jesus Way (Phil Wickham)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fhv4arL3yk>



If you curse me, then I will bless you
If you hurt me, I will forgive
And if you hate me, then I will love you
I choose the Jesus way

If you're helpless, I will defend you
And if you're burdened, I'll share the weight
And if you're hopeless, then let me show you
There's hope in the Jesus way



Chorus:

I follow Jesus

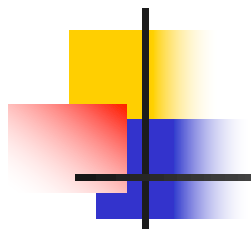
I follow Jesus

He wore my sin, I'll gladly wear His name

He is the treasure

He is the answer

Oh, I choose the Jesus way



If you strike me, I will embrace you
And if you chain me, I'll sing His praise
And if you kill me, my home is heaven
For I choose the Jesus way

Chorus:



Chorus:

And I choose surrender

I choose to love

Oh, God my Savior, You'll always be enough

I choose forgiveness

I choose grace

I choose to worship, no matter what I face

I choose the Jesus way (4)

Chorus: (2)



Jesus is the center of our faith?

And how does that help us have tough conversations about controversial issues?

(especially on ethics!)



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

1. A "Jesus Ethic" has love as its primary measuring stick.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

2. A "Jesus Ethic" is concerned more with the center of God's will than with the boundary lines.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

3. A "Jesus Ethic" maintains the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of God's Kingdom.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

4. A "Jesus Ethic" takes seriously the diversity we find in Scripture.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

5. A “Jesus Ethic” reshapes our worldview (teaches us how to adopt kingdom values and attitudes).



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

6. A "Jesus Ethic" finds expression in concrete external actions!



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

7. A “Jesus Ethic” is an ethic for the community, and equips that community for its mission.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

Where does this all lead?



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

Where does this all lead? – to a “heart” ethic!



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

Where does this all lead? – to a “heart” ethic!

- Jesus gets to the heart of the matter.



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- Jesus gets to the heart of the disciple.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

Where does this all lead? – to a “heart” ethic!

- Jesus gets to the heart of the matter.
- Jesus gets to the heart of the disciple.
- Jesus gets to the heart of the law.



Principles of Jesus' Ethic

Where does this all lead? – to a “heart” ethic!

- Jesus gets to the heart of the matter.
- Jesus gets to the heart of the disciple.
- Jesus gets to the heart of the law.
- Jesus gets to the heart of community.



Application to Test Cases

1. What Bible texts speak directly or indirectly to the issue?
2. In your view, do these texts settle the question?
3. What “Principles of a Jesus Ethic” might help us?



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LGB (Same-Sex Marriage)

- The appropriateness of “a denominational position”
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- Sincere believers disagree: Is that relevant?
- “Loving Well”



Question and Answer Time

Pose whatever questions you have! OR,

Consider these:

1. Which of the points proposed as components of a “Jesus Ethic” seem most important?
2. What does “getting to the heart of the matter” mean to you and your ministry context?
3. What input on the “test cases” would you like to offer the group?



Acts 15

The Council at Jerusalem

15 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.



Acts 15

- ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.
- ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."
- ⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question.



Acts 15

⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."



Acts 15

12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. **13** When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. **14** Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. **15** The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16 “After this I will return
and rebuild David’s fallen tent.



Acts 15

Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,

17 that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who bear my name,

says the Lord, who does these things’—

18 things known from long ago.

19 “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. **20** Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. **21** For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”



Acts 15

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,

To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:

Greetings.



Acts 15

24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. **25** So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— **26** men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. **28** It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: **29** You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.



Acts 15

30 So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. **31** The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. **32** Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. **33** After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. **[34]** **35** But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The issues of the Jerusalem Council



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The issues of the Jerusalem Council

- It was about a significant theological decision:



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

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- It was about the ethnic implications of the larger issue.
- It was about the practical social implications of the Jew-Gentile question.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The issues of the Jerusalem Council

- It was about a significant theological decision:
- It was about the ethical implications of the answer to the first question.
- It was about the ethnic implications of the larger issue.
- It was about the practical social implications of the Jew-Gentile question.
- It was about the means by which they reached a consensus.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The theological question

- Peter explained: “On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:11).



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question

- the four “conditions” or the four “essentials”

“We should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from porneia (fornication?) and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.”



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question (four goals)



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question (four goals)

- To make it “not too difficult” for the Gentiles



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question (four goals)

- To make it “not too difficult” for the Gentiles
- To make it not too difficult for the Jews, either.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question (four goals)

- To make it “not too difficult” for the Gentiles
- To make it not too difficult for the Jews, either.
- To protect the new converts from slipping back into their old lifestyles.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question (four goals)

- To make it “not too difficult” for the Gentiles
- To make it not too difficult for the Jews, either.
- To protect the new converts from slipping back into their old lifestyles.
- To facilitate evangelism among both Gentiles and Jews.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question

- The list appears to contain three matters of Jewish ceremonial law and one (“fornication”) which is an ethical matter.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethical question

- The list appears to contain three matters of Jewish ceremonial law and one (“fornication”) which is an ethical matter.
- I believe that this short list makes no attempt at all to establish basic and permanent ethical guidelines.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The ethnic question

- We are reconciled to God through our relationship with Jesus made possible by God's grace. We learn together with all other believers what an ethical Christian lifestyle involves. Everything else is ethnic, cultural, optional.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

The results of the conference

The practical question

- The church was ready to adopt practical solutions to their problems, solutions that facilitated fellowship, Christian maturity, and witness.



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

In every time and place we are challenged to discern anew: How can we make it easier and not harder for newcomers to join the Christian community? Which restrictions are necessary so that the more conservative among us are not pushed too far? What guidelines will help new converts avoid slipping back into their pre-Christian lifestyles? What helps the church to gain a credible testimony?



Learning from the early church (Acts 15)

How did they manage all that?



How did the early church reach consensus?

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- They came together, even if it cost a great deal of time and energy.



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How did the early church reach consensus?

How did they manage all that?

- They came together, even if it cost a great deal of time and energy.
- Everyone was given an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- They recalled what God had done among them in the past.
- They recognized that God was now doing something new.



How did the early church reach consensus?

How did they manage all that?

- They examined the Scriptures.



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How did the early church reach consensus?

How did they manage all that?

- They examined the Scriptures.
- They aimed to make it easier and not harder for newcomers.
- They took seriously the interests of both sides in the debate.
- They did not say, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” until they had reached consensus.



How did the early church reach consensus?

And then?



Making Tough Decisions Together (Acts 15)

Conversation:

- About the decisions made at the council
- About their strategies for discerning God's will.
- Any stories you wish to share?



Question and Answer Time

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