

*Acts - Learning from the early church – study 6 – ‘The Way Forward’.*

Read Acts 15: 1 – 21 and John 15: 9 - 11

There is good news in this passage. Two diametrically opposed views have been reconciled by the young and learning church, and they go forward in apparent unity. We need to remember that the debate about whether or not salvation was exclusive to Israel or inclusive to all people had already been decided (read Acts 10 & 11 – Peter/Cornelius) so the dispute was about which elements of the tradition handed down by Moses were essential to maintain and which were now unnecessary barriers to welcoming in new believers. For two thousand years the church has continued to address this same question, and continues today – how to retain what is essential from the tradition of previous worshippers whilst finding new expressions/ways of following Jesus appropriate for each new generation.

Here are some discussion points:-

- 1. Do you think those outside the church (UK churches in general) view the church as modern, traditional or very traditional? On what basis do you think these views are formed?*
- 2. Do those outside the church appreciate/understand differences in church denominations and traditions? Should they know, or even care?*
- 3. If you found yourself in St James church in the year 1875/1900 (say 3 generations back), how comfortable would you be as a member and worshipping there? What do you imagine the most challenging differences would be? What of value (in relation to church and faith), if anything, has been lost between then and now?*
- 4. What are the major points to draw out from the passage about the process they went through to reach a unified decision?*
- 5. What do you think the reading from John’s gospel has to do with what we have been thinking about?*
- 6. Should the church not continue the ‘tradition’ of implementing a continual programme of appropriate change/modernization, what do you think would happen to the church?*
- 7. As individual church members what role can we play in supporting the church leadership as they seek ‘The Way Forward’?*