



## COMPELLED, PART 4: DRIFTING

Controversies arise in churches for many reasons. Some important. Some seemingly trivial. One tension that arose in the early days of the Church and that continues to surface over and over is the issue of grace and truth. Namely, how good does a person have to be in order to be part of the church?

**BIG IDEA: God can change your heart before you change your life.**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From your perspective, who is the church for?
2. Have you had any bad experiences with a church that made you want to say, “I don’t want anything to do with them anymore”?
3. In your opinion, is it too easy or too hard to become a Christian?
4. *With your Bible or Bible App, read John 1:14-15.*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:14, 17 (NIV)*

John wrote that Jesus was *full of grace and truth*. Jesus wasn't the balance of grace and truth. He was the embodiment of both. He was full on grace, and full on truth. There is a huge tension. Jesus never dumbed down the truth and never turned down the grace. Jesus never dumbed down the truth. Jesus never skimmed on the grace.

5. Where do you see the tension between grace and truth?
6. The grace and truth tension requires we present the IDEAL (what the Bible says) while embracing what is REAL (still loving messy people). Where do you tend to normally land—is it easy for you to give grace? Or following the rules and truth?
7. One of the biggest ways to live within the tension of grace and truth is by distinguishing between theology and ministry.

#### Theology

Theology is what we believe about God.

#### Ministry

Ministry is what we do for others as a result of what we believe.

- Distinguishing between theology and ministry liberates ministry without compromising theology.
  - We have not been called to protect a theology. Our job is to minister to people.
  - Your theology should not get in the way of ministering to other people, no matter who they are. Jesus’ theology broadened, rather than limited His scope of ministry. If what you believe limits who you minister to? You need to change what you believe. If what you believe is an obstacle for you to minister to someone who breathes? You need to change what you believe, because everyone is made in the image of God and God loves them.
8. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Acts 15:1-2.*

*Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed,*



# COMPELLED

ACTS 12-16

*along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.*

*Acts 15:1-2 (NIV)*

9. The Jewish Christians were adding circumcision to the list of things you needed to do in order to become a Christian. Over the years, and especially today, how have Christians complicated the message of Christianity?
10. The controversy for the Church at that time was over circumcision and dietary laws. What are contemporary sources of controversy for “entry” in the Church?
11. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Acts 15:3-11.*

*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 brothers very glad. 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. 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 obey the law of Moses.” The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 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. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are. It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”*

*Acts 15:3-11, 19 (NIV)*

12. How can you guard against the propensity to drift toward law and away from grace?

## THINK ABOUT IT

If the message of the church is for everybody, we dare not create a church culture that is an obstacle to anybody. What if the church remembered that forgiven people find it easier to forgive, loved people find it easier to love, accepted people find it easier to accept, and sinners who’ve been forgiven of sin find it easier to abandon their sin? Imagine what might happen in our communities if church culture got out of the way of the gospel?

## MOVING FORWARD

We have to work hard not to be a church where grace and truth conflict but coexist. Jesus was full of both grace and truth. So, in response, let’s make three commitments:

- Let’s be more concerned with who we are reaching rather than who we are keeping.
- Let’s always present the ideal while embracing what is real. Let’s always err on the side of grace.
- Let’s not allow our theology to get in the way of ministering to everyone.

## CHANGING YOUR MIND

*It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.*

*Acts 15:19*