

Title: **The Council's Decree: A Church Guided by the Gospel**  
Text: **Acts 15:19-35**  
Date: **June 15, 2025**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at [mercyhillchurch.org](http://mercyhillchurch.org).



## Big Idea

As Christians, we are to be both *grounded* in and *guided* by the gospel. Though, in Jesus, we are under grace and free from the law, nevertheless, we make ourselves servants of others in love.

### 1. Preliminary Observations

#### Observation #1: In Our Missionary Work, *Theological Reflection* Is As Important As *Pioneering Action*

This same church there in Antioch that sent Paul and Barnabas out on a pioneering mission to bring the gospel to the nations in Acts 13, is now sending them back to Jerusalem to clarify doctrinal matters here in Acts 15. May we never think that spending time getting our doctrine right, getting trained, or reading our Bibles is irrelevant, or at least not as important, when it comes to reaching the world for Jesus. Who cares that we're breaking new ground for the gospel if we've lost our grip on the truth of the gospel. We may be reaching the nations, but what are we reaching them with? They were "sent" in both directions—to the church and to the world, to the study and to the streets—because both are essential to the mission, critical to the health and progress of the whole endeavor.

#### Observation #2: In Our Fight for the Faith, *the Manner* Is As Important As *the Matter*

Here we learn, not just *what* we should fight for (i.e. the gospel!), but *how* we should fight for it: together, in community, under spiritual authority—guided not by our own faulty intuitions, but by God's Word, searching the Scriptures together.

### 2. Perplexing Recommendations

The love of God that comes to us freely by faith in Jesus starts to make us look more and more like Jesus. It melts the heart. It trans-

forms the life. We are saved by grace and not by works, but when we truly take in that grace . . . it works. You're *grounded* in the gospel . . . and then *guided* by it.

"[Y]ou were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." - Gal. 5:13

#### Expression #1: Moral Integrity

We're not going to live like the world. We're going to live like our God, like Jesus. He writes the law on our hearts by his Spirit.

#### Expression #2: Cultural Sensitivity

I don't think these explicit recommendations here by James about meat and all this are necessarily as relevant for us today in the specifics, but the principle of love as cultural sensitivity—giving up freedom in concern for others—that remains as relevant as ever.

A lot of times the big problem with our cultural collisions, whether at a broader or individual level, is we get stuck in the horizontal. We're thinking about *us* vs. *them*, *me* vs. *you* . . . and we forget *him*. We forget to let in the vertical, to rip the roof off of our back-and-forth and see Jesus. When you see him, it changes everything. There's never been a person more free in all the world than Jesus. And yet, every step of the way, when he could have chosen to use his freedom to serve himself, he instead chooses to use it to serve others in love. If he loves me like that, how am I going to come in and fight with you about all this secondary stuff? I can be sensitive to your needs, your values, your struggles, your *culture*. Instead of flaunting my freedom against you, I can give up my freedom in love for you.



### Reflection Questions

- Which do you feel you need to most work on personally—being grounded in the gospel or guided by it? Explain. What can you do to take a step in the right direction this week?
- Have you ever been tempted to use your freedom in Christ "as an opportunity for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13)? What would it look like to instead use it to serve others in love? Get specific!

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## Our Mission & Values

*Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.*

**FAITH:** The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

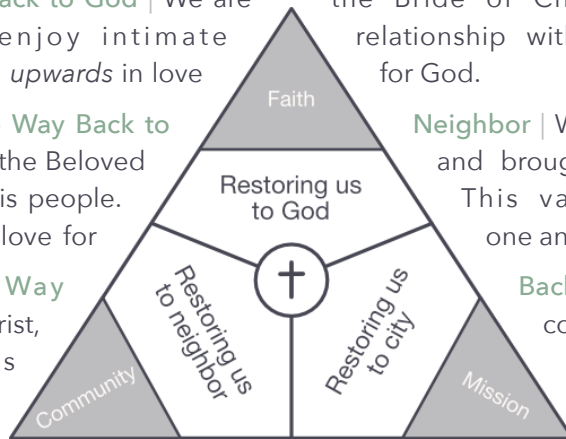
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

**COMMUNITY:** The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

**Neighbor** | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

**MISSION:** The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

**Back to City** | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



## Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.  
We are so glad you've joined us today!

## Announcement Spotlight

### All Church Campout - NEXT WEEK!

We are excited to announce that we'll be hosting an All Church Campout at Mount Madonna County Park over the weekend of June 20-22! We have a huge group campsite all to ourselves and lots of options in the park for having fun together. Whether you love to camp or you'd rather still sleep in your own bed, we have something for everyone. Because the park is only a 45 minute drive from south San Jose, people can feel free to come and go as it works with their schedule and preference.

- **Option #1: Day-Use:** For those not wanting to camp but still wanting to participate, the Day-Use option is best. You can come in for the day, enjoy activities, meals, etc., and then head home to your warm bed while the rest of us "rough" it : ).
- **Option #2: Camp:** This option is for those who want the full camping experience. We have the site for Friday and Saturday nights. You can choose to camp for one or both of these depending upon your availability and desire.

Scan the QR code below for more info and to find a link to sign up!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us  
at [info@mercyhillchurch.org](mailto:info@mercyhillchurch.org).

### Mercy Hill Kids + Youth Graduation Celebration - Today!

All Church Prayer - Called Off Tonight

Covenant Membership Class - Open Registration!

From the GO! Team - The Philippines!

Scan the QR code below for more info!

For clickable content and  
more announcements,



scan this code to head to  
our Communications Hub!

Or find it online at [mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub](https://mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub).