

Prejudice in the Early Church

Acts 6

Purpose: To learn from a conflict in the early church how to respond when people are treated unfairly, and apply those lessons to our everyday lives.

Group Discussion: How would you define racism, prejudice, and discrimination? Are they the same thing, or is there a difference?

1. (Verse 2) Whose widows were being left out, and what do you think led to that?
2. (Verse 5) Why is it important that the men chosen to solve this problem appear to have come from the group that was being overlooked?
3. Why was it significant that this decision wasn't just handed down from the top (not just the apostles), but made together as a community?
4. (Verses 8-15) Based on these verses, what stands out to you most about Stephen?
5. (Verses 8-10) Who rose up against Stephen, and why do you think his own people were the ones leading the charge?
6. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin (v. 12), a council made up of Hebrew-speaking Jews. How might this have affected the likelihood that a Greek-speaking Jew like Stephen would receive a fair trial?
7. When you look at the church today, what has changed since Acts 6 regarding race, and what still has not changed?
8. Why might people be uncomfortable pointing out the racial and cultural issues in Acts 6? What does that discomfort say about where we are today?
9. What factors do you think make the difference between a church that serves everyone well and one that unintentionally leaves some people out?
10. How might things be different in our churches and society if leadership looked more like what we see happening in Acts 6?