

life groups discussion guide
series: Be Bold (Safe is Boring)
title: "Full of It"



March 6, 2016

Reading

Acts 6:8-15

John 1:14-18

Discussion:

How is Stephen described in 6:5 and 6:8?

How is Christ described in John 1?

A consistent theme of the Bible is the perpetual struggle between grace and truth. Many Christians have struggled with this issue, thinking of it a balance, the goal of which being to have the perfect amount of grace (but not too much) while maintaining the perfect amount of truth (most also not being over weighted in this regard either). In reality the example we have been give is Jesus, who as described in the book of John was full of grace while also being full of truth. Through God's perfection, he has found a way for these godly qualities not to be competing interests, but complimentary characteristics. Furthermore, this fullness of grace and truth was also embodied in Stephen.

Discussion:

Can you think of examples in scripture of individuals who are full of truth but not grace or vice versa? What was the result?

Can you think of examples of people who fully embodied the fullness of both qualities?

In your daily life, what is your greater struggle, to live in strength and truth or to live in grace?

Many of us live like Peter, who in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:10) was quick to stand for truth and act. Peter's first reaction was to draw his sword and cut off the ear of a servant. And while boldness for God is a remarkable quality, if we live our lives like a bull in a china shop, proclaiming truth and judgment but showing no love, we actually may do more to hurt the name of Christ than help it. Discuss why this is the case.

Conversely, it seems that even more of us struggle to live in strength and truth. Our politically correct culture has melted the backbones of many Christians, in fear that we may offend our neighbors. We have a

hard time remembering that the gospel is supposed to be offensive. Living a life at enmity with Jesus is unacceptable and leads to eternal separation - that message is naturally offensive, because it calls on people to dramatically change. **(Read Mat 10:34-38)**. Jesus himself acknowledges the friction that truth brings, but it is necessary. Discuss the life of David, who lived his entire life as a great example of the full embodiment of grace and truth, with everyone, except his children **(Read 1 Kings 1:5-6)** which nearly tore apart the kingdom of Israel.

Discussion:

After considering these examples, discuss why it is critical to live fully in grace and fully in truth.

Discuss how we accomplish this.

Reading

If time permits, read Acts chapter 7

Stephen was charged with blaspheming God and Moses. He then spends Acts 7:1-50 giving a speech that summarizes the history of Israel. Why does he do this?

Discuss these possible answers:

1. He is able to praise God and honor his forefathers after being accused of blaspheming them.
2. He is able to show the Sanhedrin that throughout history, God's people have rejected Him, and now they themselves have rejected the crucified savior.

Whatever the answer, it is clear this is not a *defense*. Stephen wasn't interested in defending himself. He simply wanted to proclaim the truth about Jesus in a way people could understand. He was "Apparently not making a special defense at all or with one syllable referring to his accusers and their false witnesses, he is yet utterly refuting them and making the most effective defense." (Lenski)

At that moment Stephen was full of truth at the expense of his own life, and full of grace by sharing the gospel at his own peril, and even forgiving his killers.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, help us live our daily lives like Stephen full of grace and full of truth; loving our neighbors with our actions and by sharing the gospel. Divinely influence our lives like you did with Stephen so that through the Holy Spirit, this can be possibly. Amen.