

TABLE TALK

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE for September 4-September 10, 2022

“ACTS IN 30” Chapter 15: *The Jerusalem Council*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW: The Jerusalem Council meeting in Acts 15 is a landmark decision of incredible importance for both the Early Church and for all believers today. After Paul and Barnabas return to the Church of Antioch with testimonies of what God did in the lives of Gentile believers, several men from Jerusalem came down to Antioch and created confusion among the new Gentile believers stating that unless they obeyed the law of Moses, they were never really “saved” in the first place. This controversy led the leaders of the Church in Antioch to send a delegation (which included Paul) to Jerusalem so that there could be clarity and resolution to this issue. Their decision clarified that no “*undue burdens*” of the Law should be placed on Gentile believers and keeping harmonious fellowship with Jewish believers should be prioritized. The promise of having one unified -yet distinct- body of believers in Christ was codified here.

DAY 1: The Antioch Church Leaders Send a Delegation to Jerusalem

READ: Acts 15:1-6

REFLECT: Although Paul and Barnabas shared with the leaders Antioch about how the Lord opened the door of salvation for the Gentiles to enter into God’s family, some conservative Jewish believers from Jerusalem came down to Antioch and sparked a major debate. The leaders in Antioch decided to reach out to the Apostles in Jerusalem for help settling this matter for both Jewish and Gentile believers.

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: The church leaders in Antioch **trusted** their spiritual leaders in Jerusalem to make a godly decision. How important do you think it is for church leaders to reach out to their oversight for guidance when conflicts arise in their church?

Application Question: As a growing spiritual leader of your home, do you believe it’s important for you to reach out to spiritual leaders in your church when you experience conflict in your home? If yes, describe how you’ve done that before. If not, why?

DAY 2: Peter’s Wise Counsel

READ: Acts 15:7-11

REFLECT: Peter addresses the Jerusalem Council and recounts for them his own personal experiences with Gentile believers as recorded in Acts 10 and 11. Peter reaffirms that both Jewish & Gentile believers are only saved, “*through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”(v11)

Context Question: Ephesians 2:8 says, “*it is by **grace** that you have been saved, through **faith**; not by your works...it is a **gift** from God.*”
Do you believe salvation is something that we have to earn - or - is it something Christ already earned for us?

Application Question: The strength of Peter’s address to the council was his own personal testimony with Gentile believers (Acts 10).
What have some of your personal experiences with Jesus been like? Have you ever shared some of those testimonies with others before? If so, describe how your testimonies about the Lord potentially impacted them.

DAY 3: The Gentile Believers “Rejoice” After Hearing the Decision from the Jerusalem Council

READ: Acts 15:28-35

REFLECT: James – Jesus’ brother - was the leader of the Church of Jerusalem at this time (and later wrote the Book of James). He writes a letter of decision giving great clarity to the issue at hand and sends them by personal messengers to the known Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. Those who heard it experienced, “*great joy*” (31) at their decision. The churches were strengthened and encouraged.

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: This decision **removed barriers** for people to hear AND receive the Gospel. Are there some ways that you feel like churches TODAY make it sometimes hard for people to hear and accept the Good News about Jesus? If so, what?

Application Question: Even though the decision was reached, Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch to “*teach*” and “*assist*” the believers.
What value do you place on attending church and small groups that help unpack what the Bible says with others?

DAY 4: Paul Chooses Silas to Join Him on His 2nd Missionary Journey

READ: Acts 15:36-41

REFLECT: Acts 15 ends with a huge disagreement between two close brothers in the Lord: Paul and Barnabas. Essentially Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on their 2nd missionary journey and Paul refused, “*sharply*” (v 38). They unfortunately ended up separating.

JOURNAL or DISCUSS:

Context Question: Although both Paul and Barnabas appeared to be “right” in their reasons, they were wrong about **how** they handled it. Read Matthew 18:15-20. What is the 3-step pattern Jesus gave us for reconciling differences with others?

Application Question: Describe a time when you feel like another believer hurt you. How did you handle it? Did it end up separating you, or did you reconcile? Regardless of the result, Jesus always calls us to forgive one another (Matthew 6:14).
