

13

Leader Guide

Decisions

April 30, 2023

Main Passage: Acts 15:1-11

Theological Theme

When men came to Antioch and taught a message that was contrary to the gospel, Paul and Barnabas stood against their false teaching. The matter was taken to the Jerusalem Council, where Peter reinforced that the truth of the gospel is for everyone and nothing else is needed for salvation.

Introduction

- ? What are some things that make it difficult to recognize false teachings from the truth?
- ? Have you ever fallen for spam/scam emails or texts?
- ? What can Christians do to strengthen their faith and keep themselves from falling prey to false teachings?

1. The Dispute (Acts 15:1)

Some men came down from Judea to influence the body of believers at Antioch. God had been doing a great work in both the Jews and Gentiles of the area. These men struggled to accept that Gentiles could receive salvation without following the law or Jewish traditions. The men who came to the church taught that Gentiles could only be saved if they first became Jews and submitted to Jewish traditions, including circumcision.

- ? Why was the men's teaching directly against all that Paul and Barnabas had been doing? Why was this more than a minor add-on to Paul and Barnabas's message?
- ? Why is it sometimes hard for us to believe the gospel is all we need for salvation today? In what sense is it easier to try to do other things to earn our salvation?
- ? Application: What are ways we can seek to guard against believing false teachings?

2. The Response (Acts 15:2-5)

Paul and Barnabas demonstrated good principles of dealing with adversity and dissension. They were unwilling to stand by and let the false teaching have influence on the work that God was doing. They first tried to show the men from Judea the truth. Scripture tells us that this caused no small amount of dissension and dispute. In other words, the men from Judea were committed to their message and not willing to turn from it.

- ? How do we determine which issues are of primary importance in the church?
- ? Application: What can you learn from the way Paul and Barnabas dealt with conflict? How might their approach be instructive when you face threats to the gospel message?

3. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-11)

The leaders of the early church gathered to address the situation at hand. This council consisted of apostles and elders who were committed to encouraging and guiding the early church. The ultimate question of this matter was: Is the work of Jesus on the cross enough to save completely or does a believer also need to add to the work that Jesus did? Is it Christ alone or a combination of faith in Christ and obedience to the law?

- ❓ Proverbs 9:10 tells us “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” How do we show this wisdom when we seek to root our convictions in the truth of the Bible?
- ❓ Look back at Acts 10. How has Peter’s own mind and heart been changed on this matter? How did this make him a credible and influential contributor to the discussion?
- ❓ Application: Where do you need to take a stand for your faith and share with others how they can be saved by grace through faith?

Questions to Guide Your Group’s Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

Here’s How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: “What does this say to me?”

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).