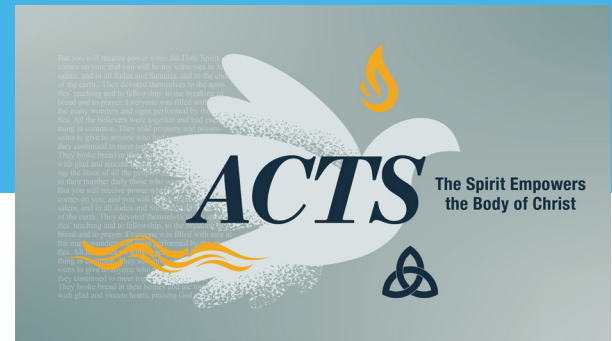


# Discussion Questions

November 24, 2024

## Acts 15:1-19

### Removing Barriers to Jesus



#### 1. Read Acts 15:1-19

What made circumcision such a contentious issue for the early church?

#### 2. Why do you think adding to grace is so tempting for Christians?

Can you share an example of where you have added something to the Salvation = Jesus + \_\_\_\_\_ equation?

#### 3. Re-read Acts 15:19. Then give a number of examples of non-essential "modern-day circumcisions" (rules, expectations, traditions, beliefs or customs) that Christians or churches might impose on new believers, whether consciously or sub-consciously, that make it difficult for them to come to Jesus?

#### 4. In this passage we see that the devout Jewish Christians struggle to accept that God's grace is big enough to reach sinful Gentiles. Share an example where you have struggled to accept God's grace on behalf of yourself or someone else.

#### 5. James began the sermon quoting from a recent study, "The Great Opportunity," looking at how over 1 million young people a year are walking away from their faith. It said. "the majority of the disaffiliated [youth] did not go through a crisis of faith or intellectually reject church teachings. They left because they just weren't interested in the Christian life they saw." Would you draw the same conclusion? What do you see as the largest contributors for the lack of interest?

#### 6. Take a minute to reflect on where you personally might be contributing to making it difficult for modern Gentiles - ie. the unchurched, de-churched & the next generation - to come to Jesus, or where any actions or expectations you have might be like sandpaper to those in the early stages of their journey to Jesus.

**Acts 15:4-11, 19 (NLT)**

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses." So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus... And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

**The Great Opportunity**

"the majority of the disaffiliated [youth] did not go through a crisis of faith or intellectually reject church teachings. They left because they just weren't interested in the Christian life they saw."

**Acts 14:27-28 (NLT)**

Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

**Acts 15:1 (NLT)**

While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently.

**Acts 15:2 (NLT)**

Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.

### **Acts 15:4-5 (NLT)**

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### **Acts 15:6-9 (NLT)**

So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith.

### **Acts 15:10 (NLT)**

So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

### **Acts 15:11 (CSB)**

On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are.

### **Acts 15:19 (NLT)**

And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

**Salvation = Jesus + the Law of Moses**

**Salvation = Jesus + ~~the Law of Moses~~**

**Salvation = Jesus**

### **Dr. Kent Hughes - Acts Commentary**

That means today, we can't make lifestyle issues not spelled out in scripture as being requirements for being "good" Christians. How to dress, how to run our church, the standards of living we think are proper, musical preferences (including in a worship service), etc. If we thrust any of these on others as necessary to a life of grace, we repeat the sin of the Judaizers!

We so easily push our preferences on others. We assume they will either do things our way or they are unspiritual. We too often put others through the paces of our own heritage before we fully accept them as brothers and sisters. Sadly, sometimes a church will radiate more of this than the gospel!

Where we are communicating **Salvation = Jesus + \_\_\_\_\_**

- Where am I making it difficult for Gentiles, outsiders, or the next generation to come to Jesus?
- Where have my own customs or preferences taken greater weight than they should?
- Where have I made periphery doctrines central and lost sight of the "main thing?"
- Where have my politics, or even personal convictions, been like sandpaper to those in the early stages of their journey to Jesus?