

## Connect Group Discussion Guide

### OPENING

The Gospel is “the good news that God saved sinners through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” What was your first reaction when you heard the good news of the Gospel? Was it doubt, joy, or disbelief? Why do you think you reacted that way?

### GOING DEEPER

1. Read Acts 15:1-11. Each person comes to Christ with different beliefs and views that need to be examined in the light of the Gospel. What different beliefs and views did some of the believers in Jerusalem who belonged to the part of the Pharisees hold to (cf. vs. 5-6)?

How did these beliefs and views differ with what Paul and Barnabas were preaching on their missionary journey to the Gentiles (cf. vs. 7-9, 11)?

*Leader’s Guide:*

- Paul and Barnabas taught salvation by **grace** through faith in the Gospel (cf. Acts 13:38-39, 14:3; Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Believers of the Pharisees believed that the Gentiles must obey the Old Testament **law** (Acts 15:5; Galatians 3:1-14).

What are the apparent dangers to these beliefs and views (cf. vs. 10)?

*Leader’s Guide:*

- *What is dangerous about these views is that these Christian Pharisees were purporting that Gentile believers were to keep the whole Old Testament Law (cf. Galatians 5:3). However, the method of one’s justification [how one is saved and declared righteous] ultimately determines the method of their sanctification [the process of one becoming holy in their Christian experience] (cf. Colossians 2:6). So, if a person is saved by grace through faith in the Gospel, then one is sanctified by grace through faith in the Gospel. It would be of no practical or spiritual benefit to require those who were saved by grace to be placed under the “yoke” or requirements of a law that has so sanctifying merit.*

2. What was the purpose for the miraculous signs and wonders that God did among the Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas (vs. 12)?

*Leader’s Guide:*

- *God used these miraculous signs and wonders to confirm the teachings of Paul and Barnabas (the Gospel) and to prove that they carried with them divine authority.*

Why do you think the whole assembly became quiet? How do you react when you hear that God is doing a great work and you see such miraculous signs and wonders to confirm it?

3. Read Acts 15:12-35. In the church of Jerusalem’s letter to the churches of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, it concluded by saying that it was beneficial that these Gentile believers avoid certain items and activities (cf. vs. 29; Leviticus 17-18)? Why?

4. Read Acts 15:36-41. After such a challenging theological debate in Jerusalem, why does it seem weird that Paul and Barnabas so quickly have their own disagreement and part ways?

In what ways do we as Christians allow similar disagreements to develop within the Church? How can we resolve these disagreements in both a loving and unifying manner?

*Leader's Guide: The greatest way you can resolve or diffuse disagreements that can so easily develop within the church is to make sure that all parties involved on "keeping the main thing the main thing." Most Christians agree upon the essential doctrines of the faith, the 90% that make up their views, beliefs and opinions. On only about 10% of their views, beliefs and opinions (not theological issues but often strong personal convictions) does the average Christian actually disagree with other believers. If you stay focused on the 90% that you have in union with other believers, you will have neither the time to neither start nor continue disagreements because you will be busy about the Lord's work.*

## **CHALLENGE**

Last week you were challenged to commit to pray each day for one person in your group for strength and boldness. This week, connect with that person to see how they are fairing and encourage them to keep following Christ despite any opposition they may face. Read through Acts 16 in preparation for next week.