

# BGCC Community Group Guide



## Living The Mission

May 3rd 2026

### Clarity That Leads to Unity

Key Text: Acts 15:1-35

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#### Introduction: When Confusion Creeps In

The early church was growing rapidly, but growth brought tension. As Gentiles began coming to faith, a major question surfaced: *Do they need to become Jewish to truly be saved?* What seemed like a practical question quickly revealed a deeper issue—what exactly is the gospel?

This passage shows that confusion in the gospel doesn't stay theoretical. It affects assurance, unity, and mission. What the church believes about salvation will shape everything else.

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#### Significance in the Biblical Story

Acts 15 is a defining moment in church history. The apostles and leaders gather to settle whether salvation is based on grace alone or grace plus obedience to the law. Their conclusion preserves the heart of Christianity: that salvation is entirely the work of God through Christ.

Without this moment, the gospel would have been buried under religious requirements. Instead, it is clarified and strengthened, allowing the church to move forward with confidence and unity.

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## Section 1 — When the Gospel Gets Complicated

Text: Acts 15:1–5

### Summary

The conflict begins with a teaching that sounds reasonable on the surface: Gentile believers must be circumcised and follow the law to be saved. This was not a rejection of Jesus—it was an addition to Him. But that addition changed everything.

The gospel is simple but not simplistic: salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Adding requirements shifts trust away from Christ’s finished work and onto human effort. As Luther argued, once works are added to justification, grace is no longer grace.

This is why Paul and Barnabas respond so strongly. The issue is not preference or tradition—it is the foundation of salvation itself.

### Group Question

Why do additions to the gospel often feel reasonable or even helpful at first?

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### Personal Relevance

We may not argue about circumcision today, but we still tend to add expectations to what makes someone “right with God.”

- Flow Question: What are some modern “add-ons” people associate with being a true Christian?
  - Reflective Question: Where are you tempted to rely on your performance instead of Christ’s work?
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## Section 2 — God Has Already Made It Clear

Text: Acts 15:6–11

### Summary

Peter stands and reminds the group that God has already acted. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the Jews did—without following the law. God made no distinction, cleansing their hearts by faith.

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Peter's argument is powerful because it rests on God's initiative. The law, he says, was a burden no one could bear. To add it now would be to ignore both human inability and divine grace.

As Calvin notes, faith rests not in human worthiness but in God's mercy. Salvation is not earned—it is given. The gospel is clear because God has made it clear.

## Group Question

Why is it important that salvation is based on what God has done rather than what we do?

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## Personal Relevance

Many believers intellectually accept grace but emotionally live under pressure to earn God's approval.

- Flow Question: When do you feel like you have to “prove” yourself to God?
  - Reflective Question: How would your daily life change if you fully trusted that you are accepted by grace alone?
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## Section 3 — Truth Anchored in Scripture, Applied in Wisdom

Text: Acts 15:12–21

### Summary

After hearing testimony, James turns to Scripture to confirm what God is doing. He shows that the inclusion of the Gentiles was always part of God's plan. Experience is validated, not by opinion, but by God's Word.

The decision is clear: salvation is by grace alone. But the leaders also provide guidance to help Jewish and Gentile believers live in unity. These instructions are not about earning salvation, but about preserving fellowship and avoiding unnecessary division.

This moment demonstrates that truth and unity are not enemies. As Augustine wisely said, unity must be rooted in truth, not detached from it.

## Group Question

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How does this passage show the importance of both biblical truth and relational wisdom?

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### **Personal Relevance**

Christians often struggle to hold firm convictions while maintaining loving relationships.

- **Flow Question:** Where do you see people choosing either truth or unity instead of both?
  - **Reflective Question:** How can you grow in applying truth with both conviction and humility?
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## **Section 4 — Gospel Clarity Produces Joy and Strength**

Text: Acts 15:22–35

### **Summary**

The council sends a letter to communicate their decision clearly. The result is immediate: encouragement, joy, and strengthened faith. When the gospel is clarified, it does not burden people—it frees them.

Clarity removes confusion, and confidence in the gospel fuels growth. The early church doesn't become passive after hearing this message—they become stronger and more unified.

As Spurgeon noted, the gospel is good news precisely because it depends on Christ's work, not ours. When that truth is clear, it produces both peace and purpose.

### **Group Question**

Why does a clear understanding of the gospel lead to joy rather than complacency?

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### **Personal Relevance**

A distorted gospel leads to either pride or discouragement. A clear gospel leads to freedom.

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- **Flow Question:** How does the gospel bring peace into areas where you feel pressure or insecurity?
  - **Reflective Question:** What would it look like to live more confidently in the grace you've received?
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## **Closing Summary / Application**

**Acts 15 shows us that the gospel must be protected with clarity and lived out with unity. The early church refused to compromise on the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.**

**When the gospel is clear:**

- **burdens are lifted**
- **unity is strengthened**
- **mission moves forward**

**“We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 15:11)**

**The question is not just whether we understand the gospel—  
but whether we are trusting it completely and living in its freedom.**