



Sermon Discussion Guide

05.14.23 Message | Tyler Myers | Acts 15:1-35

Key Scriptures:

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.' Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and



Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

- Acts 15:1-35

Message Highlights:

- Acts of Jesus and the Spirit reveal the church should be a place where the world sees diverse people walking in radical and intentional unity.
- God uses the Holy Spirit and his Word to bring life to people.
- The church can mature both individually and collectively by handling problems with perspective, the Spirit, the Word, the mission and wise counsel.
- Together as the church, our unity allows us to continue to stay focused on the teaching and preaching of God's Word that is promised to transform the minds, hearts and lives of people.

Conversation Starter:

Does your spouse, sibling or best friend tend to do something differently than you do? How do you pursue unity within this key relationship while knowing that your loved one only eats the top of their muffin, or cracks their knuckles every day?

Discuss the Message:

1. What did Paul and Barnabas do in verse two to reach a consensus within the church?
 - a. When you're in a disagreement with someone or unsure what is right or true, where is the first place you usually turn?
 - b. Read Revelation 3:20. How can you usher Jesus into your daily thoughts and decision-making, particularly when you come to a crossroads?
2. How does verse 10 demonstrate that we cannot be our own god?
 - a. Has following your plan rather than the Lord's plan proved to be unhelpful or detrimental in your own life? How so?



- b. How can you leverage the collective wisdom of the church community in order to live a life that walks closely with the Spirit?
 - c. Read on to verse 11. In what ways can you more fully embrace Jesus' grace?
3. How did the church at Antioch respond to the council's letter that Paul and Barnabas delivered?
 - a. Despite the disapproval of the Pharisees, the Gentile believers rejoiced that the council recognized them as followers of Jesus. How does rejoicing, in good times and amidst tension, shift your perspective?
 - b. How can you make a habit of rejoicing in your life?
 - c. What are you rejoicing about in this season?

Pray:

Lord of all, we are grateful for the joy and purpose that you add to our lives when we choose to walk with you in this broken world. We're in awe that you not only fulfill us through salvation in Jesus Christ but that following the Way, the Truth and the Life also leads us to spiritual growth and maturity. As we face the present challenges that confront us and the future obstacles that are yet to come, may we remember that joy, hope and unity must prevail in the midst of tension. We love you and we're grateful for all the ways you graciously care for us. In Jesus' name, amen.