



# ACTS

OUT OF JOY / THE CHURCH MULTIPLIES

## GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

### WEEK 8

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL (ACTS 15:1-35)

#### VERSE FOR MEDITATION

*“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.”* **ACTS 15:10-11**

#### OPENING THOUGHT

There was a great deal of debate in the early church as to whether Gentiles should or should not be counted as equals among God’s people. Many of the Jews saw the individuals as half-breeds or step-children because they were not of Abraham’s lineage. In this text, we see the elders debating the topic. James took a stand and reminded everyone that the Gentiles were adopted sons and daughters and must be treated no differently than the Jews.

With that said, it must have been disheartening for the Gentiles to hear that they might be required to follow Jewish law as part of their Christian faith. This was a different message than what they originally received. Adding Old Testament law meant they had to do something more to gain salvation, so they were greatly encouraged and rejoiced when they received a letter from the elders regarding the surety of their place in the family of God.

Paul calls the Gentiles “Abraham’s offspring” in Galatians 3:29. Imagine what it must have been like for the Gentiles in the first century. They had always been standing on the outside of this royal family. Then suddenly they were offered the same inheritance as the Jews—an

eternal home and freedom from the slavery of sin. Imagine the joy they must have felt in being adopted into God's family. Now remember that you—most likely—are a Gentile. You have been given that same adoption and freedom. This reality calls for great rejoicing!

## **QUESTIONS**

**Read Acts 15:1-21 and answer the following questions.**

1. Why did the Pharisees want the apostles and elders to require the Gentiles to be circumcised?
2. In verse 20, James gives four requirements for the Gentiles. What are they? What reason did James give for fulfilling these requirements (v. 21)?
3. How do you see the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men in this passage?

**Read Acts 15:22-35 and answer the following questions.**

4. What message would have been communicated to the Gentiles if they had been required to be circumcised?

5. The answer to this disagreement came after a time of “unsettling” (v. 24). How did the Lord use the question of circumcision to bring about greater unity among the believers?

6. What benefit did it serve to send Judas and Silas to personally deliver the letter to the Gentiles?

**Read Galatians 3:23-29 and answer the following questions.**

7. How does this passage relate to the passage we read in Acts?

8. When God calls you an adopted son or daughter, what weight does it carry? In what ways do you struggle with that identity?

9. In what ways might you be trying to add unnecessary “law” to your faith in the same way the Pharisees wanted to add circumcision to faith? Are there ways in which you are trying to save yourself and forsaking faith alone?

## **ACTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- Think about ways you are trying to add to Christ's finished work on the cross to gain salvation. Believers wouldn't say they need to work for their salvation, but there are many of us who still feel the need to gain God's acceptance or the approval of others in order to be loved.
- Confess your areas of "law" to someone who will follow up with you in a week and pray for you.
- Do a word study on "adoption" to further press into the Lord's unconditional acceptance of you based on Christ's finished work.
- Pray for those close to you and ask the Lord to use you as a minister of His grace in their lives. Seek to learn how to specifically pray for them against the sin they are struggling with.
- Spent time reading and considering the article *Christian Responsibility and Mosaic Law* on The Village Church website.