



Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides! If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions at the end of page 2.

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE
for the sermon preached on April 25, 2021
"The Way of Discovery—Students not Experts"
Acts 15:1-35



This week, Pastor Adam continues the "Finding Our Way Forward" series with a message encouraging us to examine how tightly we hold our opinions and interpretations. The sermon is based on the story of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1-35. You might want to send that whole passage to your group members and invite them to read it ahead of your meeting.

Group Discussion Questions

- Pastor Adam began by asking: "Have you ever changed your mind about something important? ...Do you still think the same way you did as a teenager? ...My guess is no. My hope is that you've grown, and in doing so shed some of your immature ways of thinking. And that's a good thing. ...We're supposed to grow, and change, and adapt."
 - So, *have you* ever changed your mind about something important? Share a little bit about what that something was, and what changed your mind. (If you've never changed your mind about anything important, tell us about something *unimportant* you've changed your mind about. If you can't think of a single time you've changed your mind, even about something unimportant, this might be a good time for some self-reflection about that!)
 - What is an example of how you have grown, changed, or adapted, or shed some immature ways of thinking, as you have matured as a person and as a believer?
- Invite someone from your group to read Acts 15:1-2a aloud:
"Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.' This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them."
 - Try to put yourself in the shoes of some of the early Christians, on either side of

- this issue. How would the “sharp dispute and debate” have felt to you?
- Why do you think some early church leaders argued that the Gentiles should be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses?
 - Have someone read the end of Peter’s speech in Acts 15:10-11: *“Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”*
 - What is at stake in this disagreement, in terms of our understanding of who could experience the grace of Jesus Christ, and how?
 - What do you think Peter meant when he said that requiring new believers to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses would amount to testing God (v. 10)?
 - Adam noted that this disagreement was so intense, it could have split the church in two.
 - Without naming which side of the issue you find yourself on, what are some of the questions that sometimes seem like they might divide the church today?
 - How do you tend to feel about these “sharp disputes and debates”? (Again, this is not asking you to share your position on the issues, but your feelings about the disagreements.) How do you think most Christians feel about these divisions?
 - Adam suggested that in approaching difficult issues, we need two things: 1) a willingness to look deeply at Scripture for ways our current interpretation might need to grow and change; and 2) a recognition that we don’t have it all figured out.
 - What is one concrete way that you personally can adopt the posture of a learner, not an expert, when it comes to disputes in the church or in your family?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord, help us to have a more open-handed, expectant, and humble approach to everyone and everything. Help us to give everyone and everything to you.

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don’t feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
 - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
 - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Group Leader Support: Please reach out to your Coach or Campus Pastor with questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. Please reach out to Pastor Tim or Pastor Rachel from the Group Life team with questions about or feedback on the Study Guides.

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