

**OPENING UP:** In Acts 15, the Apostles confronted a false gospel that required Gentiles to add a religious ritual to be fully included in the church. What “Jesus-plus” gospels have you heard taught?

♥ *Why do you think people have such a hard time embracing the gospel of Jesus-plus-nothing? In other words, why is a message of grace so hard for people to swallow?*

**1 Acts 15 shows us how disagreements between Christians can be settled in a Christlike way.** When have you seen something like that happen? What was it like?

♥ *What are you like when you're in a strong disagreement with others? How do you normally respond to differences? Do you tend toward serious disagreement too quickly or too slowly?*

**2 Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed the teaching brought by the visitors from Judea.** What was at stake in the debate in Acts 15? What does their response teach us about when and how to engage in important theological disagreements?

🗨️ *Why do you think our culture is so uncomfortable with disagreement and debate?*

🗨️ *Can you think of any current issues where speaking up with a voice of dissent is necessary? What makes those situations worth addressing?*

♥ *How can you proactively seek to discuss doctrine with other Christians in a way that strengthens and encourages both them and yourself? Think especially of the different approaches in Acts 15. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas refer to various experiences that they had, whereas James appeals to Scripture.*

3 **The Jerusalem Council affirmed that salvation comes by grace through faith alone, apart from the works of the Law.**

Take some time to discuss that incredible assertion as a group. See also Galatians 2:16, Romans 3:21-28, Romans 4:1-5, Titus 3:4-7, 2 Tim. 1:8-12.

⚙️ *Even with their teaching on being free from the works of the law, the apostles still gave the Gentile believers four specific instructions. This raises an important question: If they were free from the Law, why were these admonitions necessary? If we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, where do obedience, action, and duty fit in?*

♥️ *How are you most challenged in your own life thinking about what salvation requires and what salvation results in?*

4 **The Jerusalem council encouraged new Gentile believers to refrain from eating meat sacrificed to idols.** The point wasn't that the meat itself was inherently wrong—idols are nothing, after all. The Apostles were calling them to voluntarily surrender a freedom to demonstrate their commitment to the gospel and remove stumbling blocks for others. In other words, they chose to set aside a “right” in order to promote unity and further the advance of the gospel.

🗨️ *Have you ever had to willingly give up a personal liberty for the sake of unity or mission? Perhaps it was declining to voice an opinion or choosing to forego a preferred practice so that someone with a different background wouldn't be offended.*

*What are some examples of how believers might set aside certain “liberties” to build unity in the church or advance the gospel among the lost?*