



SERIES: ACTS - WHEN THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN  
MESSAGE TITLE: "TESTING GOD"

**SPEAKER: BRAD WILLIAMS**  
**DATE: SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020**

## MESSAGE SUMMARY

BIBLICAL TEXT(S): *Acts 15:1-35*

In Acts 15, the church faces a major dispute. Some of the Jewish Christians have been telling the Gentile Christians that in order to actually be saved they need to also become Jews, get circumcised, and follow all the Jewish purity laws. Paul and Barnabas debated with these Jewish Christians, and eventually, the church in Antioch sends the two men to Jerusalem to see what the apostles and elders have to say.

A council of apostles, church leaders, and Jewish believers decide that the Gentile believers are saved by grace, not by keeping any laws or regulations. They specifically say that they want to make following Jesus as easy for new believers as possible. This is a principle that should radically impact how we treat new believers and those that don't yet know Jesus today.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*These questions are designed to help lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. These can help your group understand and apply the teaching more profitably*

## LEAN IN

*These are icebreakers and warm ups, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon? Why was it significant to you?
2. Are you a natural rule follower or natural rule breaker?
3. What is one significant way that your life has changed since you started following Jesus or made your faith your own?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week? What's one that you are dreading?

## LOOK DOWN

*These are questions about the Bible passage(s) and observations about what's been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.*

1. What issue was under debate in Acts 15? What two groups are mentioned that were espousing this view? What did they want Gentile believers to do?
  2. How did Paul and Barnabus deal with the dispute? What did they do? Who did they go to/meet with?
  3. What evidence did Peter give at the council? How would you sum up his statement in your own words?
- cont.*

## CONTINUED:

4. What evidence did James provide at the council? What was his recommendation and his reasoning?
5. What was the ultimate outcome of the council? What did they decide and how did they share their decision with the church?

## LOOK OUT

***These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.***

1. Can you think of any debates that are happening today within the church that are similar to what is described in this chapter? What groups/behaviors do people debate about?
2. How have you seen Christians deal with disputes well in the church today? How have you seen disputes dealt with poorly? How do our modern ways of dealing with disputes compare to what happens in Acts 15?
3. How have you heard "grace" defined and described in our church? How does it compare to what is described in this passage?
4. How have you seen the church make following Jesus hard for people? How have you seen the church make following Jesus easy?
5. What do you think it would look like for our church to put this passage into practice? What things might change and what might stay the same?

## LOOK IN

***These are questions that help you consider personal application. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.***

1. What groups/people do you have a hard time accepting? How does this verse challenge or encourage you?
2. How have you dealt with disputes with other Christians? How does this passage challenge or encourage you?
3. Are you the kind of person whose emotions and passions reflect a life lived in moralist striving, or do you move freely through this world as a person covered by grace?
4. What are the barriers you put up that make it hard for folks to find and follow Jesus?
5. What are the ways you've decided things 'should be' that are firmly rooted in what might be a glorious past, but it's causing you to miss out on a fruitful future?

## CONTINUED:

## LIVE IT OUT

***These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.***

1. Do you have a hard time accepting and/or giving grace? How can your group pray for you as you seek to understand and embody the grace of God?
2. What might need to change in your life, your group, or our church to make it easier for those who are new to faith or "in process" to follow Jesus? Is there anything you can do this week to move towards this goal?
3. Are there moralist leanings that you have a hard time letting go of? How can you seek out God's views on these things this week? How can your group support you?

*Thanks to Ashleigh Rich and the Adult Discipleship Team for this week's notes and questions, as well as Charissa Burns (@charissaburnsstudio on Instagram) for her illustrated notes, which normally appear on the following page.*

# ACTS 15:1-35

## Testing God

B4 Church 8-16-2020 Brad Williams

Jesus blows open the categories of who is part of the church.

Acts 15 - some men come to Jerusalem and they start preaching that men need to be circumcised to be Christians.

JESUS IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF MAKING US GOOD, BUT RATHER HE MAKES US ALIVE!

THIS IS NOT WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

Moralism/legalism

↳ the view that you are acceptable to God, or to the society, or to yourself, because of what you've done.

- The standards must be upheld.

The problem is that moralism/legalism leads to self-loathing or self-righteousness.

↳ THIS WILL NOT LEAD TO BEING ALIVE.

JESUS PROCLAIMS THE OPPOSITE!

↳ YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE.

↳ YOU ARE GOOD BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS HAS DONE

IT'S GRACE!

Grace changes everything. Your guilt/shame is eradicated. You no longer have to strive

↳ Then you begin to come alive!

The way we come alive and stay alive is

BASKING IN THE GRACE THAT GOD HAS LAVISHED ON US!

REVIVAL HAPPENS WHEN WE SHARE JESUS -

Paul & Barnabas go to Jerusalem to debate the legalism that is being presented.

Through the unique and beautiful GOSPEL

When we come to a debate we must look through the lens of Jesus. - JESUS IS THE ANSWER.

ACTS 15:19-21 - James comes back saying we shouldn't make it hard to find & experience the grace of Jesus and the follow him.

↳ Let us let others start their journey where they are at. Let grace take over.

ACTS 15:30-35 - They shifted their gaze from the past to the future with God bringing life and renewal.

MAY YOU BE MEN & WOMEN WHO MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH JESUS.

MAY YOU FIX YOUR GAZE ON A FUTURE WITH THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S KINGDOM MADE KNOWN ON EARTH.

MAY YOU FIND THE FREEDOM THAT COMES WHEN YOU LIVE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF GRACE.