

The Message: “Christ Alone”

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 15:1-35

MAIN POINT: The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers.

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 1:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

The church in Antioch praised God for His grace to Paul on his first missionary journey. Though Paul and Barnabas were strongly opposed in some places, many people heard the gospel and believed. Paul and Barnabas took the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. But a problem arose when some Christians began saying that the new followers of Jesus—the Gentile believers—needed to obey the Law of Moses in order to be right with God.

Paul and Barnabas debated this issue with other church leaders in Jerusalem. They met together to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed? When Paul addressed the council,

he insisted that God saves Gentiles the same way He saves Jews: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Paul testified to the things God had done among the Gentiles. God had given Gentiles the Holy Spirit. James cited the prophets Amos and Isaiah in support. The group agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved. They also agreed that they should not make salvation more difficult for Gentiles by adding unnecessary rules.

The church chose two men—Judas and Silas—to go with Paul and Barnabas to the church at Antioch. They wrote a letter for the Gentile believers there, encouraging them and giving them instructions for how to live as followers of Christ.

The message for the Gentile believers was important: Whether Jew or Gentile, salvation comes only through faith in Christ. No one is saved by the law but by grace alone. Emphasize to the kids you teach that, while the Bible does give us plenty of instruction for how to live, sinners are made right with God only by the grace of Jesus. Salvation is a gift. To receive this gift, Jesus is all we need.



Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

The Message: “Christ Alone”

Acts 15:1-35

• **Dramatic dialogue:**

Stand on a small stool as you tell the words the disciples spoke to the group. Speak loudly and confidently as the disciples may have done.

• **Change your**

posture: Sit as you narrate the action. Stand during the dialogue of the disciples.

Paul and Barnabas had been sharing the gospel with many people—including Gentiles. But some people in the church began to teach that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they followed some of the same rules the Jews followed.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed, and **the church leaders decided to meet in Jerusalem to talk about whether or not the Gentiles needed to obey the law of Moses.** After a long discussion, **Peter stood up and said to the group, “Brothers, God chose me to tell the good news to the Gentiles. They heard the good news, and they believed. God accepted them and gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did for us.**

“Why are you trying to make salvation harder for them? **We know that we cannot obey God’s laws perfectly.** No, we believe that the **Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way—by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”**

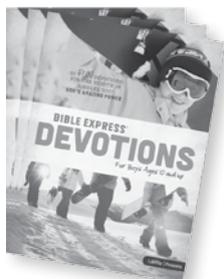
Everyone in the group was quiet as Paul and Barnabas told them about all the things God had done through them when they were with the Gentiles. Then another apostle, James, spoke up. He pointed out that the words of the prophets showed that God wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles.

“I think we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who have trusted in Jesus. Instead, let’s write them a letter telling them the things they should not do.”

So **the church leaders wrote the letter to the Gentile believers.** The letter also explained some things they should not do now that they were believers.

The leaders chose Judas and Silas to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter. The believers in Antioch were encouraged by the letter. Judas and Silas stayed with them for awhile, and then they went home. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch and taught believers and told other people the good news about Jesus.

Christ Connection: The church leaders met in Jerusalem to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed? The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover how God's Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce the STORY

SESSION TITLE: The Message: “Christ Alone”

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 15:1-35

MAIN POINT: The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers.

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 1:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to imagine they were the leader of a city. If they could make only one law, what would it be?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Picture Mix-Up” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Picture Mix-Up” on the activity page. Kids should arrange the picture pieces in the correct order to complete the Bible story main point.

If kids need help, guide them to study the details at the edge of each piece and imagine what piece comes next. Arranged correctly, the pieces will spell the word *Gentile*.

SAY • The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers. Can anyone tell me what the word *Gentile* means? [*Allow responses.*] The word *Gentile* describes anyone who is not a Jew (a descendant of Israel).



LOW PREP

- dry erase board or large piece of paper
- marker

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What does it take?

Display a large piece of paper or a dry erase board. Invite

kids to consider what makes a person a Christian. How do you know someone follows Jesus?

List their ideas on the paper or dry erase board. Kids might talk about salvation experiences, how believers act or think, and so on. Emphasize that this is a list of ideas or observations, so there are no wrong answers.

SAY • This is an interesting list of ideas! Today we are going to hear a Bible story about some people who had different ideas about what it takes to follow Jesus. We'll find out soon what the Bible says about that.

OPTION 2: Choose a side

Before the session, create two posters to hang on opposite sides of the room. Label one poster *Agree* and the other *Disagree*. Explain that you are going to make a statement. If kids agree, they should stand by the *Agree* poster. If they disagree, they should stand by *Disagree*.

- large pieces of paper
- marker
- tape

Make several statements, pausing between each one while kids move. Make your own statements or use the following suggestions:

- Kids shouldn't have cell phones until they are 15.
- Peanuts should not be served on airplanes.
- Everyone should be required to learn two languages.
- School should be in session year-round.

End the activity with the statement, "A person can only be saved by faith in Jesus."

SAY • In the Bible story we will hear today, a group of early church leaders met together to answer an important question. We'll find out what that was and what they decided.

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• stuffed penguin or
fur seal

[Leader enters wearing a white outfit: white pants, white shirt or jacket, and a white hat. Leader is carrying a stuffed penguin or fur seal.]

LEADER • Ahoy! Welcome back, mateys. I’m [*your name*] and this is my new friend, Mr. [*type of animal*]. Do you know which ocean is home to animals like this? [*Allow kids to guess.*] I found this little guy when I visited the ocean that surrounds Antarctica. It’s called the Southern Ocean, and it’s very cold there!

You can find icebergs and cold-weather animals like emperor penguins, albatrosses, blue whales, fur seals, and giant squid. I wonder if Mr. [*animal*] would like to stick around and hear our Bible story. I bet he would. Let’s dive in!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • If you remember our big picture question and

answer, say it with me: ***How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.***

We've been hearing stories from the Book of Acts about the apostle Paul. He was one person God used to tell others about Jesus. Many faithful followers of Jesus were spreading the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

Faithful followers continued to share the gospel generation after generation, and that's why we have the good news even today!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle. Point to previous Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

LEADER • Paul obeyed the call of the Holy Spirit to go and tell others about Jesus. He was a missionary with Barnabas. They traveled and shared the good news about Jesus to the Jews and Gentiles.

Many people believed, and some people tried to stop them from preaching. But Paul and Barnabas didn't give up.

Today's Bible story was about the message going out to the Gentile believers. The church leaders met together to talk about what was true. Let's listen to find out what happened.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 15:1-35. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Message: 'Christ Alone.'"

LEADER • Most of the believers in the early church were

• Bibles
• "The Message: 'Christ Alone'" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

Jews, but we saw in our Bible story about Paul's first missionary journey that **the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to tell Jews and Gentiles about Jesus**. So now, people who were not Jews were hearing about the gospel and believing in Jesus!

But a problem arose when some of the Jews started telling the Gentiles that in order to be Christians, they needed to become Jews. This meant obeying the Jewish laws. Now this was a big problem because this meant that in order to become Christians, the Gentiles had to obey the law.

But nobody can obey the law. Jews can't obey the law. Gentiles can't obey the law. We are all sinners, and that's exactly why we need a Savior!

Paul and Barnabas knew this was wrong; the Holy Spirit had come down on Gentiles, so obviously their lack of law-keeping wasn't preventing them from being saved. So the church leaders decided to meet in Jerusalem and talk about what rules the Gentile believers should follow.

Paul and Barnabas told the group how they had seen God doing wonderful things among the Gentiles. Jesus' half-brother James pointed out that the Old Testament prophets said God wanted to save everyone—Jews and Gentiles.

The church leaders decided to write a letter to the Gentile believers. **The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers**. They told them some things they should do now that they were Christians. Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas went together to deliver the letter to the believers in Antioch.

Christ connection

LEADER • The church leaders met in Jerusalem to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed? No one is saved by obeying the law or by not doing certain things. The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Acts 1:8.

LEADER • Jesus said that His followers would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. The Holy Spirit is God's Spirit, and He dwells within every believer. The Holy Spirit gives us power and helps us remember and understand what is true about God and about ourselves.

Paul knew that the Holy Spirit lived inside the Gentiles who trusted in Jesus. The Gentiles didn't need to follow the laws of Moses to be saved. The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved. Let's sing a song to help us memorize our key passage.

Lead boys and girls in singing "To the End of the Earth."

- Key Passage Poster
- "To the End of the Earth" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • **The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers.** The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved. We don't need to do anything extra to earn salvation. Keep that in mind as you watch this.

Show the "Unit 30, Session 3" discussion starter video.

- "Unit 30, Session 3" discussion starter video

Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- What was wrong with Nell's instructions?
- What were the Jewish believers in our Bible story saying about salvation that was unnecessary?
- What is the truth about salvation in Jesus?

LEADER • God calls us to share the message that salvation comes through faith in Jesus, not through anything else.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • *How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.* We have the privilege of telling others about Jesus. We have good news that can bring hope to the world. God sends us out to be His light in a dark world. Let's sing.

Sing together "A Mission from Above."

• "A Mission from Above"
song

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, You are good and Your plan is perfect.
Thank You for Your Word and for salvation in Jesus.
We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards, 24
- marker

Before the session, write two- to four-word phrases of the key passage on 12 separate index cards. Include the reference, *Acts 1:8*. Then make a matching set.

Display the key passage poster and guide kids to read Acts 1:8 aloud together. Mix up the prepared index cards and arrange them facedown in a 4-by-6 grid. Invite kids to play a matching game. Kids should take turns turning over two cards. If the cards match, the player keeps the pair. If they do not match, the player turns the cards facedown. Play passes to the next player.

When kids collect all of the pairs, guide them to work together to arrange the phrases of the key passage in order. Then lead them to read the key passage aloud together.

SAY • Jesus’ followers received power from the Holy Spirit. As believers shared the good news about Jesus, the early church leaders wanted to make sure they were sharing the right message. **The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers** and agreed that Jesus alone is all we need to be saved.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Provide Bibles and guide kids to find Acts 15. Ask them which Bible division comes before the Book of Acts.

(*Gospels*) Which Bible division is the Book of Acts in? (*New Testament History*)

Form two teams of kids. Ask review questions, allowing time for kids to discuss with their teammates. Award points for correct answers.

1. Some people in the church began to teach the Gentiles that they had to follow the law of Moses in order to do what? (*be saved, Acts 15:1*)
2. In what city did Paul and Barnabas meet with church leaders? (*Jerusalem, Acts 15:2*)
3. Peter said God gave whom to both Jews and Gentiles? (*the Holy Spirit, Acts 15:8*)
4. How are Jews and Gentiles saved? (*by the grace of Jesus, Acts 15:11*)
5. Who told about all the things God had done among the Gentiles? (*Paul and Barnabas, Acts 15:12*)
6. Which apostle pointed out that the prophets showed that God wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles? (*James, Acts 15:13-18*)
7. Who went to Antioch to share the letter from the leaders? (*Judas, Silas, Paul, and Barnabas; Acts 15:22*)

SAY • The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile

believers. The message for the Gentile believers was important: Whether Jew or Gentile, salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

The Bible does give us plenty of instruction for how to live, but sinners are made right with God only by grace. We can't keep enough rules to earn our own salvation. Jesus is all we need.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Something added

Read a recipe for chocolate chip cookies. Do not read the additions in brackets. Challenge kids to listen closely.

Then provide paper and pencils. Read the recipe again, including the additions in brackets. Challenge kids to make a note any time they hear ingredients or instructions you added to the original recipe.

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
- Combine $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour, 1 teaspoon baking soda, [*1 cup oatmeal*] and 1 teaspoon salt in a small bowl.
- Beat 1 cup butter, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract in a large mixer bowl until creamy.
- Add 2 [*dozen*] large eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Gradually beat in the flour mixture.
- Stir in 2 cups chocolate chips [*and 1 cup of raisins*].
- Drop by rounded tablespoons onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake for 9 to 11 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on baking sheets for 2[0] minutes.
- Remove to wire racks to cool completely.

SAY • Were you able to pick out what I added to the recipe? Those things were not necessary to make chocolate chip cookies. In our story, the church leaders met to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed?

Some Christians had been saying that the new followers of Jesus—the Gentile believers—needed to obey the Law of Moses to be right with God. The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.

OPTION 2: Jesus plus nothing

Before the session, write the name *Jesus* on one inflatable ball and the word *law* on several more inflatable balls.

Instruct kids to stand around a bedsheet and hold on to the edges. Guide them to lift the sheet to waist height. Place the *Jesus* ball and a few *law* balls on the sheet. Challenge kids to shake and lift the sheet to knock off the *law* balls but keep the *Jesus* ball on the sheet. As kids play, add more *law* balls. If the *Jesus* ball falls off, reset and play again.

SAY • The church in Jerusalem encouraged Gentile believers. Jesus alone was all they needed to be saved. We are guilty under the law, but Jesus obeyed the law perfectly. In Him, we are forgiven and free.

- inflatable balls
- dry erase marker
- bedsheet

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray asking God to protect His message of the gospel so people hear the truth about Jesus. Thank Him for providing salvation through faith in Jesus alone.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "The Message" on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "The Message" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.