

“Don’t make it difficult” – Discussion Questions on Acts 15v1-35

*Feel free to choose the questions that you feel are most interesting or relevant for your group – there is no need to go through them all! The important context for Acts 15 is that the gospel has growing in Antioch and during Paul’s first missionary journey and many Gentiles (non-Jews) have become Christians. For some Jewish Christians this leads to the question of how these converts are to relate to the Old Testament Law – do they need to be circumcised and keep the OT Law in order to be saved? This was an important question as the answer to it would affect the future composition of the church and the nature of the gospel that the Christians would preach. If you want to do some extra reading, then Galatians 1-2 provide some helpful background to some of the issues that the Jerusalem council addresses.*

Read Acts 15

1. From what you read in v1-5, can you put the issue that this chapter deals with in your own words? Why is the view of the Jewish teachers in v1-5 so logical?
2. What might be some examples of a “Jesus plus” gospel that you have experienced? Do you think that this kind of message appeals to certain kinds of Christians?
3. Looking at the speeches by Peter, Barnabas and Paul, and then James in v6-19, how do they clarify the gospel?
4. We often think that a “Jesus plus” gospel applies mostly to those who aren’t Christians, but what might be some of the ways that Christians can functionally look to other things apart from Jesus for their standing with God? What do you think this looks like personally for you?
5. How might a church be in danger of making it difficult for people to become Christians in the way that is described here? How might we (even inadvertently) give the impression that someone needs to do something other than come to Jesus to be saved?
6. Thinking about v20-21, why do you think James lists these particular things for the Gentile Christians to abstain from? What is the principle that lies behind these instructions?
7. Why is it okay for Christians today to eat meat that still has the blood in it, but yet it is not okay to indulge in sexual immorality? Under what circumstances ought we *not* to eat meat that still has the blood in it?
8. Christians are to be like stone pillars with regard to the gospel, but yet are to be flexible like bamboo when it comes to fellowship – which of these pictures do you most need to bear in mind at the moment?