



Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C
Sunday School

Lesson 10 November 9, 2025

GOD MAKES NO
DISTINCTION

SUNDAY SCHOOL CORE VALUES



SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. **Psalms 133:1**

School/Class: But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. **Hebrews 13:16**

Superintendent/Teacher: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. **2 Timothy 3:16**

School/Class: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **Psalms 119:105**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Philippians 2:4**

School/Class: He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. **Proverbs 22:9**

Superintendent/Teacher: Therefore he says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." **Ephesians 4:8**

School/Class: As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **1 Peter 4:10**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

School/Class: For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. **Romans 12:4**

Superintendent/Teacher: By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. **John 13:35**

School/Class: For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **Gal. 5:13**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

ALL:

But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

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- Bible Basis: Acts 15:1-12
- Bible Truth: Luke claimed that the Jerusalem council had power to change the Law of Moses in order to make it congruent to God's action.
- Memory Verse: VERSE: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9).
- Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will: REVIEW the story of how the Jerusalem council listened to Paul and Barnabas as they told of the signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles; REFLECT on how difficult it can be to reconcile law and God's action; and INITIATE a process of discernment of God's will when the law and God's actions appear to conflict.
- Background Scriptures: [Acts 15:1-35](#) & [Revelation 21:1-5](#). Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

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Acts 15:1-12 KJV

- 1** And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.
- 2** When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.
- 3** And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.
- 4** And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.
- 5** But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.
- 6** And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

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Acts 15:1-12 KJV

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Phenice. The country on the eastern Mediterranean coast situated just north of Palestine. This land lay at the foot of the Lebanon mountains and was located within the Syrian coastal plain. The cities of this region were world-renowned ports where trade flourished. Phenice was also one of the places Christian refugees fled to during Saul's persecution ([Acts 11:19](#)). It is here where Paul and Barnabas visited to encourage the disciples.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Samaria. Samaria was a province north of Judea and south of Galilee. It contained a population descended from a mixed ancestry of Jews and other Gentile nations. These populations worshiped similar to the Jews, except they did not worship at Jerusalem, but Mt. Gerizim. This caused hostility between the Jews and the people of Samaria which continued until Jesus' day. Philip, one of the Seven, journeyed to Samaria and preached the Gospel there. Many believed in his preaching and became the first Samaritan converts ([Acts 8:4-12](#)).

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: Students will see how laws are an integral part of civilized society, and that some laws must change as society changes. However, no law will negate or supersede God.

INTRODUCTION

The Radical Movement

The events recorded in the book of Acts reflect a period marked by political and social upheaval. While the ancient world was no stranger to religious debates, the absolutely radical movement incited by Jesus and His disciples was continuing to make waves. As the early church was developing, it was still very much a sect of Judaism, since Jesus and His disciples were committed to their Hebrew roots. Nevertheless, just as Jesus had to stand against the rulers, high priests, and Pharisees, so now would His disciples, both original and newly converted, have to contend with those who attempted to straddle the line between grace and the law. The central debate in this passage centers on the Jews' historical separation from Gentiles. The conversion of Cornelius and his household in [Acts 10-11](#) sparked a controversy that epitomized the explosive birth and growth of the Christian church.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will discover that Paul and Barnabas shared the power of God's mighty acts in the Gentile community.

I. GOD'S WILL DEBATED

Acts 15:1-3

The "certain men" who initiated the circumcision controversy in the early church are known as Judaizers. Their desire to navigate the demands of God's Law and His grace would not be the first or last such attempt in the life of the church. While it is difficult to imagine a modern debate of this type, it is not unlike the various divisions that have created the many different denominations of the Christian faith. It is true that circumcision was indeed God's command, initially given to Abraham in [Genesis 17:10](#).

I. GOD'S WILL DEBATED

Acts 15:1-3

Notably, Paul and Barnabas were chosen to discuss the case against physical circumcision on their journey. Paul, especially, was no stranger to Jewish tradition and law, at times recalling the depth of his religious pedigree ([Philippians 3:4-6](#)). Additionally, Paul had the unique position of being both the chief persecutor of the church ([Acts 9:1-5](#)) as well as one of its most prolific champions. In preparation for the debate ahead, it is important to note that they stopped to report the effect of the Gospel message on the Gentiles along the way. Their emphasis on the salvation of Gentiles is important as it helped to verify the authenticity of the Gospel's power among those not born Jews. Of course the result of their report is the "great joy" experienced by the brethren. The Christian message is ultimately joy that comes individually to those who accept eternal life, and collectively as more are added to the Body of Christ.

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Acts 15:1-3

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Some say these "certain men" were (1) proselytes to the Jewish religion, (2) the Pharisees, or (3) priests who were obedient to the Jewish faith. Whoever they were, they were recent Jewish converts to Christianity. The men arrived in Antioch from Judea. They came to Antioch, the headquarters of those who preached to the Gentiles, preaching a doctrine different from what Paul, Barnabas, and the other leaders of Christianity taught. Their message to the Gentile Christians was that they would now have to submit to circumcision and the Jewish ceremonial law. They taught that unless people were circumcised after the manner (Gk. ethos, EE-thoce) or customs prescribed by the law, they were not saved. Although many of the Jews embraced Christianity, they did not want to release their Jewish heritage and customs. Not only did they continue to observe Jewish rituals and laws, some also wanted to impose these requirements on the Gentile Christians.

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Many Jews at this time believed that Gentiles would be saved by keeping the seven Noahide laws ([Genesis 9:1-7](#)). These were the laws the Jews believed were binding for all people because they were given to Noah, the ancestor of all the people to repopulate the earth after the Flood. Other Jews believed Gentiles could only be right with God by observing the whole Torah, including the ceremonial laws. For men this meant circumcision, and for both genders it meant observance of dietary laws. This debate about what was required for Gentiles spilled over into the open argument in [Acts 15](#).

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Paul, Barnabas, and the other leaders of the Gentile Christians would not see the truth betrayed or distorted. They taught: (1) Christ came to free us from the yoke of ceremonial law, (2) Jews and Gentiles were united in Christ, and (3) salvation comes by belief in Jesus Christ. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were the two ritual instructions given to the church. Paul and the other leaders could not bear to hear of circumcising the Gentile converts because God had already affirmed the acceptance of Gentiles by filling them with the Holy Spirit. Those Judaizers who came with this doctrine claimed they came at the directions of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Therefore, the church at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas to go to Jerusalem to present this case to the apostles and elders. Since the apostles and elders established Christianity in Jerusalem, their opinion in this matter was very crucial. It was necessary to hear what they had to say in order to put an end to the controversy, and to silence these teachers and false apostles.

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Paul and Barnabas traveled or passed through Phenice or Phoenicia and Samaria declaring (Gk. ekdiegeomai, ek-dee-ay-GEH-oh-my) which means to narrate in full or wholly the conversion of the Gentiles. The word for conversion (Gk. epistrophe, eh-pee-stroh-FAY) means a turning about or turning around. Their report resulted in joy for all the church.

II. GOD'S WILL CONSIDERED

Acts 15:4-6

Some would discourage debate among believers, seeing it as a sign of division. Yet, God encourages His children to seek His will actively and engage each other with Scripture, prayer, and a desire for unity. This quest for unity seems to be the missing element to the discussion initiated by the Judaizers. As a result, Paul and Barnabas must engage in what amounts to a trial to plead the case for grace against the position of the law, which mandated circumcision. This trial pointed toward the definition of what true belief would come to mean.

II. GOD'S WILL CONSIDERED

Acts 15:4-6

Today's debates rarely involve physical alteration of the body; however, many religious rites and activities must be carefully considered not only for their historical significance, but also their spiritual relevance. The apostles and elders coming together to discuss a difficult situation presents a great role model for the contemporary church to follow. While there were legitimate foundations to both sides of the debate, it was certainly worth discussing, rather than initiating war, or worse, dismantling the newborn church for lack of an agreement. Many issues face new and modern believers, which should be discussed with careful consideration of God's will, versus the desires of psychological comfort or blind tradition.

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II. GOD'S WILL CONSIDERED

Acts 15:4-6

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Finally Paul and Barnabas arrive in Jerusalem and Luke notes that they were received (Gk. apodechomai, ah-po-DEH-kho-my) or heartily welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders. They also declare all the things that God had done. The focus is on what God is doing among the Gentiles as this is Paul and Barnabas' unique ministry task.

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As much as they are received by the church they also face opposition. This opposition arises from a sect (Gk. hairesis, HIGH-ray-sees) which means a group of people following their own tenets. In this context it refers to a certain group of Pharisees who are given to the same beliefs and practices within the wider group of Pharisees. These men claimed the Gentiles' conversion was not complete. In their opinion, the Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses.

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At the Jerusalem council, the apostles and elders gathered by consent to consider this matter. They came to reason together. They did not give their judgment separately or rashly, but considered the matter rationally and communally. The apostles, although of higher authority than the elders, did not exclude them. Here is an example to the leaders of churches, pastors in particular, when disputes arise (and they will): come together in solemn meeting for mutual advice and encouragement. Bring all together to present their positions so that the church can act in concert and come to the best decision for all involved.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

A New Order

Now that some time had passed since Jesus' resurrection, the unique and powerful movement of the Holy Spirit demanded attention and action from those within and outside the established church. Visions experienced by Cornelius ([Acts 10:1-6](#)) and subsequently Peter ([Acts 10:10-16](#)) demonstrated God's desire to not only include Gentiles in the Christ movement, but also forge a relationship between those raised under Jewish law and those not. As with many groups, the Jews grappled with ways to make new believers conform to the older ways. Yet it was clear that any boundaries that had been in place were now demolished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Acts 15:7-12

As Peter adds his voice to the fervent debate, his words bring a severe but comforting resolution. He uses several words that ring out even in sermons to this day. "God made [a] choice ..." While Peter is specifically speaking about his inspiration to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, he is echoing the foundation of both the Jewish and now Christian faith. God's choice was to save His people. This was announced by prophets and by various acts of God all through Scripture. If God has initially chosen who would speak, He has now chosen who may hear and subsequently believe. This is a radical concept considering the Judaizers' lifelong understanding of being "God's chosen" as an elite group, free to discriminate and exclude outsiders.

III. GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Acts 15:7-12

A chilling summary follows as he declares that God put "no difference between us and them" (v. 9) and acknowledges that the rigors of the law were even too much for the Jewish ancestors to bear. Even those who are fully committed to the law are incapable of obeying it completely without fail. To acknowledge this simple human frailty is the first step to embracing the call of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Acts 15:7-12

Peter's conclusion should motivate anyone attempting to engage in evangelism. The difference between "we" and "they" should never last long in a believer's view of another person. It is simply a matter of timing. Jesus' commission to go, teach, and baptize ([Matthew 28:19-20](#), [Mark 16:15-16](#)) means that everyone can have an opportunity not only to be called brother and sister, but also be acknowledged as the sons and daughters of God.

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III. GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Acts 15:7-12

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After much disputing (Gk. suzetesis, su-ZAYtay-sees) or mutual questioning and discussion on both sides, the Apostle Peter stood to address the group. Peter was the first apostle to preach to a Gentile audience ([Acts 10:34-43](#)). He reminded them of his experience in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. When Peter reported his experience to the Jerusalem church, everyone rejoiced and no one said a word about circumcision ([Acts 11:1-18](#)).

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Peter uses the compound word kardiognostes (Gk. kar-dee-ah-NOS-tays). This word is used in the Bible only in the book of Acts. In both instances it (there are only two) is in reference to God and His omniscience ([1:24](#); [15:8](#)). This is in anticipation of Peter confirming that God gave them the Holy Spirit. He says that God "bare them witness" (Gk. martureo, mar-too-REH-oh). Peter is letting the council know that God knows people's hearts and therefore knows what He is doing.

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Peter went on to say that since God did not differentiate between the Gentiles and the Jews, His followers should not either. The Gentiles were as welcome to the grace of Jesus Christ as the Jews. Their hearts were purified (Gk. katharizo, ka-tha-REED-zo) by faith. The word for purified is the same word for pronouncing something clean in the Levitical sense. It is used in [Acts 10:15](#) as God speaks to Peter about clean and unclean food. Now this word is used for the Gentiles. They are no longer "unclean" people because their hearts have been cleansed through faith in Christ. Paul reiterated this point to the church at Galatia: God would not deny anyone who believes in Jesus Christ access to the Holy Spirit. There is no distinction between Christians in Christ ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

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III. GOD'S WILL REVEALED

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Peter reproved those who wanted to bring the Gentiles under the obligation of the law of Moses. In his indictment against the Jewish leaders, he basically asks why they would want to test God when they can see how powerfully He is moving. In this case, to tempt (Gk. peirazo, pay-ROD-zo) means to exhibit distrust ([Matthew 16:1](#)) and it is Peter's way of saying not to go against the movement God has already started to bring the Gentiles to faith. In other words, trust what the Holy Spirit is doing. The Jewish ceremonial law was a heavy yoke (Gk. zugos, zoo-GOHS) that no one could keep. The yoke was a device that joined two cattle together as they plowed in the field; hence it became used metaphorically for any type of burden or bondage. A yoke could also have a positive connotation of strong support and guidance as in [Lamentations 3:27](#) or with the yoke of rabbinic instruction. Jesus Christ came to set us free from the yoke of the law, saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29, NIV).

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Peter reminds the Jerusalem church leaders that the salvation they received comes by the grace (Gk. charis, KHAH-rees) or unmerited favor of Jesus Christ. It is not by circumcision or uncircumcision, but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They could not obtain salvation by keeping the law. Peter confessed that neither they nor their ancestors could bear up under this weight. Both Jews and Gentiles are now equal in God's eyes and will receive the same salvation because of Christ.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

All are Chosen

Many Christian churches today carry on as though they alone are chosen; yet Peter, in agreement with Paul and Barnabas, clarifies that God has chosen to save all who will accept the gift of salvation. Peter goes on to mention that God knows the heart. As the circumcised heart was to be the most authentic indicator of true belief, Peter forces the divided council to accept that the Gentiles must have the same capacity to believe as anyone else.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will understand why Christians should remember that it is important to know that God gives everyone an equal opportunity.

BIBLE APPLICATION

Many people would not know the first thing about another method of worship outside their own. Even among Christian denominations, there seem to be sharp divisions between the practices of the Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Catholics, etc.

While there are many styles and even many administrations of worship that are ordained by Scripture ([1 Corinthians 12:5](#)), there is still only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism ([Ephesians 4:5](#)). It is the confession of Jesus Christ and faith in Him that unites us all.

STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: Students will learn that Christians understand that it can be difficult to choose between God's laws and society's laws.

STUDENT RESPONSES

God desires unity among all believers in Christ so that we may operate as one body ([1 Corinthians 12:12](#)). However, the reality is that this desire is often thwarted by believers on numerous levels. One of the ways we can seek out unity is learning how to resolve conflict in a Christ-like manner. As a class, construct a model for conflict resolution based on the events in [Acts 15](#). Note the different elements that helped the early church to come to a peaceful resolution regarding the circumcision of Gentile believers.

Prayer

Thank You, Jesus,

For choosing us and giving everyone an opportunity to know You. Like Paul and Barnabas, we want to stand firm on Your word as we speak to others about who You are.

In the Name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

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Next Sunday
November 16, 2025
Lesson 11
From Derbe to Philippi
Acts 16:1-5, 8-15