

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide

SB 05.09.2021

DIVINE WISDOM— Act 15:22-41

## Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

In Acts 15: 22-41 the church had been rapidly growing. The Gentiles began to outnumber the Jewish converts and some problems started to arise regarding Christian practices. James announced his opinion that Gentiles would not have to become Jewish converts to become Christians (v. 19). Then James suggested a letter be sent to Gentile churches instructing believers to keep four ritual requirements in deference to Jewish Christians. Many Gentile converts and God-fearers had become familiar with Jewish rituals and regulations. Also, by being sensitive to the beliefs and practices of Jews, Gentile Christians might reach them (vv. 20-21). To resolve conflict, we should always look to the Scriptures' wisdom for guidance. We should never accept any resolution that violates God's Word. When the church at Jerusalem had reached agreement, they sent a letter to the church at Antioch. In that letter they mentioned four things that the Gentile Christians should not do. They were not to eat things that had been offered to idols. Otherwise, people who were not Christians would have thought that they still worshipped idols. They were not to eat or drink blood. They were not to eat animals that had been strangled because those animals would still have their blood in them. They were not to do any sex sins or have immoral relationships. The church at Antioch was very happy because the church at Jerusalem had agreed with the things that they were teaching. Now they could tell the false teachers from Jerusalem to be quiet. Let's get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion:

1. What struck you or stood out to you from this week's sermon in the book of Acts?
2. What are some of the silliest rules you've heard of? (If there is time, use your smartphone to search for silly rules online.)
3. What have been some extra-biblical rules you've been encouraged to follow?

## Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 15:22-35

1. Who accompanied Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch? Who is "Silas" (Acts 15:22)?
2. Whom did the Jerusalem church discredit to the gentile church in and around "Antioch" (Acts 15:23) of Syria? Whom did the Jerusalem church affirm as servants of Christ?
3. Why would a letter and representatives from the Jerusalem church be a good way to communicate the apostles' decision?
4. What is the tone of the letter? What are its main points?

The Twofold Decision: 1) A Doctrinal Decision And 2) A Practical Decision vv. 22-29. The Doctrinal Decision we have already looked at. The Church concluded that Jews and Gentiles are All sinners before God and can be saved only by Faith in Jesus Christ. But all doctrine must lead to obedience. The Letter asked for obedience in 2 Commands and a willingness to agree to 2 personal concessions. The 2 Commands 1) Willingly abstain from idolatry and immorality,

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sins very prevalent among the Gentiles. The 2 Concessions 1) Abstain from eating blood and 2) meat from animals that had been strangled. Remember that the early Church did a Lot of eating together and practicing hospitality. Many Churches met in homes and would have a “Love Feast” which we call a potluck dinner. If Gentiles ate food that Jewish believers considered ‘unclean’ it would cause division in the Church. Forbidding the eating of blood was actually given by God Before the time of the law (Gen. 9:4) If an animal is killed by strangulation some of the blood will remain in the body and make meat unfit for Jews to eat. Thus the admonition against strangulation.

### HAVE A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 15:36-41

1. Who was "John called Mark" (Acts 15:37)?
2. Why didn't Paul want to take John Mark along on their second journey?
3. Why was Barnabas determined to take John Mark with them?
4. Who do you think was right in the argument between Paul and Barnabas? How did God work in Paul and Barnabas's separate missionary journeys?
5. What does this passage teach us about restoring people to ministry despite their past failures?

Believers will make mistakes. As we show willingness to forgive failures and give second chances, we provide Christians opportunities to grow and learn from mistakes. John Mark is believed to be the writer of the Gospel of Mark. He made good use of the second chance Barnabas gave him. The Bible calls us to invest in each other even though risks are associated with it. However, as we involve others in church ministry, the whole church benefits.

#### Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

**Pastor Ray spoke to us about the “Times of the Gentiles” and the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple. In Luke 21:24, Jesus said “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” In other words God is going to regather the Jews to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The restrainer is being removed! In 70 AD the Romans came in and trampled the Temple, destroying it. Thus began the Church Age, the Lord building His Church making One New Man of Jew/Gentile. We are in a time of transition from the Church Age into the Kingdom Age that will result in The 2nd coming of Christ and His Kingdom. The SIGN of confirmation will be when we hear they are ready to Rebuild the Tabernacle and offer Sacrifice on Temple Mount. Jared Kushner has launched the ‘Abraham Accords Institute For Peace’ to complete the process of implementing the 2 State Solution To Divide Israel... (cc Joel 3:2)**

Discuss: What does this tell you about the times we are living in? Who can you share this with?

### APPLICATION FROM ACTS 15:22-41

1. What risks are involved in seeking to resolve conflicts? Why should we accept those risks and work to resolve conflicts?
2. Have you ever lost a friendship because of a religious dispute? What happened?
3. What is the Lord asking you to do or obey from this passage from Acts 15?
4. Make an “I will statement” from this lesson. For Example: After hearing this message, “I will seek to be more gracious to those who have fallen and seek ways to restore them...”

PRAYER - Thank God for the mercy He's shown you through His Son, Jesus. Acknowledge that your salvation is totally dependent upon the Lord and His grace to you through Jesus' death on your behalf. Pray that your focus would be kept on His grace, not your works, but that the works that you do were ordained before the

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foundation of the world to bring Glory to God (Eph.2:10). Pray that you would boldly proclaim His grace and love to others.

*"I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land." Joel 3:2*