

# THE GENTILE CAUSE

The Jerusalem  
Council  
Acts 15:1–14, 22–35  
AD 49

## OVERVIEW

### BIBLE TRUTH

The Gospel is for everyone.

### BIBLE VERSE

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28

### LEARNER GOAL

I can show how conflict resolution in the text informs Christian debate today and reminds us that the Gospel is for everyone.

### LAW & GOSPEL

I sin when I think that I must do something, however small, to contribute to my salvation.

**Jesus has done it all perfectly for me. In Him, my salvation is complete.**

### SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

A disagreement arises in the Church concerning the Gentile believers. Some want to make the Gentiles follow the Jewish laws. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give testimony to the Jerusalem Council concerning their work among the Gentiles. The council sends a letter to the Gentile believers, encouraging them and welcoming them as God's chosen people.

## LESSON PREP

**BASIC** Read Acts 15:1–14, 22–35 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

**MORE TIME** Read “Apologetics Helps” on the back page in preparation for the “Live” section.

**IN DEPTH** Read the article “Conflict among Christians” on page 1867 in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

## SUPPLIES

### FOR THIS LESSON

- Half-sheets of paper

### FOR EVERY LESSON

- Student copies of *Defend Journal*
- Bibles
- Pens
- Shareable images from digital resource center
- Supplies for bonus activities
- [cph.org/digitalcontent](http://cph.org/digitalcontent)



### LEADER NOTE

Do you have rules for your classroom? Ask youth what they think about those rules. What kinds of rules are good to follow in any classroom?



### DEFEND JOURNAL

Hand out journals and turn to Lesson 7.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Does your group like to sing? Try “Father Welcomes.”



### LEADER NOTE

You know the maturity level of your group. If you choose to talk about circumcision, you may want to read or reference Genesis 17:1–14, where God made the covenant of circumcision with Abraham. Circumcision was a visible reminder for the Israelite males of God’s promise to send a Savior. Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise. Therefore, circumcision was no longer necessary.

# LAUNCH

## WALK-IN QUESTION

What’s one rule that’s hard to follow?

## FOLLOWING THE RULES

Hand out half-sheets of paper and ask everyone to write one or more rules that they have to follow at school, home, or as part of their teams or groups. Ask a few people to share. Which rules do they agree with? Which rules don’t they agree with?

**SAY** We might agree with some rules (no cursing) but not others (no chewing gum). Today, we’ll see what happened when two groups disagreed on the rules for being a Christian.

**PRAY** Dear God, You invite us all to be Your children through the Gospel. Help us resolve conflict with Your wisdom and love. In Jesus’ name we pray.

# LEARN

## READ “THE BIG PICTURE” AND TALK IT OUT

▷ What do you do when you have a disagreement with someone?

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Let youth share their thoughts.

## LEARN ABOUT “THE GENTILE CAUSE”

Read Acts 15:1–5 or ask volunteers to read.

▷ Describe the disagreement between Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch. What did the Church in Antioch decide to do?

- Some Jewish believers wanted the new Gentile believers to follow certain Jewish rules and laws, especially circumcision. These Jews went so far as to say that the Gentiles couldn’t be saved unless they were circumcised.
- The Church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss the matter directly with the elders and apostles.

Ask volunteers to read Acts 15:6–14.

▷ How did the Jerusalem council go about resolving the conflict?

- The Jerusalem Church first listened to Paul and Barnabas, who were eyewitnesses of the conflict in Jerusalem. The council then listened to one another, debated, and ultimately resolved the conflict by pointing to God’s Word and focusing on the work of Christ. This is a good example for us to follow when we have controversies in the church today.

Read Acts 15:22–35 or ask volunteers to read as others follow along in their Bibles.

▷ What was the final decision, and how did the Antioch Church react?

- The Jerusalem Council decided that Gentile believers did not need to be circumcised. However, they did ask Gentile believers to stop certain practices that were clearly sinful (such as sexual immorality) as well as those that would offend Jewish believers (such as eating meat sacrificed to idols).
- The Antioch Church rejoiced because of the encouragement of the Church in Jerusalem.

# LIVE

## DISCUSS “CHRISTIANS AND CONFLICT”

Have youth get together in pairs to discuss the question below. Give them a few minutes to talk, then come together as a group to share thoughts. You can use the discussion points below and “Apologetics Helps” on the back page for support as you discuss.

► **How should Christians handle conflict?**

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Listen respectfully to one another.
- Present the facts.
- Relate experiences—what God has done.
- Look at what Scripture says.
- Show care and concern for others.
- If you have an issue with someone or if someone wrongs you, follow Jesus’ instruction in **Matthew 18**: (1) Talk face-to-face, not Facebook to Facebook. (2) The conversation should be one-on-one—between you and that person alone. (3) If you aren’t able to resolve it, get help.
- **Matthew 18:15–17**: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.
- We are saved by grace alone, not by obedience to the Law. At the same time, we strive to follow God’s Law. We also should show respect and care for others. We choose not to do things that could weaken or hurt another person’s faith.

### CONSIDER “LAW AND GOSPEL”

The Law shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. Can we be saved by obeying the Law? No. Why? Because God demands perfection, and no one can obey the Law perfectly—we are all sinners. Jesus is the only one who obeyed the Law perfectly, and He did so in our place. He died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. We are saved by His grace, and we are saved through faith in Him.

Ask youth to say or write a prayer of thanks for God’s love and grace in Jesus.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Check for understanding by asking youth to describe who the Gospel is for.

# LEAVE

Read the Bible Verse, written in the *Defend Journal*:

**For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28**

Ask for prayer requests. Offer to pray, or invite a student to pray for everyone.



### CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus kept the Law perfectly. He died and rose to pay for the sins of the world. This Good News is for all people!



### LEADER NOTE

If you have time, try a little role-play to help youth practice some of the biblical conflict resolution steps you’ve discussed.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Let youth hear how your church operates with “Your Church Council.”



### SHAREABLE DOWNLOAD

Connect with youth before and after the lesson by using the shareable images from the digital resource center.

# APOLOGETICS HELPS

## DEFEND THE FAITH

The Jerusalem Council (aka the Apostolic Council) is regarded as the first ecumenical council of the Church. Paul and Barnabas addressed the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem Church. After much debate, both Peter and James (the half-brother of Jesus) spoke, and the Council was able to come to an agreement. Christians should always work toward resolution of conflict in the Church. Acts 6:2–6 is an example of a local church council discussing an issue within their church and resolving it.

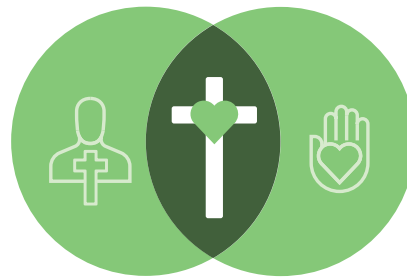
## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ► What do I do when I really don't get along with someone?

We won't always get along with everyone. Because of sin and differences in personality, experience, and point of view, we will disagree with others at times. But we don't need to give in to the temptation to argue, fight, or try to get our way. As Christians, we are called to do our best to get along with others. We can take a cue from the Jerusalem Council, where they listened to one another, debated, consulted God's Word, then came to an agreement.

### ► How can I welcome people to my church?

When you see someone new in church or in Bible class, what do you do? A welcoming smile, a simple "hello," and a handshake is a good place to start. You can engage them in conversation by asking where they are from and what brought them to your church. You can also welcome friends to come with you to church. Help them feel comfortable by introducing them to your church friends and guiding them through Bible class and the worship service.



## CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

### IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God welcomes all into His family without placing qualifications on them.

### CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can share my faith with others no matter their background.

## GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

*See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.*

### ADULT

I can identify how the early Christians resolved the controversy in the text, and I can consider how their approach to teaching that the Gospel is for everyone applies today.

### YOUTH

I can show how conflict resolution in the text informs Christian debate today and reminds us that the Gospel is for everyone.

### ELEMENTARY

I understand that the Good News that Jesus is the Savior is for all people everywhere.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God loves me just as I am and forgives my sins for Jesus' sake.

## BONUS ACTIVITIES

### FATHER WELCOMES

5–10 minutes

Look online for the words and music to the hymn "Father Welcomes," *Lutheran Service Book* 605. Listen to a recording, or if your group likes to sing, lead them a cappella or with recorded music.

### WELCOME BAGS

10–15 minutes

Ask youth to come up with ideas for a few inexpensive items to put into a "welcome bag" for visitors to Bible class or church (church brochure, mug, pen and notepad, etc.). Share ideas with your church leadership. If approved, gather items and have youth put the bags together.

### YOUR CHURCH COUNCIL

15–20 minutes

Ask your pastor or a member of your church council or leadership team to come and talk with the youth. Ask them to share who is on the congregation's leadership team, what they do, how they make decisions, and how the youth could help and encourage these church leaders.