

Looking for
helpful
resources as
you study
Acts?



Bible Project



Free Commentary



Free Crossway Study

LET'S CHECK IN:

1. Briefly share: over the last week, what's one way you've noticed God working in your life? Or in the lives of others? In your community? In the world? Or share something that happened in the last week you are grateful for!

LET'S DIVE IN!

2. First, read together Acts 15. Think back to the message and the main idea: **Confusion arises when we are unclear about God's grace and God's Law.**

Was there an idea or aspect of the text spoke to you? Was there anything said that challenged, intrigued or confused you that you want to explore more? Listen to each other, but don't feel the need to answer a person's question.

3. Acts 15 opens up with a debate. A small group of believers who "belonged to the party of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5) say that "it is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." Read Genesis 17:9–14 and Lev. 12:1-3. For a faithful Jew, what did circumcision mean? What was its significance for being a member of the covenant people of God?
4. The controversy of the Council re-appears elsewhere in the New Testament. Read Paul in Galatians 2:1–21. How does this help you understand more fully the issues in Acts 15?
5. So far in Acts, we've seen how the inclusion of the Gentiles and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon them was an unexpected paradigm shift for many Jewish believers. In Acts 15:7–9, Peter refers to the outpouring of the gospel at the house of Cornelius that he experienced in Acts 10:34–43. Peter refers to the manner in which the Gentiles received the Spirit. In Acts 15:7–9, to what does Peter refer?

6. In Acts 15:9, Peter's reference to God having cleansed the Gentiles' hearts by faith may allude to the content of his vision prior to visiting Cornelius: "What God has made clean, do not call common" (Acts 10:15; 11:9). The faith of the Gentiles at Cornelius's house is only implicit in Acts 10–11, but Peter referred to it explicitly here: they were saved by faith in their hearts, not by circumcision in their flesh. How does the argument here recall points made in Acts 11:15–17?
7. In Acts 15:10, Peter refers to the law as a "yoke . . . that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear." Who is Peter echoing when he calls the Law an unbearable yoke? Today, Christians can be confused over our relationship to the OT Law. The Law informed God's followers how to walk in integrity with him, but it never provided the power to obey it; instead, it only revealed the inability of God's people to live up to God's perfect righteousness. Through its system of sacrifices, the people of Israel were to look forward to the sacrifice that was to come, the true spotless lamb that would take away their sins forever (John 1:29). Consider Matthew 11:28–30. Why is the Jesus' yoke different? Do you ever live as if his yoke is burdensome? Why is that? How can Christ grace serve as a remedy?
8. Peter concludes his speech in Acts 15:11. What does he say? How does this provide clarity over the confusion about God's grace, salvation, and the Law? How does this support the unity of the early church that would include both Gentile and Jewish believers and the unity we should strive for across all ethnic lines today?
9. Acts 15 offers a model of how Christians can face disagreement over major issues yet work together to achieve clarity and arrive at unity. Notice how in Acts 15:2, the way Christians and the Spirit worked together to discern the Lord's will and arrive at clarity. What principles can we apply today when we face areas of disagreement?

WHATS YOUR NEXT STEP?

10. In light of this study, share and write down one next action step you feel God is leading you to take in the next week?

(Consider areas: a temptation to avoid? Promise to claim? Example to follow? Command to obey? Person to move toward? A new discipline to develop that will help you love God with your heart, soul, mind, strength and to love others?)