

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

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 (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read the article “Conflict among Christians” in *TLSB*, page 1867.

IN DEPTH Read Galatians 3:15–4:7, when Paul talks about the role of the Law from Abraham to Moses to Christ.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- ☐ “Welcome!” sign
- ☐ Papers with labels “Jew” and “Gentile”
- ☐ Scissors

FOR EVERY LESSON

- ☐ Device with downloaded music
- ☐ Pens or pencils
- ☐ Student copies of *Explore Bible Guidebook*
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Copies of downloadable activity page
- ☐ Supplies for bonus activities
- ☐ cph.org/digitalcontent



LEADER NOTE

Draw or print out a “Welcome!” sign to use in the opening today.



GUIDEBOOKS

Hand out student copies of the *Explore Bible Guidebook* and turn to Lesson 7.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Does your group like to sing? Try “Father Welcomes” (LSB 605).



LEADER NOTE

Use discretion when discussing circumcision with younger students. The student book refers to the “Law of Moses concerning their bodies.”

LAUNCH

PRAY Dear Jesus, You want everyone to know that You are their Savior. Help us share Your Gospel message with people everywhere. In Your name we pray. Amen.

SING “God’s Word for Everyone”
“Jesus, I Believe in You”
Music can be found in the digital resource center.

SAY Have you ever seen a sign like this? (Hold up “Welcome!” sign.) Where have you seen it? At a restaurant? A store? How about at church? This sign tells people that they are welcome to come in. Today we’ll hear how the Jewish believers in Jesus decided to welcome Gentiles to be part of the Church.

LEARN

READ “THE GENTILE CAUSE”

Use the *Explore Bible Guidebook* to read the Bible narrative aloud to your students.

DO SOMETHING

FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS Write “Jew” and “Gentile” on pieces of paper. Remind students that a Jew was part of the family of Israel, God’s chosen people in the Old Testament. Jesus and His disciples were Jews. A Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew. Point out that includes you and, most likely, your students. **Who does God welcome into His Church to be part of His family? Everyone!** Have everyone shake hands or give high-fives and say, “Welcome to God’s Church! You are God’s child!”

FOR OLDER LEARNERS After reading the narrative from the *Explore Bible Guidebook*, have students read the second section of the account, **Acts 15:22–35**, straight from the Bible. Then have them work together to write a letter in their own words that has the same points as the letter sent to the Church in Antioch. Give the following prompts: **What did the letter say? Why did it encourage the Gentile believers and bring them joy when they read it?**

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Bible text tells us that 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. Paul and Barnabas decided to go to Jerusalem to discuss the matter directly with the elders and apostles. They listened to one another 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.
- While the Jerusalem Council decided that Gentile believers did not need to be circumcised, they did ask Gentile believers to stop certain practices that were clearly sinful (sexual immorality), as well as those that would offend Jewish believers (eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols).
- 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.

LIVE

EXPLORE THE CONTEXT

Before you start the discussion questions, use the *Explore Bible Guidebook* for further details about Silas and Barsabbas, idol sacrifices, and the Jerusalem Council, found in Lesson 7.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose from the following questions. For a few helps, encourage students to look in the *Explore Bible Guidebook*.

- **What did the Jerusalem Council decide about Gentile believers?** (Gentile believers did not need to follow the Law of Moses about their bodies, but they needed to avoid blood and meat sacrificed to idols and be sexually pure.)
- **How can you welcome people to church and to the family of believers in Christ?**

Question for older students:

- **What can we learn from the way that the Jerusalem Council handled this situation?** (We should listen to one another, look to God's Word, focus on Christ, and respect other people. If time allows, let students come up with fictional conflict situations and practice solving them using the above-mentioned strategies.)

SAY THE BIBLE VERSE TOGETHER

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

KEY DISCUSSION POINT

- We cannot be saved by obeying the Law, because God demands perfection, and no one can obey the Law perfectly—every person is a sinner. Only Jesus obeyed the Law perfectly, and He did so in our place. He died on the cross to take the punishment for all our sins. We are saved by His grace, and we are saved through faith in Him.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ask students to name people and people groups that Jesus came to save. The list goes on and on and on! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone!

LEAVE

SAY The Christian Church is made up of people from every nation and people group. Jesus is the Savior for all people.

SING The Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"
"The Lord's Prayer"
Music can be found in the digital resource center.

PRAY Dear God, thank You for loving the world so much that You sent Your Son to be our Savior. Help us share the Gospel with people everywhere. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



DOWNLOADABLE PAGE

Extend learning by printing the downloadable activity page found in the digital resource center. See the back page of this guide for details.



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!



BONUS ACTIVITY

Help students make your room a welcoming place with "Welcome! Sign" and "A Warm Welcome."

DOWNLOADABLE PAGE HELPS

Make copies of the downloadable activity page found in the digital resource center. Use the helps below as a guide.

Explain to your students that the word *GRACE* can be an acronym for “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” The riches we receive from God include faith, forgiveness, eternal life, God’s love, and God’s care and provision. We cannot do anything on our own to receive these riches. We receive these riches “at Christ’s expense.” Jesus died on the cross to pay the price we owed God for our sins. Jesus rose and lives forever as our Lord and Savior.

After your discussion, have the students cut out the GRACE pentagon shape on the outer dark line. Then have them fold along the dotted lines as indicated. Have the students write “A Gift for You” on the outside of the triangle. Encourage them to give their fold-up to someone and explain to that person that God has saved us by His grace.

THE GENTILE CAUSE—THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL
Unit 9, Lesson 7

Saved by God's Grace
Peter told Paul, Barnabas, and the members of the Jerusalem Council this important truth for both Jews and Gentiles concerning the Christian faith: “But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:11).

Directions: After you talk about the GRACE pentagon below, cut out the shape along the dark outer border. Next, fold the bottom corners up along the dotted lines. Then, fold the top point down along the dotted line. Write “A Gift for You” on the outside of the triangle. Give your folded-up treasure to someone and explain to them that God has saved us by His grace.

GRACE
God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

What are the “riches” we receive from God? _____
Can we do anything to receive these riches? _____
How do we receive God's wonderful riches? _____

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
Ephesians 2:8–9



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. Encourage children to sing along as you lead them a cappella or with recorded music.

WELCOME! SIGN

10–15 minutes

Use a half or full poster board to make a “Welcome!” sign for your room. Ask students to plan how they will decorate the sign. Help with the lettering, if needed. Give them markers and stickers. Talk about how God welcomes us to come and hear His Word, and how we invite and welcome others to God’s house.

A WARM WELCOME

15–20 minutes

Talk with your group about how they can be welcoming to children who visit your church or Sunday School (smile, say hi, sit with them). **What might be a nice welcome gift for them?** (a card, Arch Book, Bible bookmark) Ask students to write down their ideas. Later, share your group’s ideas with the church leadership.