

Discussion Questions

Read Acts 15

1. We have been learning about what it means to be part of the people of God. Last week we saw that one of the things that it includes is being part of a covenant community, which implies that some people are part of it but some aren't. There are insiders and outsiders, even in the Kingdom of God.

- a. What does Acts 15 teach us about the requirements for membership to the people of God? (vv. 6-21)
- b. Why was this a big deal for the church in Acts?
- c. How can this continue to be an issues for us today? How are we tempted today to try to get people to conform to our expectations in order to be part of the church? Put another way, what are some religious customs that we have that we are tempted to put on others?

2. Notice that the Apostles did ask the Gentiles to refrain from certain activities that were connected to paganism. One of these was an outright sinful practice (sexual immorality which is likely a reference to visiting cult prostitutes). The others were practices concerning how they prepared and ate food which had strong associations with pagan practices. They were to avoid both sinful pagan practices and things strongly associated with paganism that could offend their brothers.

- a. Where else in Scripture do we see Paul talking about avoiding things that are associated with paganism?
- b. What are some prevalent cultural practices that are part of a pagan (non-Christian) lifestyle that are inherently sinful?
- c. Which these sinful practices do you find most difficult to leave behind?
- d. What are some prevalent cultural practices that are strongly associated with a non-Christian lifestyle and so ought to be avoided because they can cause others to stumble?

3. What criteria did the Apostles use to come to their decision in Acts 15?

- a. Is it dangerous to rely on only one of these things to the exclusion of the other?
- b. If so, then how do we keep them in balance?

4. The reason that the Acts 15 church was dealing with the issue in the first place was because God had been working powerfully in their midst to use their witness for Christ to lead people to himself. And so, while it ultimately depends upon God, we do have a part to play as witnesses.

- a. What do you find most challenging about being a witness for Christ? How can you help one another overcome this?
- b. Who has God placed into your life that you can be sharing Christ with?

5. Spend some time praying in your group for boldness to share Christ with other and that God would move and save people.