

7/5/26

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

For Group Meetings from June 28<sup>th</sup> – July 4<sup>th</sup>

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Gracious God, you save us by your grace alone in Jesus Christ, not by anything we earn. Free us from the need to add burdens to what you have already made simple. Open our hearts to welcome others as you have welcomed us. Lead us in the unity and freedom of your Spirit. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (Matthew 10:40-42) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Acts 15:1-21

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What issue causes conflict in the church at the beginning of this passage?
2. Who are the main voices in this discussion?
3. What specific practices are Gentile Christians asked to avoid?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where have you seen God working in unexpected people or places recently?
2. What traditions in your life that help your faith?
3. When have you felt like you had to "prove yourself" to belong somewhere?

**Memorize this verse:** "But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." (Acts 15:11) What makes it hard for you to trust that grace is enough?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 145:8-14. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Acts 15 is one of those passages that can feel, at first glance, like an inside the church debate. Church leaders arguing over circumcision? Ancient religious customs? It can seem far removed from our lives. But scratch just beneath the surface and you realize this is one of the most important, and most human, moments in the whole story of the church. Because the question underneath the argument is timeless: Who gets to belong? That's the real issue. The early Christian movement had begun as a Jewish renewal movement. Jesus was Jewish. His disciples were Jewish. The Scriptures they knew were Jewish. And so when Gentiles started showing up, it raised an urgent question: Do they need to become Jewish first in order to follow Jesus? That may sound abstract to us, but we ask versions of this question all the time. What does a person need to do to belong here? What are the expectations? What hoops do they need to jump through? Every community has them. Every family has them. Every church has them. Sometimes spoken. Often unspoken. And that's what makes Peter's speech so remarkable. He stands up and says, essentially: Why are we making this harder than God has? Peter points to his own experience with Cornelius back in Acts 10. God poured out the Holy Spirit on Gentiles before they had checked any boxes. Before they had learned the customs. Before they had gotten everything right. In other words, God acted first.

And isn't that always the story of grace? Before we understand. Before we deserve it. Before we can explain it. God acts. That's the heart of verse 11: "But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." Notice the reversal there. Peter doesn't say they will be saved like us. He says we will be saved like them. That matters. Because it levels the ground. It reminds everyone in the room that no one gets in by achievement. No one gets in by heritage. No one gets in by moral performance. Everyone enters the same way: by grace. And that's both comforting and unsettling. Comforting, because it means you don't have to earn God's love. Unsettling, because it means the people you might least expect to receive that love are welcomed too. That's the tension of Acts 15. Grace widens the circle. And if we're honest, we often prefer a smaller circle. A more manageable one. A more predictable one. One filled with people like us. But the gospel keeps stretching it. The church's first great debate wasn't really about circumcision. It was about whether God's grace could really be that big. And the answer, astonishingly, was yes. It still is. Which leaves us with the question: Where might we still be putting barriers where God has opened doors? And perhaps even more personally: What makes it hard for us to trust that grace is enough?

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen