



STUDY GUIDE

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[set up]

As you think back to your upbringing, what were some unusual family rules that you were expected to obey in your home?

As you think back to your past church experiences, what extra-biblical rules, if any, were imposed on you?

[digging deeper]

According to Acts 15:1 and 5, what could have been some additional things that those who belonged to the party of the Pharisees said were necessary so that Gentiles could be saved? (See Mark 2:16, 7:1-5.)

If you were a person who grew up in a strict Jewish household, why might these practices and behaviors – these rituals and rules – be important to you?

If you were a Gentile hearing that these Jewish regulations were required, how would you feel about becoming a follower of Jesus?

Read Acts 15:2. Why would Paul, who often wrote about unity, and Barnabas, who was such an encourager, be so willing to dispute and debate over this issue? (Read Galatians 2:21, 3:5, 3:11-13.)

Scan Acts 15:1-35 and discuss how 1) Biblical theology, 2) Spirit-led experience, and 3) practical considerations play a role in the decision-making process of the Jerusalem Council.

Read about Peter's struggle with this issue in Acts 10:28, 34-35 and Galatians 2:11-13. How does Peter's struggle strengthen his argument in Acts 15:7-11?

Read Philippians 3:2-9. Knowing Paul's pharisaic background and his impeccable reputation as a Jew, how would his testimony influence the council?

Read Galatians 2:21 and discuss why this matter "Jesus, plus" vs. "Jesus, period" is of utmost importance.

In light of the Commission from Christ in Acts 1:8, what is the significance of the council's decision?

What are some rules, regulations, sacraments, and ceremonies that you have seen here in Northeast Ohio that some religious traditions want to add to the pure gospel of Jesus?

Read and discuss the meaning of the following statement: "In essential things, unity; in non-essential things, liberty; in all things, charity."

Have copies available (or see our webpage: <http://www.cvconline.org/about-cvc/statement-of-faith/>) and read through - out loud - the "Essential Beliefs" of Cuyahoga Valley Church. Why is it important that we as a church family stand together in unity over these basic essentials of the faith?

What are some non-essential issues that we as believers in a local church fellowship can be free to differ on and disagree about?

[living it out]

What issues might be troubling some believers that you know that could be resolved by looking at them with three realities: 1) Biblical theology, 2) Spirit-led experience, and 3) practical considerations?

What "add-ons" to the gospel might a new believer sense from your life or in our church? What should we do about that?

Read Acts 15:31. Discuss how maintaining the purity of the gospel message enhances our joy and encouragement.

Close your time in prayer thanking God that it is "Jesus plus nothing" that saves (See Acts 15:11). Pray for the ongoing purity of the message that is proclaimed through the ministries of Cuyahoga Valley Church.