



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Date: 06.29.25 | Paul Becomes a Missionary
Scripture: Acts 13-14

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- God values all people and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and people are invited to join Him in His work.
- We are to be involved in reaching the nations through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- The church is a fellowship of believers, and we are called to meet together regularly.
- The church is not a place or a building, but rather a community of people who belong to the family of God.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- God values all people---born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths---and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and as we join Him in His work, He uses people to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- We demonstrate honor for God when we respect the earthly authorities God has placed in our lives.
- The church is a community of believers called to gather regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve, encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.
- The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry.



MEMORY VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

“The Club Rules”

Purpose: To help students wrestle with the tension between grace and rules, setting the stage for the council’s debate over whether Gentiles need to follow Jewish laws to be saved.

Instructions:

1. Set the Scene:

Say something like: “Imagine we’re starting an exclusive club. This club is for people who truly want to belong, but there will be some rules. What rules should we have to make sure only the ‘right’ people get in?”

2. Group Brainstorm:

Write on a board or just discuss aloud. Ask:

- What kind of rules should we make to join this club?
- Should people have to dress a certain way? Believe certain things? Do certain things?
- What if someone doesn’t follow all the rules but still wants to join?

3. Shift the Conversation:

After a few minutes of discussion, say: “Now imagine someone shows up and doesn’t follow your rules, but really wants to be part of the club. Should they be allowed in? Why or why not?”

4. Bridge to the Bible Text:

Conclude with: “This is exactly the kind of issue the early church had to deal with. In Acts 15, some people believed that Gentile believers had to follow Jewish customs to be saved. Others believed salvation came by grace through faith in Jesus alone. So they had a major meeting to decide—what does it really take to belong?”



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

The book of Acts presents a pivotal shift in the spread of the gospel. In the early chapters of Acts (1–12), Peter emerges as the primary leader in bringing the message of Jesus to the Jewish people. Beginning in Acts 13, however, Paul becomes the central figure in the mission to the Gentiles. Throughout both sections, the true driving force is not any individual but the Holy Spirit, who empowers and guides the church at every step.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are set apart by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel beyond their current borders (Acts 13:1–3). Accompanied by their young companion, John Mark, they begin their journey. Many, especially Gentiles, receive the gospel eagerly, but opposition arises as some Jewish leaders grow jealous. In response, Paul and Barnabas declare their intention to focus on the Gentiles—a decision that brings great rejoicing among the non-Jewish listeners (Acts 13:44–48).

This first missionary journey, likely around AD 46–47, marks the beginning of Paul's lifelong calling to take the gospel to the nations. In every city they visit, Paul and Barnabas evangelize, plant churches, appoint elders, and strengthen the new believers. After retracing their steps to encourage these churches, they return to Antioch and report all that God had done, especially how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

Paul's first missionary journey into Gentile territory is a clear success, as both Jews and Gentiles are witnessing lives transformed by the gospel. Yet the early church begins to wrestle with an important question: to what extent should Gentile Christians observe the traditions and practices of Jewish Christians? The Holy Spirit had come upon them without circumcision or adherence to the Mosaic Law, a point Peter would later emphasize. Before the mission to the Gentiles could continue effectively, the church needed to reach an agreement on how this mission should be conducted. It was essential for believers to understand how a person is saved from sin and how works relate to the life of faith.

The church addressed these questions at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), which affirmed the foundational truth that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not through the Law of Moses. Throughout church history, leaders have gathered to resolve doctrinal issues, but this council was the first and most important, answering the most vital question of all: What must a person do to be saved? The apostles and elders rejected any attempt to impose legalism or ritualism as prerequisites for salvation. They firmly upheld that salvation is entirely by grace through faith in Christ alone.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Some men from Judea—possibly believers from the Jerusalem church who misrepresented the views of the apostles and elders, or perhaps false teachers with a Jewish background—came to Antioch insisting that Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). This raised the issue of whether Gentiles needed to become Jews and follow Jewish ceremonial laws in order to be Christians. The Jewish law included not only moral commands but also many ceremonial practices—such as circumcision, kosher dietary laws, and regulations regarding ritual purity, sacrifices, and festivals. Some Jewish believers, particularly those from a Pharisaic background, insisted that Gentile believers should be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. They believed that without adherence to the law, no one could truly be forgiven of sin. This mistaken understanding of Christ's atonement became a significant stumbling block for Gentile believers. These requirements would make it nearly impossible for Gentiles to remain part of their cultural communities.

Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with this legalistic teaching, recognizing it as a threat to God's grace. The church in Antioch appointed them to go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders about the matter (Acts 15:2). When they arrived, they reported all that God had done among the Gentiles, including how He had poured out His Spirit on those who believed (Acts 15:3–4, 8). While the apostles and elders provided the main leadership during the council, the entire church was present and gave consent to the final decision after much debate (Acts 15:7, 22). Though some believing Pharisees insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses (Acts 15:5), Peter, James, Paul, and Barnabas argued strongly that Gentile Christians should not be burdened with such requirements.

Requiring Gentiles to submit to the law would distort the gospel of God's grace into a message of grace mixed with works. Peter gave the first of three major speeches at the council, offering one of the clearest defenses of salvation by grace through faith alone found in Scripture. He reminded the council that God had saved Gentiles in the early days of the church without requiring circumcision, law-keeping, or ritual observance. Since God did not demand these things for salvation, neither should the church. Peter pointed to the gift of the Holy Spirit as proof of the genuineness of their salvation (Acts 15:8). Barnabas and Paul then delivered the second major speech, recounting how God had worked powerfully among the Gentiles during their first missionary journey (Acts 15:12). James followed with the third speech, showing that God's current work among the Gentiles aligned with His long-standing redemptive plan, as revealed in Scripture (Acts 15:13).

Peter addressed the apostles and elders with boldness, declaring that both Jews and Gentiles are saved through faith in Jesus Christ. He emphasized that God makes no



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

distinction in how Jews or Gentiles are saved, for all are cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9). The council ultimately sided with the apostles, concluding that Jewish Christians should not place obstacles before Gentiles who were turning to God (Acts 15:19). They decided not to “trouble” the Gentiles—that is, not to burden them with unnecessary requirements. Instead, they sent word back to the church in Antioch, clarifying that Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised or observe the Mosaic Law to follow Christ (Acts 15:22-35). However, they did ask Gentile Christians to abstain from certain practices, especially those that were offensive to Jewish Christians, so that both groups could maintain fellowship (Acts 15:20, 29).

The council’s decision protected the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith and preserved the church’s purity by preventing the blending of pagan customs with the true faith. The wisdom of this decision was reflected in the response of the Gentile church at Antioch. When Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas read the letter aloud, the believers rejoiced. The potentially divisive issue had been officially resolved, and unity was preserved. Judas and Silas continued to minister to the Gentile believers, strengthening their faith, before returning to Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching the word of the Lord and continuing their ministry among the Gentiles, now free from the controversy over the law of Moses.

Though our good works and obedience to God’s commands serve as evidence of His power at work in us, they have never been the basis of salvation. As the Jerusalem church declared, salvation is a gift of grace that cannot be earned through circumcision or by keeping the law.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY

Remind your group that we are studying the New Testament. The book of Acts is about God sending the Holy Spirit to permanently dwell within Jesus' disciples and other believers after He ascended back to heaven. With the help of the Holy Spirit, those who followed Christ told many people about Jesus, helped others, and started the first churches. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the message of Jesus began to spread all over the world.



TELL THE STORY - Acts 15:1-35

Earlier in the book of Acts, we learned about a man who arrested and harmed followers of Jesus. His name was Saul. One day, Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and changed Saul from the inside out. (Acts 9) Saul began to follow Jesus, and God used him as a missionary, sharing the good news of God with others. Saul, also known as Paul, told Jews and Gentiles about how they could be saved through faith in Jesus. Today, we will learn how Paul and Jesus' followers discussed whether faith in Jesus is enough for a person to be saved.

Paul and Barnabas had been sharing the gospel with many people, including Gentiles, but some people in the church began to teach that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they first followed some of the same rules Jesus followed. (Acts 15:1-5)

Paul and Barnabas disagreed, and the church leaders decided to meet in Jerusalem to discuss whether Gentiles needed to obey the law of Moses. After a long discussion, Peter stood up and said to the group, "Brothers and sisters, God chose me to tell the good news to the Gentiles. They heard the good news, and they believed. God accepted them and gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did for us.

"Why are you trying to make them earn salvation? We know that we cannot obey God's laws perfectly. No, we believe that the Jews and the Gentiles are saved in the same way- by the grace of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 15:6-11)

Everyone in the group was quiet as Paul and Barnabas told them about all the things God had done through them when they were with the Gentiles. Then another apostle, James, spoke up. He pointed out that the words of the prophets showed that God wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

"I think we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who have trusted in Jesus. Instead, let's write them a letter telling them the things they should not do," said James. ([Acts 15:12-21](#))

So the church leaders wrote a letter to the Gentile believers explaining some things they should not do now that they were believers.

The leaders chose Judas, who also went by the name Barsabbas, and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, where they would deliver the letter. The believers in Antioch were encouraged by the letter. Judas and Silas stayed with them for a while, and then they went home. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, where they taught believers and shared the good news about Jesus with others. ([Acts 15:22-35](#))



RETELL THE STORY



SHARE THE GOSPEL

In the early days of the church, leaders gathered in Jerusalem to settle a critical question: Can a person be saved by faith alone, or is something more required? Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they affirmed a foundational truth of the Christian faith—salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. His death and resurrection are sufficient for our salvation; nothing else needs to be added.

God has made a way for all people—Jew and Gentile alike—to be saved through faith in His Son. We cannot earn this gift of salvation by our own efforts or good works. Instead, our good works flow from a genuine faith, as the Holy Spirit empowers us to live in obedience to Christ's commands.

Jesus commissioned His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations," and the early church took this call to heart. Paul and Barnabas, for example, traveled extensively to share the good news of the gospel and to make disciples. Their message was consistent: faith in Jesus is all that's needed to begin a new life with God.

Even when God gave the law to the Jews, it was never intended as a means to earn righteousness. The law revealed humanity's sinfulness and pointed to the need for a Savior. That Savior is Jesus, sent by God, not just for the Jews, but for all people. Anyone who trusts



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

in Him is forgiven and receives the Holy Spirit, who transforms us to live in ways that honor God and reflect His love to others.

As Peter and James wisely pointed out during the Jerusalem Council, we should not create barriers for those who are turning to God. Our role is not to burden people with rules but to help them understand God's grace and truth. While obedience to God's commands is important, it is not what saves us—it is the natural response of a heart transformed by grace, keeping our eyes fixed on the Savior who makes salvation possible. Sharing the gospel, then, is not about demanding perfection or adherence to a set of rules. It is about inviting others into the same grace we've received, pointing them to Jesus—the only one who saves—and walking with them as they grow in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

The good news of Jesus was reaching Jewish and Gentile people. The Gentiles did not grow up with the same laws the Jews followed. Jewish people had been taught to follow the law God gave Moses, while the Gentiles did not. **What did some of the Jewish Christians think the Gentiles should do? (Acts 15:5)** They believed that Gentiles needed to follow the laws and that this would show they were saved.

The early church decided to meet together to discuss what Jesus said was necessary for a person to be saved. Peter stood up and reminded the people that no one can obey the law perfectly. Only Jesus perfectly obeyed God and never sinned. **What did Peter say was the sign the Gentiles had been saved? (Acts 15:8-11)** Peter told the church that the Gentiles were saved by faith. After they trusted in Jesus, they received the Holy Spirit as a sign of their faith. Every person who trusts in Jesus receives the Holy Spirit as a sign of their salvation. (Ephesians 1:13)

Paul, Barnabas, and James also agreed with Peter. James quoted from the Old Testament. **What did James say was God's plan for the Gentiles? (Acts 15:17)** God had always planned for the Gentiles to know Him. Salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles. Faith in Jesus alone saves people from their sins.

Peter said Jews and Gentiles were saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11). What is grace? Grace is undeserved love given to people by God. God loves us, forgives us, and saves us because of what Jesus did. Grace means we can never earn our salvation.

Have you ever tried to earn forgiveness or God's love? We can sometimes feel like we need to earn God's love because of our sins. God showed His love to us when He gave His only Son to die for our sins. God's grace covers past, present, and future sins.

Why is Jesus' death and resurrection enough to save us? Jesus lived a perfect life, which made Him the perfect, spotless sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' blood completely washes away



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

our sin forever, and His resurrection defeated death.

What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?

What does the story teach me about myself?

Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?

Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

How does this story help me live on mission?



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You that through faith in Jesus, we can be saved from our sin. We recognize we could never earn the forgiveness our sins need. Please help us remember Your grace so that we can live for Your glory. Amen.

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Practice naming the 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Remind the kids that these books are in the NT and tell of Jesus' time on earth. Practice finding these books in the Bible.

Practice naming some of the disciples. During Wednesday night Bible study childcare, the kids learned a hokey song to remember all of the disciples. Play it a couple of times with your group and have them try to sing along.

You can find the song [here](#).

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For July and August, our Creek Kids will be collecting money in the funnel for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. We will have a family mission opportunity in August, where our families can both register and attend a bed build with Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Additionally, they can shop and purchase needed items from a wishlist for this organization. More information about this special project will come soon.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Continue to use the Memory Verse Handout for fun ideas for practicing the memory verse for this unit.

[Check out this Seeds Kids song](#), Not Ashamed: Romans 1:16-17 to help memorize this verse.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - God is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD



- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD



- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?