

Use the following thoughts and questions to have a spiritual conversation as a family. Don't emphasize having the right answer, but focus on spending time discussing the Word as a family.

Scripture

Acts 15:1-11, 14-21

Session Summary

Gentiles throughout the Roman world had been turning to God through Paul and Barnabas' missionary travels, and now the missionaries have returned to Antioch with a great report. Men from Judea came to Antioch, teaching the Gentile believers that they had to be circumcised in order to truly be saved, but Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed them. We should always be willing to stand for what is right, especially when others are being harmed. But when the stakes are high, it is wise to seek the counsel and support of the authorities God has placed in your life instead of trying to handle things on your own. When it became obvious that the argument would not be resolved, they journeyed to Jerusalem to settle this issue once and for all. There, the apostles agreed with Paul that salvation is by faith alone.

Acts 15 reaffirmed the truth that God saves people on the basis of His grace alone through faith in Jesus. It seems to be human nature to resist grace, but we are reminded here that God's grace is sufficient not just to save us, but to change us. Being freed from the Jewish law does not mean that we are freed from moral duty. Rather, grace enables us to fulfill our moral duties to God and to each other. So, the counsel concluded with instructions for how Gentile believers ought to live. We should be thoughtful of other *believers* as we make different lifestyle choices, and considerate of *unbelievers* as we remember our testimony and witness to them. In both cases, we should be people who put our preferences aside for the sake of others

- What are some examples of how we can stand up for others like Paul and Barnabas stood up for Gentile Christians?
- What kind of thing is okay to handle on your own, and what kind of issue should you get an authority involved in?
- How have we seen the changing power of God's grace in our own lives?
- What are some ways we can be more considerate of believers and unbelievers with the choices that we make?

Let each person in the family have one evening this week where he or she gets to choose what the whole family is going to eat for dinner. Challenge them to choose something that they know others in the family like more than they do. The purpose of the exercise is to teach them to consider others first. At the end of the week, discuss how you all can consider others first in other decisions in life.