A ITSE Q

reaching all people





NORTHSHORE'S COMPELLING STATEMENT

Hope changes everything.

ICE BREAKER

What's your favorite way to communicate—face-to-face, over the phone, text messages, handwritten letters?

BACKGROUND

In Acts 14, while Paul and Barnabas were preaching the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, they came across a man who had never walked. When Paul saw that he had faith, he told him to stand up, and it was so. The crowd of Gentiles immediately misplaced their praise, directing it to Paul and Barnabas, thinking that it was by their own power that this man was healed. Paul and Barnabas readily corrected them, teaching them that God is the Creator of all things, the source of life, and all that is good. Throughout the chapter, God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (v. 27), and many believed.

In chapter 15, we see a concerning misunderstanding of God's salvation to the Gentiles, which came from inside the Church. Some of the believers were convinced that Gentiles must be circumcised and *keep the Law of Moses* (v. 5). This may have come from the precedent set in the Old Testament, where any foreigner who wanted to partake in the Passover first needed to be circumcised, he and all the males in his household (Exodus 12). However, it is made clear that *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love* (Galatians 5:6). Instead, ...we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

Paul clarifies in Romans 2:25, circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. The Pharisee believers were clinging to the law, but did not realize they had not been obedient to it, causing Peter to ask them this question: why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10). It is instead by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Having established that the law cannot save anyone, and that the Gentiles should not be burdened by trying to keep it, the believers in Jerusalem sent them a letter of encouragement to remain holy. They addressed the major points of temptations for the Gentiles, particularly related to worshiping idols and keeping themselves from immorality, similar to Paul's encouragement where he writes, [f]or this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

REVIEW

What was meaningful from the above context or the sermon from last Sunday?





KEY VERSES: Acts 15:10-11

Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.

READ: Acts 15:1-35



HEAD LEVEL: What does it say? These help us to examine what the Word tells us.

- 1. What did some of the believers claim was necessary for salvation? How did the other believers react?
- 2. What evidence was there that the Gentiles did not need to keep the law to be saved (vv. 8-9)?
- 3. What is the yoke that the Jews were not able to bear (v. 10)? Why were they unable to bear it?
- 4. In the letter to the Gentile believers, what were the requirements that the church asked them to follow?

DEEPER DISCOVERY:

What does the Bible say about what the law is for and what it is not for? Read the following verses: Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 10:4, 3:20; Galatians 2:16, 3:10-13, 23-26.



HEART LEVEL: What does it mean? These questions help us shape our beliefs around the objective truth of God's word.

- 1. Why did some of the believers think that keeping the law of Moses was necessary to be saved? Since the law does not save, where do works fit into the Christian life?
- 2. How was the prophecy in verses 16-17 fulfilled?
- 3. Why do you think these four requirements were included in the letter to the Gentiles?
- 4. In verse 28, what does it mean that *it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit. . .*? What does this reveal about the Spirit's work in the early church and in our lives?





HANDS LEVEL: What does it mean to me? These questions help us commit to live out the truth in our everyday lives and commit to potential next steps.

- 1. The letter addressed issues in the Gentile community that the Gentile believers needed to separate themselves from. What is one thing that you need to start abstaining from in your culture?
- 2. How can you balance serving God zealously while not being overburdened by trying to do too many things? (Ref. Matthew 11:28–30)
- 3. What are some ways that you can encourage fellow believers to be holy in the coming weeks?



MEMORY VERSE: Romans 10:4

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

PRAYER REQUESTS

(Please remember that these requests are confidential and need to stay within the group.)