

Family Worship Guide – Week 7

READ

Read Acts 15:1-5

We have seen throughout the book of Acts Jesus establishing His church in all nations, from Jews and Gentiles alike. This led to some problems in the early church. The Jews had considered themselves to be the people of God and had always looked at Gentiles (non-Jews) as outsiders.

This chapter is all about an important meeting that the leaders of the early church held in Jerusalem. Some false teachers who were Jewish were telling the Gentile Christians that they had to keep certain Jewish rituals in order to be saved. They told them they had to be circumcised, which meant the men had to have their bodies cut to show that they were Jewish, and to only eat certain kinds of food that had been prescribed in the Law of Moses.

Read Acts 15:6-11

The leaders of the early church got together to address this question and discussed it for a long time. Then Peter stood up and reminded the entire group of how God had sent him to the house of Cornelius and that He had poured out the Holy Spirit on them, even though they were Gentiles. The point is that God accepts people solely on the basis of trusting in Jesus, not on whether they are Jew or Gentile.

Read Acts 15:12-35

After Peter spoke, Paul and Barnabas told the entire assembly about how God was bringing many Gentiles to faith in Christ and planting churches in the cities all over the empire. Finally, James spoke up and showed how this was really the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament. God had promised the Gentiles would be called by His Name (v. 17).

The council decided the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised or keep the food laws. They realized God was building a people from every tribe and tongue and nation. To require people to do something to earn the salvation of God would mean that Jesus Christ died for nothing.

Questions:

What do you need to do to earn your salvation? Why does God accept you?

Does God love people from one race or nationality more than others?

What can you do as a family to show that God accepts people based on what Jesus has done for them and not based on their race or nationality? What can you do here in Birmingham? What can you do in all nations?

Bottom Line: God accepts us because of Christ's death and resurrection, not because of anything else we can be or do.

PRAY

This week we are praying for the unreached people groups in Atlanta, Ga. That's right Atlanta, Ga. Over the past 10 years approximately one million people have immigrated to Atlanta from all over the world. Clarkston, Ga. is known by many to be the most diverse square mile in America. Our partner, Global Frontier Missions works in the heart of Clarkston. They serve a significant population of Asian Indians, Muslims, Africans, Chinese and Hispanics that have never heard the gospel. The U.S. presents an amazing opportunity to reach members of many of the remaining unreached people groups of the world. Cities such as Atlanta and Houston are experiencing tremendous growth due to immigration, refugee resettlement and international students. There are many challenges faced when living in a foreign land; culture change, language barriers, the inability to get a job and provide for your family are just a few many refugees face. Global Frontier Missions tries to live among those moving to the U.S., build relationships with them by supporting them in English learning, job skill training and with after school programs. All with the ultimate goal of sharing the gospel and planting churches among these unreached people groups. The goal then being that they will return to their own nation and take the gospel with them. Please pray this week for the staff of Global Frontier Missions as they live among and minister to the unreached of Clarkston.

SING

John Newton, author of this week's song, 'Amazing Grace', was born in England in 1725. During his youth he spent most of his time with his father on merchant ships. There was little religious instruction given to him, and he grew up with no religious convictions. While at sea he suffered abuse by rough sea captains. Eventually, he himself became a captain and ran a slave ship. In 1748 he and his crew encountered a terrible storm that nearly destroyed their ship. When all seemed lost, Newton called upon God to have mercy on them, and the sea began to calm. Newton later saw this as the time when God began to work on his heart and he referred to this incident as his 'great deliverance'. Thereafter he celebrated May 10th as the anniversary of his conversion, a day of humility when he finally submitted to God's authority in his life.

In His mercy, God transformed John Newton's heart, and his life began to change. Newton gave up the slave trade to become a minister and Bishop of Lincoln. It was at Lincoln where he wrote one of the world's most beloved hymns, 'Amazing Grace'. It illustrates Newton's tumultuous life prior to his salvation and the sinful state of his heart, and it also captures the wonder he felt at the power and might of God when He granted Newton mercy. Similarly, our hearts were sinful and we were separated from God before we came to Christ. We could not save ourselves or earn salvation. That is why this hymn begins by talking about the grace of God 'that saved a wretch like me'. It is our gracious heavenly Father who mercifully gives us His grace and forgiveness as a gift. He accepts us and loves us because Christ made us worthy. That is amazing grace indeed.

MEMORIZE

Acts 15:11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God's word and worship Him together.

Preschool:

- Before you begin, gather some type of small gift (i.e. lollipop, book, etc.).
- Read Acts 15:11 with your preschooler.
- Tell your preschooler that you have a special gift for them. Now show them the gift and tell them they have two choices: 1) they can choose to do a simple task like pick up their toys, or dust the furniture and you will give them the gift or 2) explain to them that you can just give them the gift because they are your child and you love them. They do not have to do anything to earn the gift.
- Now ask your preschooler, "Do you want the free gift or do you want to earn it?" (Most children will choose the free gift)
- Explain to your preschooler that you are also God's child and He loves you. Just like mommy and daddy gave you this gift because we love you, God accepts you as His child, loves you and has the best gift of all for you. The gift is His son Jesus! God sent Jesus to save us from our sins. When we choose to believe in Him and turn away from our sin (bad choices) He saves us. Jesus is the only way to be saved. There is not anything we can do to earn God's gift. It is a free gift!
- Question: What if someone tells you there is another way to be saved other than Jesus? Sadly, they are not right. God sent Jesus from heaven to earth to show us the way. He died for our sins. Jesus is the only way.
- Conclude by re-reading this week's memory verse, Acts 15:11 with your preschooler.
- Pray with your preschooler. Ask God to remind us every day that His son, Jesus, is the only way to be saved.

Children:

- As a family, re-read Acts 15:11.
- Help your children understand that many areas in life offer acceptance based on how good you are at doing something. Ask if everyone who plays baseball get invited to be part of the All-Star Baseball team. What must a person do to be invited? Does every girl that participates in dance receive an invitation to be part of the traveling Competition Dance Team? What must you do to be included?
- Unlike baseball or dance, God does not accept us into His Kingdom based on how good we are at following rules. Any person who repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus as their Savior will have their sins forgiven and be fully accepted by God. We are made right with God not because of anything we could ever do or be. Jesus' work for us on the cross is the only thing that makes us acceptable before God.

- This means that the gospel is for absolutely everyone! We can go to every man, woman, boy and girl on the planet and tell them about God's great love and invite them to turn from their sins and trust in Jesus.
- How can you display God's perfect and impartial love this week at your school, on your sports team, and in your neighborhood? Pray as a family for opportunities to do so.

Students:

- As a family, re-read Acts 15:4-5.
- Have your students talk about their biggest rival school. If your family homeschools, attempt to recall a favorite sports team's rival. What would happen if a student from that school or team transferred to yours? How would they be received? How would you receive them?
- In the early church a similar situation was happening. The church leaders were questioning if Gentile Christians should have to follow the Jewish laws. It would be as though your team were questioning whether the new guys had to look and act exactly like you. The church was about to decide that the Gentiles had to follow the Law of Moses, but Peter spoke up and reminded everyone of how they were saved.
- Have you ever thought about your relationship with Jesus as a list of "do's and don'ts"? How does this passage change that view?
- How might we communicate the **grace** that is talked about in this passage as opposed to a list of rules that some connect with Christianity?
- Conclude by re-reading Acts 15:11 - Peter's reminder. Pray that we live and share our faith in a way that reflects Christ's grace in our lives.

Prayer

Lives/Church

As the church at Antioch was worshipping God and fasting, the Holy Spirit led them to set apart Paul and Barnabas and send them out (Acts 13:2). During the last year, our faith family has identified men and their families whom God is leading to different parts of the world (North Africa, East Asia, Central Asia, Seattle, Kansas City, New York). This week pray intentionally for their families and their ministries. As Paul and Barnabas encountered opposition and hardships so will these families. So pray for perseverance. Pray that the Holy Spirit will use these families to proclaim the gospel, disciple men and women, and plant churches.

Local

Focus: Tom Brown Village - a Birmingham Public Housing community, located in the Avondale area. Our goal is to engage senior adults living there in meaningful disciple-making relationships.

Local Church: Westwood Baptist Church, Pastor Les Hughes

Monday: Pray that Brook Hills' members will have opportunities to share the gospel with seniors and their families living in Tom Brown Village.

Tuesday: Pray for God to send more Brook Hills small groups and individuals to begin serving in Tom Brown Village.

Wednesday: Pray for God to give seniors who are Christ-followers the boldness to share His love and Word with those around them.

Thursday: Pray for the family members (grandchildren and great-grandchildren) that many of the seniors care for on a daily basis.

Friday: Pray for the health and safety of the senior adults living in Tom Brown Village.

Saturday: Pray for Gordon and Marilyn Day, gordonday@charter.net, as they lead in this outreach ministry to seniors.

Scripture Memory

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.
Acts 15:11

Week 7

Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone

By John Newton

Arrangement/Additional lyrics by Chris Tomlin

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

My chains are gone I've been set free
My God my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love Amazing Grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

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