



THE GOSPEL: THREATENED

Open it

1. When was a time you had plans that were threatened? What were those plans? What threatened them? How did you resolve it?

Daily devotions

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Acts 15:1-35

2. What teachings caused the apostles and elders to gather in Jerusalem to discuss them?
3. What was the solution to the problem the leaders were trying to solve?
4. What two things did they do to share the outcome of their meeting together?
5. What was the response from the Gentile Christians when they heard the news?

Day 2

TODAY'S THEME: ADDING TO THE GOSPEL

Read Acts 15:1-5

Throughout the book of Acts, we have seen a theme of the gospel spreading to new people, especially to the Gentiles. We've learned about the history between the Jews and Gentiles and why it's been so hard for the Jews to accept the Gentiles as God's people. Well, now we run into some Jews who are adding to the gospel. They are essentially saying that it's great to believe in Jesus, but you must also follow the Law of Moses in order to truly be saved!

Today we don't have as much of a struggle with expecting people to follow the Law of Moses in order to be saved, but there are still things that people will teach that add to the gospel message—that we are saved by grace through faith, not our works. It's such a serious problem that Paul actually says later in his letter to the Galatians¹ that if anyone is preaching a different gospel than one of salvation by faith, he should be cursed!

6. What things do some people add to the gospel today that we must do in order to be saved?

7. Why do you think people add things to the gospel?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Pray that the true gospel would continue to advance and that any false gospels would be stopped!

¹ Galatians 1:6-9

Day 3

TODAY'S THEME: THE GOSPEL THREATENED

Read Acts 15:6-11

Churches can argue about lots of different things: the color of walls, the volume and style of music, and how money is spent. But this argument in Acts 15 was far more important than all those! When a church is divided in what it teaches, it can become ineffective. It was so threatening to the spread of the gospel and to the message of salvation that all the apostles and elders gathered together to discuss the matter and come to a resolution.

It makes me think of when Jesus said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I have to admit, if I were watching the church argue over what they believe, it would really cause me to second guess whether I can trust anything they say at all, which in this case could have prevented me from hearing the gospel and trusting in Jesus for my salvation!

8. Being on the same page as far as the gospel message is so important. What dangers could there be if the Church didn't agree on the gospel message?

9. How can you know what the truth is?

10. What are some things that you think Christians disagree on today? How can we work towards unity in these things?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray for unity in the church. Pray that the church can strive to work together for the sake of the gospel.
- Pray for the church to speak with a unified voice!

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Read Acts 15:12-17

There are lots of things we try to base decisions on when we are discussing issues. Naturally we will lean toward things that we are confident in like scientific studies, popular opinions, and sometimes even our own feelings or experiences. None of those things are bad in and of themselves. They just don't always help provide the final standard for what God wants us to do. As a matter of fact, Peter, Barnabas, and Paul talked about the things they had seen and experienced as they discussed the issue of the gospel in Jerusalem. But at the end of it all, James speaks up and brings everything full circle to the Bible.

Our emotions are flawed and can lead us astray; we can't fully rely on our experiences because they can vary so much. You could go to a concert with a friend, and one of you could love it and the other could hate it. In this case, they learned that the prophets had spoken about how God was one day going to welcome the Gentiles into His family. Choose to build your life with the Bible as your foundation!

11. Why is it easier for us to rely on our feelings and experiences instead of relying on the Bible?

Why is it better to rely on the Bible more than our feelings and experiences?

12. When was a time that you relied on your feelings and experiences and not the Bible? How did that go? What happened?

When was a time that you relied on the Bible instead? How did that go?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- That God would help you understand the Bible more and more so that you can trust and rely on it to help you make important decisions in life and learn what God's will is!

Day 5

TODAY'S THEME: FOR THE SAKE OF UNITY

Read Acts 15:19-21

Imagine if you saw someone who couldn't walk suddenly be healed and able to stand up and walk. No, like seriously. Imagine if you literally saw that with your own two eyes! How would you respond?! Well, that happened when Paul and Barnabas went to Lystra. After they had healed the lame beggar, the people there believed that they were actually the gods Zeus and Hermes! Can you believe that?!

Sometimes God gives us skills and abilities that we can use to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ! When I was in high school it was basketball! I had the opportunity to play on a really good team and because of that, we had quite a platform in our community. I could have used that platform to make myself great or as an opportunity to talk about God! Each of us have received different gifts and abilities from God that we need to use to share the gospel, not to make ourselves great. Paul and Barnabas had people literally making sacrifices to them, but they chose to use the opportunity to point to God and share the message of salvation that they had found in Jesus Christ!

13. What are some things that can cause division in the church today? How can we work towards unity in those things?

14. Why do you think it's so important for the church to be unified anyway?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- We all have that one person we have a hard time getting along with. Pray that God would help bring unity to your relationship.
- Pray that the church would seek to find unity and work together for the sake of the gospel instead of dividing over so many different things.

Day 6

TODAY'S THEME: UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Read Acts 15:22-35

Have you ever been caught up in the drama at school or at least observed it from a distance? Then you know how much hurt that division can bring to friendships. It can become all you think about and all you care about. It can keep you from sleeping. You might slack off on homework. You can't focus in class. Sometimes we change how we eat. It can even change who our friends are sometimes.

The same happens in a church when it is divided. Instead of spending time focused on reaching the lost with the gospel message and changing people's lives, a divided church becomes so focused on itself and its problems that it doesn't even have time or energy to be reaching out to those who need to hear about Jesus.

15. What are some practical threats to a church that is not unified?

How does unity bring strength to a church?

16. What are some things that you think bring unity in a church or a youth group?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray that your church would stay unified!
- Pray that more and more churches would have unity between them and work together for the sake of the gospel!