

## “The Way Forward”

**Use this guide as a tool to help you prepare to experience spiritual transformation in a practical way. It is a flexible guide that will help you discover, own, and apply the truths of God’s Word.**

### Message Summary

Acts 15 is central to the development of the plot of the book of Acts. The first half of Acts focuses on the Jewish community of believers. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised the Holy Spirit who would give them power to become His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The first 5 chapters locate the church in Jerusalem. In chapters 6-9 we see that church begin to make Gospel progress in the much-hated Samaria. In chapters 10-14 we see God using His church to reach into the Gentile world. The stage was set for the Gospel to go into all the world. There remained, however, one final question. How would the Jewish church accomplish a Gentile Mission and receive Gentiles into Christian fellowship?

Acts 15 outlines how this question would come to the church at Antioch and ultimately the church at Jerusalem. When we read it separated by 2000 years, it’s hard for us to understand those who came from Jerusalem to Antioch with what seemed like an ax to grind with the Gentile church. We fail to realize that these men came with 1000s of years of Jewish history of being called God’s special people through whom the entire world would be blessed. It was natural for them to assume that for a person to become Christian they must also become a Jew. It was not a dumb concern but necessary to resolve in order to establish unity in the church.

In this 1<sup>st</sup> Christian Council, called the Jerusalem Council, the gathered church resolved two primary issues. First, the issue of what it means to be saved was resolved. Second, the issue of how to receive Gentiles into Christian fellowship was resolved. Both Jews and Gentiles would have responsibility in order to establish the way forward to maintain Christian fellowship and to accomplish Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations.

The way forward for the church today to accomplish the Mission of God is unity and clarity around the Gospel. What we believe about the nature of the Gospel will determine how we live and how we commit ourselves to make disciples who make disciples. Therefore, this week during our community gatherings we will be watching a video titled “Gospel Power” that will help us apply the truths of this message to our individual and corporate lives. This video featuring Jeff Vanderstelt, a pastor and Missional Community trainer, will help us think through the three tenses of the Gospel (Past, Present, and Future). As you prepare to meet with your community group ask God to give you a heart filled with Gospel Priority, Gospel Clarity, and Gospel Unity.

### Message Outline

Accomplishing the mission of God requires...

1. Gospel Priority.

It’s the means of reconciling us to God.

It’s of first importance to the church.

It’s the common thread that makes the church one body.

It’s worth fighting over.

2. Gospel Clarity.

Salvation is NOT accomplished by...

Changing your behavior.

Keeping certain rules.

You.

Salvation is accomplished by...

Grace alone

Through faith alone

In Christ alone

By God alone.

3. Gospel Unity.

The Holy Spirit unites the body for the purpose of Mission.

Christian fellowship requires...

Unity in essential beliefs.

Liberty in non-essential beliefs.

Love in all beliefs.

The Mission of God is more important than your...

Convictions.

Liberties.

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### Group Discussion (sermon application)

Take a few minutes to use these questions to apply God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do). This can be done in the group or individually.

1. What usually takes priority in your life? In the church? Why should the Gospel dethrone that priority? What do you think is the best way to accomplish this in your life?
2. Why is it so easy to look to behavior modification as a measure of your relationship with God? What are the potential consequences? While behavior modification isn’t the means of our salvation, what place does it have in the Christian life?
3. How will you apply Gospel Unity this week in relationships with other believers? How will you apply it in relationships with unbelievers?

### Group Discussion (video application)

Watch the video titled “Gospel Power” and spend some time making application by answering the following questions as a group.

1. Which one of these do I most struggle with in terms of believing it’s true of me today (I have been saved, I am being saved, I will be saved...)?
2. As a group, practice proclaiming the good news of Jesus to each one of these areas where you struggle (believing). Have a few people in your group share specific struggles of unbelief. Take time to encourage and speak the truths of the gospel to these areas of unbelief.
3. What could we as a Missional Community do to continue to rehearse all 3 aspects of God’s salvation in our lives, as we gather together? What kinds of practices could we engage in regularly to grow in this?

### Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**  
Covenant Members
  - Added New members
  - Revival in the hearts of current members
  - Excitement for the new year.
- **Local:**  
Practicing hospitality in our communities.
  - Growing relationships with family, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances.
  - Opening our homes to new friends.
  - Gospel conversation opportunities.
- **Global:**  
Bob & Georgette Kornegay, missionaries for Servants Hearts Ministries in Guatemala.
  - Purchase of property for SHM Headquarters (~\$35,000).
  - Storage building on new property (~\$10,000).
  - Future mission house.
  - Future mission trip.