

## April 7: Prayerfully Study Acts 15:1-11

"Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the gentiles and brought great joy to all the brothers and sisters. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.'

"The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us, and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'"

## Hearing the Need | Those Who Aren't Here Yet

# April 7

1 | Believers in Judea came to Antioch teaching the faith. They sensed a need to have a church for connection and to be faithful in how to follow God (vv.1-4). Over 75 years ago, First Presbyterian Church (FPC) downtown realized that Knoxville was growing and wanted to plant a new congregation in Sequoyah Hills. What motivated their planning? When have you wanted to do something for the future that you may or may not have the chance to see the results of?

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2 | In Jerusalem, a sticky situation arose with the apostles and elders when believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees voiced their opinion on requirements for Gentiles (vv. 4-11). There may have been some from FPC who didn't want to send so many of their own members to start a new church. How do Christians faithfully go about making decisions when they disagree with the process? When have you watched believers work through disputes? What worked well and what didn't?

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4 | Peter boldly spoke about the future of the Church and how they might proceed. Jesus had spoken boldly to religious leaders, too. How can God use you to speak up now about the changes we are going to go through? Where can you go to be heard? What would you like to tell God about your feelings?

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5 | Read verse 8 again and consider the significance of God "giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us." How might God use you/us to prepare for the Spirit at work among those who are not even at SHPC yet? What does it mean that God "purified their hearts by faith" (v. 9)?

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6 | In verse 11, Peter comes to the most significant point in his rebuttal. He is referring to God's gifts to us and those after us. In the spirit of this week's theme, what might future generations need? How can we be more attentive to hearing emerging needs?

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