



Life Group Sermon Study Notes
“Let’s Talk: Start A Conversation”
Pastor James Lowe – February 23, 2020

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- If you could eat one meal the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What would you sing on Karaoke night?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Acts 15:1-19 ¹But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²And 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...⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses”...Peter stood up and said to them, “...⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them (the Gentiles), by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us...” ¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me...¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God...”

This was written about 50 A.D. by Luke at a time of peace after years of persecutions. However, conflict arose internally. If not handled correctly, what couldn’t be destroyed by external forces had opportunity to do so within the church.

Jews who had converted to Christianity believed that Jewish rites were essential to being saved. They were called Judaizers and they were teaching this false doctrine. Paul and Barnabas debated with them first but then were sent to the Jerusalem church to root out the heresy.

They stopped in Phoenicia and Samaria on the way and shared details of the Gentiles' conversions, showing their confidence that the grace of God extended to all people.

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were greeted as brothers and with kindness, contrary to what may be expected when dealing with conflict. Peter testified first, referring to the conversion of Cornelius and those with him at Caesarea, where God showed that Jewish rites were not necessary for true conversion but only belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, Paul and Barnabas shared the wondrous works they witnessed as Gentiles were saved.

Then James, leader in Jerusalem, agreed with Peter, acknowledging that God sent the Gospel and then his Spirit to the Gentiles. He cited a passage out of the prophets where God, by his grace, would call them to form his church. His plan since the beginning.

We are called to defend the truth and to resolve disagreements in a Godly way. Defending the truth does not have to be within a church council establishing doctrine. We can do so by the way we manage our household, treat others at work, or serve in the community. Each time we forgive our spouse and love unconditionally, we defend the truth. When we treat our staff fairly, we defend the gospel. Charity and generosity spreads the truth of the gospel. Principles learned:

- Earnestly defend and be faithful to the truth as found in the full scope of God's word.
- Do so with proper spirit and with ardor for his precepts.
- Pursue unity (in our homes, church, or throughout the worldwide Christian movement).
- Ask a third party to help resolve conflict but be intentional with who it is; trust the church.
- Remember the good in a relationship, not shaped by prior grievances, extending grace.
- Keep things in proper perspective, God's perspective.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Discuss the Godly principles to resolving conflicts and how to apply this today.
- How could Judaizers misunderstand the words of the prophet with regard to Gentiles being saved and how can mistakes be avoided in our own belief system?
- What are the essential and nonessentials for the Christian faith as learned in Acts?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.

- Thank God for transforming us into his image as we follow his ways found in his word.
- Ask God for wisdom and understanding in how we conduct our relationships.
- Ask God to empower us to uphold his truth.