

Icebreaker:

Did you feel like you had extra rules in your church growing up? If yes, what were those “rules?”

Questions:

1. It didn't seem right to Paul and Barnabas that new believers must be circumcised to be saved. Do you ever feel like the Church adds expectations we need to meet to be saved – or even accepted?
2. Do you have some area of your faith where you are going back and forth (like the Council with rules for Gentiles or Peter and Paul in Galatians 2:11-14) because you are not sure what is right?
3. The early church and the Council deal with their conflict and come to an agreed solution. How does this interaction between leaders of the early church reflect the character of God? What can we take from their example about handling conflict in our own churches or relationships?
4. In the end, the Council agrees not to make it difficult for Gentiles to come to faith. But they still ask Gentiles in writing to abstain from certain activities, (parts of the Jewish law dealing with not worshipping idols) which would help their Jewish sisters and brothers interact with them. What activities today do you wrestle with that might help you get along with, or keep you isolated from, other Christians?
5. Paul and Barnabas tell stories of how Gentiles had come to know Christ. Peter tells his story of how he was called to share the message of the gospel with Gentiles. Why is it important to share stories of faith? Why does it matter if we share our own stories?
6. When has someone's story helped you in your faith? When has your story helped someone else's faith journey?

Homework:

This is the last week of Home Groups until January. As we approach Advent, consider ways you can serve and celebrate individually and as a group. Some ideas: Attend ZPC Date Night on 11/18; share a meal as a group, either at a restaurant or someone's home; fill an Operation Christmas Child shoebox; fill a Shepherd Tote; attend the ZPC Christmas Cantata on 12/17 or David Ackerman's Christmas Concert on 12/10.

Prayer:

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

- > Prayers of healing for Cheri Fuchs and Sarah Schein.
- > We celebrate with Nikki, Josh, and Russell Samuelson (grandparents are Steve and Lane Kessel) in the birth of Mitchell Raymond and with Rachel, Bryan, and Waverly Dysert in the birth of Gideon Ellis.
- > Prayers of comfort for Dave Platt in the death of his wife Bev, as well as comfort for their daughters Jody Smith and Maggie Platt.

Info for your group:

- > Save the date | HG Leader Training with Paula Taylor, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church | Sunday lunch | Feb 25, 2018.
- > Want a fun social for your group? Plan to attend ZPC Date Night | Saturday, Nov 18 | 6:30-9:30 pm | ZPC Sanctuary
- > Lots of ways to engage with one another during Advent. Visit zpc.org for details!

Leader's Notes:

Thanks for leading and facilitating your group these 10 weeks. We know it takes time and energy to do so. It also takes some courage to invite people into your home, to ask tough follow up questions and to get involved in people's lives. We (Jerry, Sally, and Scott) often hear what a difference you are making in our home groups. We don't take it lightly. You are helping our adults to engage with scripture and apply it to their lives in today's world. That is so valuable and vital to the spiritual growth of our adults. So, thank you! Continue to live out your faith with the excitement, prayer, struggle, and leaning on God to help you just as the members of the early church did in the book of Acts!

[Question 1] It says in Acts 15:3 that the news of the Gentiles converting to Christ “made all the brothers very glad.” People like stories. A good story is like a toy for an adult. People are inspired by stories, often more than the nuts and bolts of faith or discipleship. Sharing stories is a good practice to share life and to inspire our friends in faith.

[Question 2] Encourage your group members to get specific with their answers. If they can't think of anything, you might have an example for both ready in your mind. Think of how someone impacted you and what was their story? Think of close relationships you have and maybe how your story has helped them. Sharing in this way reminds us of the importance of our own stories.

[Question 3] Some churches might have expectations of dress or getting behavior “right” to really be accepted into the church. At ZPC, there have been people who have felt like they must go to the Great Banquet to be accepted. The Great Banquet is wonderful, but we should gently invite people to participate, not make them feel “outside the club” if they have not experienced it – or even other ministries or events at church.

[Question 4] The Council was debating whether or not Gentiles must be circumcised. In Galatians, Paul said he told Peter to his face he was wrong for sometimes accepting Gentiles and then separating himself from them. What are some similar struggles for Christians today? What is a similar struggle you might have? Continue to ask God and trusted Christian friends for guidance in dealing with sticky issues in your life or in culture.

[Question 5] This episode reflects the character of God in a couple of ways. God is a God of grace and order, and the church showed grace by not expecting the Gentiles to be circumcised but showed order by maintaining boundaries so the Gentiles could relate to the Jewish Christians. The church also solves conflict by doing life in community which reflects God being a relational God. We too can approach conflict by doing life together with respect, grace and order.

[Question 6] Christians try to walk the line of being in the world but not of the world. This can be manifested in views on social drinking, entertainment choices or views on sexuality (just a few examples!) where faithful Christians and good friends might disagree. It is good to wrestle with our actions and views so that we can both stand for truth and at the same time be gracious, kind, and welcoming.