

## Week 3 Overview

### Off Week

For most groups this will be an off week from small group. The reason we have off weeks is because we value rhythms of rest. Busyness is a sickness and we live in an overcommitted and overscheduled society. Having rhythms of rest is both healthy and necessary. Use this off week as an opportunity to be at home, spend quality time with your family or get together with a friend and plan a night that is *unlike* the rest of the month.

### Flexibility

Having off weeks also allows small groups to rearrange their schedules around holidays (Labor Day and Easter) and key dates on school calendars (fall break). This ensures flexibility with your small group so you can plan ahead and maximize attendance.

### Sermon Study – Off Week

If your small group is not meeting this week, we still want group members to continue their personal study in Acts 15. Through this sermon-based study in Acts, we want to create a mindset where people are digging into Scripture themselves and then coming to church prepared and excited to hear the sermon. Let's be encouraging this practice with our people.

## Leader's Guide

## Acts 15

### Preview Acts 15

Though change and transitions can be difficult, Acts 15 shows us how God can work through encouraged and strengthened people to encourage and strengthen other people.

In Acts 15 there is dissension, debate, sharp disagreement, choosing sides, troubling words, unsettled minds and ministry separation. Yet in the midst of controversy and conflict, God worked to strengthen, encourage and unify the church leaders. He clarified the message of salvation by grace alone and He doubled the ministry of Paul and Barnabas who parted ways.

### Discuss Acts 15

We often view problems as an annoyance and disruption to life. Yet some problems result in clarity, unity and encouragement. *How has God used tension or conflict in your life to help you see challenging situations with increased clarity?*

After having a sharp disagreement, Paul and Barnabas parted ways and separated their ministry. *Have you ever been in a situation where you separated yourself from a close friend over a theological or life-style difference? How did you handle this?*

Within the church the goal is not unity at all cost or tolerance no matter what. Theology matters. *What does Acts 15 teach you about the essentials and nonessentials in the Christian faith?*

### Apply Acts 15

The church in Jerusalem is more established, has strong leaders, clear doctrine and is more traditional. The churches Paul and Barnabas are planting are contemporary and untraditional with the inclusion of Gentiles. Since attending Harvest have there been any changes for you that have been hard to process?

**How are you handling the growing pains of Harvest? How can you be more intentional to help in these growing pains?**