

HEALING A RIFT (THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL)

Acts 15:6–12; 22–30

Acts 15:8–9

God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Acts 15:8–9

BIBLICAL PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSE

Wouldn't it be nice to live in a world without conflict? The reality is that conflict happens daily. It happens in families, in school, at work, and even among church members. But how you respond in the face of conflict can be a testimony to Christ.

Read Acts 15:6–12, 22–30. A major dispute had come up in the early Church. Jewish believers were unsure about the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles. Not only were the Gentiles' diets different, they were also uncircumcised—a major “no-no” among Jewish leaders. And circumcision wasn't just tradition for tradition's sake; the Jews were tying circumcision to salvation. They believed the Gentiles had to be circumcised in order for their

salvation to be complete. The council followed the leadership of the Holy Spirit. They arrived at a decision that would strengthen the fellowship between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Unity would be preserved and the gospel would continue to spread.

Churches, families, and students can learn much from this passage about handling disputes and conflict, especially among believers. Instead of becoming isolated and angry, believers should work together under the direction of the Holy Spirit to resolve conflict in a healthy manner. Remember, the world is watching to see how Christians work together.

FAMILY DEVOTION TIME

Connect . . .

Your family chooses between the following preferences: McDonald's® or Chik-Fil-A®, Superman™ or Batman™, Third Day or Casting Crowns, Disneyworld or Washington, D.C. A family member asks each person to defend his or her choices.

Next, the family discusses: **Can you remember a time when you had a disagreement over something that seemed important but really wasn't? How do you handle disagreements between family members or friends?**

Explore . . .

Read Acts 15:6–12, 22–30. The family discusses: **What was the disagreement about? Was this a valid disagreement? Do you think the leaders of the council handled the situation wisely? What was the outcome of the meeting?**

Transform . . .

Family members think about a time when they faced conflict with another person. Family members discuss: **Do you feel like you handled it in a Godly manner? Could you have done something differently that would have made things better?**

Pray together that your family members will learn to resolve conflict by following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.