

Acts 15; Galatians 2

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 Acts 15

2 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the
3 brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of
4 Moses, you cannot be saved.”
5 ...
6 ⁶The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this
7 matter. ⁷And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and
8 said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a
9 choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the
10 word of the gospel and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart,
11 bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to
12 us, ⁹and he made no distinction between us and them, having
13 cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now, therefore, why are you putting
14 God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that
15 neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But we believe
16 that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they
17 will.”

18 ¹²And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and
19 Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through
20 them among the Gentiles. ¹³After they finished speaking, James
21 replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has related how God first
22 visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.
23 ...
24 ¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the
25 Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but should write to them to abstain from
26 the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from
27 what has been strangled, and from blood.

28 Galatians 2

29 Then after fourteen years I [Paul] went up again to Jerusalem with
30 Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ²I went up because of a
31 revelation and set before them (though privately before those who
32 seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in
33 order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³But
34 even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised,
35 though he was a Greek.
36 ...

37 ⁹and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars,
38 perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of
39 fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and
40 they to the circumcised. ¹⁰Only, they asked us to remember the poor,
41 the very thing I was eager to do.

Observation (What does it say?):

Consider the observation questions on the back of this page. What do you notice in this passage?

- Underline all the persons in these two passages.
- **Circle** references to faith or belief.
- **Box** references to any kind of works or duties.
- Other observations?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- From these two abbreviated descriptions what do you think was the overall issue the people were trying to decide?
- What specifically do you see in these passages about the relationship between faith and works?
- What part did James play in the decisions reached in the discussions?
- What other questions come to mind as you read?

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- What general ideas or “hearsay impressions” have you had about the book of James?
- How might these passages affect your thinking as we begin to study the letter James wrote in the New Testament?

Additional questions for thought and discussion:

For more suggested methods of study: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/methodical-bible-study/>
For examples of inductive studies: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/inductive-bible-study-examples-2/>

Inductive Bible Study

(A few general ideas)

Observation
(What does it say?)

What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer’s thought process?

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose (“in order that...”)?
- Are there conclusions (“Therefore...”)?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good “headline” for the passage?

Interpretation
(What does it mean?)

What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer’s thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

Application
(What does it mean for me?)

What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

**Read nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything from them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden that is really in them.
J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)**

For a much more detailed description of the methodology, see Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*. Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1952.