

## Unit 33: A Firm Foundation

### Unit Description:

Paul reminded believers about the truth of the gospel. The Bible gives us a firm foundation for our faith. By reading and studying Scripture, we can remember what is true and encourage others as they live by faith.

### Key Passage:

Acts 4:12

### Big Picture Question:

What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

### Session 1:

#### The Jerusalem Council

*Acts 15*

**Story Point:** Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

### Session 2:

#### Paul's Second Journey

*Acts 15–18*

**Story Point:** Paul and Silas planted new churches.

### Session 3:

#### No Other Gospel

*Galatians 1–3*

**Story Point:** Believers are saved and grow in godliness by faith in Jesus.

### Session 4:

#### Paul Gave Hope

*1–2 Thessalonians*

**Story Point:** Paul told the church to stand firm as we wait for Jesus' return.



**The Jerusalem Council**  
Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.



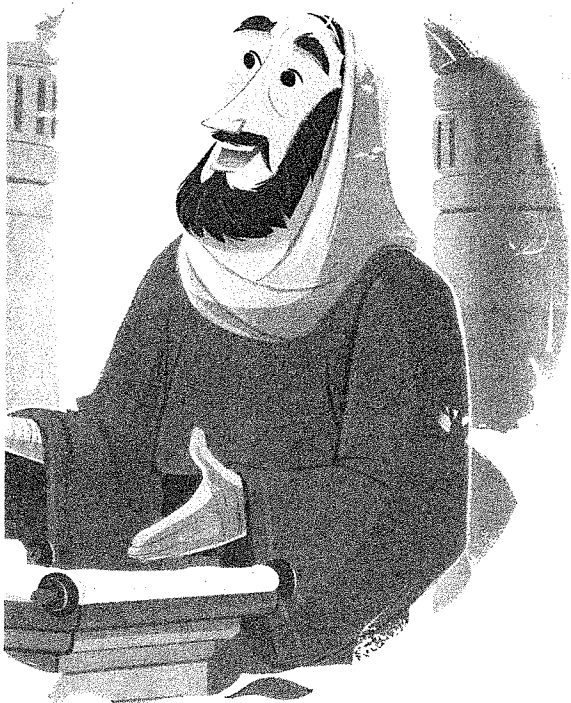
**Paul's Second Journey**  
Paul and Silas planted new churches.



**No Other Gospel**  
Believers are saved and grow in godliness by faith in Jesus.



**Paul Gave Hope**  
Paul told the church to stand firm as we wait for Jesus' return.



Use Week of:

## Unit 33 • Session 1 The Jerusalem Council

### BIBLE PASSAGE:

Acts 15

### STORY POINT:

Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

### KEY PASSAGE:

Acts 4:12

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the Bible about?  
The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

**INTRODUCE THE STORY**  
(10–15 MINUTES)  
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**TEACH THE STORY**  
(25–30 MINUTES)  
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**APPLY THE STORY**  
(25–30 MINUTES)  
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## LEADER Bible Study

The church in Antioch praised God for His grace to Paul on his first missionary journey. Though Paul and Barnabas were strongly opposed in some places, many people heard the gospel and believed. Paul and Barnabas took the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. But a problem arose when some Christians began saying that the new followers of Jesus—the Gentile believers—needed to obey the Law of Moses in order to be right with God.

Paul and Barnabas debated this issue with other church leaders in Jerusalem. They met together to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or was something more needed? When Paul addressed the council, he insisted that God saves Gentiles the same way He saves Jews: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Paul testified to the things God had done among the Gentiles. God had given Gentiles the Holy Spirit. James cited the prophets Amos and Isaiah in support. The group agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved. They also agreed that they should not make salvation more difficult for Gentiles by adding unnecessary rules.

The church chose two men—Judas and Silas—to go with Paul and Barnabas to the church at Antioch. They wrote a letter for the Gentile believers there, encouraging them and giving them instructions for how to live as followers of Christ.

The message for the Gentile believers was important: Whether Jew or Gentile, salvation comes only through faith in Christ. No one is saved by the law but by grace alone. Emphasize to the kids you teach that, while the Bible does give us plenty of instruction for how to live, sinners are made right with God only by the grace of Jesus. Salvation is a gift. To receive this gift, Jesus is all we need.

# The BIBLE Story

## The Jerusalem Council

Acts 15

Paul and Barnabas had been sharing the gospel with many people—including Gentiles. But some people in the church began to teach that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they first followed some of the same rules the Jews followed.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed, and the church leaders decided to meet in Jerusalem to talk about whether or not the Gentiles needed to obey the law of Moses. After a long discussion, Peter stood up and said to the group, “Brothers, God chose me to tell the good news to the Gentiles. They heard the good news, and they believed. God accepted them and gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did for us.

“Why are you trying to make salvation harder for them? We know that we cannot obey God’s laws perfectly. No, we believe that the Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way—by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”

Everyone in the group was quiet as Paul and Barnabas told them about all the things God had done through them when they were with the Gentiles. Then another apostle, James, spoke up. He pointed out that the words of the prophets showed that God

wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles.

“I think we should not cause trouble for the Gentiles who have trusted in Jesus. Instead, let’s write them a letter telling them the things they should not do.”

So the church leaders wrote a letter to the Gentile believers explaining some things they should not do now that they were believers.

The leaders chose Judas and Silas to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter. The believers in Antioch were encouraged by the letter. Judas and Silas stayed with them for a while, and then they went home. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch where they taught believers and told other people the good news about Jesus.

*Christ Connection: The church leaders met in Jerusalem to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or is something more needed? The early church agreed that because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.*

### Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Dramatic conversation:** As you tell the story, vary the tone of your voice as you speak for Peter.
- **Call for active listening:** Challenge kids to listen carefully and stomp their feet any time they hear the words *Gentile* or *Gentiles*.

## INTRODUCE the Story



**SESSION TITLE:** The Jerusalem Council

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Acts 15

**STORY POINT:** Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Acts 4:12

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

### Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about a time they had to work to earn a reward and a time they received something good as a gift. How did they feel each time?

### Activity page (5 minutes)

• "Council Conundrum" activity page,  
1 per kid  
• pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Council Conundrum" on the activity page. Kids should circle every fourth word in the paragraph and read the circled words in order to reveal the answer to the question.

**SAY** • In today's Bible story, we will hear about some people who asked this question: Can a person be saved by faith alone, or is something more needed? Some wondered if people needed to follow Jewish laws to be accepted by God. Let's find out what happened.

### Session starter (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** All we need

Distribute pencils and paper to the kids. Challenge them to draw any picture of their choosing without picking up their

pencil.

Allow enough time for all kids to complete their drawings. Direct volunteers to hold up their drawings and challenge the group to guess what they have drawn.

**SAY** • Great job! You were able to create a picture with only one line. That was all you needed to make a great picture! Today, we are going to talk about a time when church leaders met together to discuss what is needed for salvation. Was one thing needed or more than one?

### OPTION 2: Let's discuss

Before the session, prepare index cards with questions for each group to discuss. Examples:

- *What type of storm is worse, a hurricane or a tornado?*
- *Should kids have to do chores?*
- *Which type of pet is best?*
- *What time should kids go to bed?*

Form small groups of three or four kids. Prompt each group to discuss a question. After a few minutes, invite kids to share their group's answer and explain their choice. If time allows, invite other groups to argue for or against a choice.

**SAY** • Today, we will learn about a time when church leaders and believers met together to discuss a very important question. They were trying to agree on whether a person can be saved by faith alone or whether something else is needed.

### Transition to teach the story

• index cards  
• marker or pen

**LOW  
PREP**

• paper  
• pencils

## TEACH the Story



**SESSION TITLE:** The Jerusalem Council

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Acts 15

**STORY POINT:** Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Acts 4:12

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

· room decorations  
· Theme Background  
Slide (optional)

**Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Simulate a gymnasium by arranging gym mats, a mini trampoline, weights and barbells (artificial or real), and anything else that might be found in a gym. Consider hanging posters from local school athletic teams around the room.

### Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

### Introduce the session (3 minutes)

*[Leader enters wearing athletic clothes and a whistle. He or she is carrying a clipboard.]*

· leader attire  
· clipboard

**LEADER** • Welcome to our gym, everyone! I'm Coach *[your name]*, and this is where our athletes practice to become the best they can be. No matter what sport they play, all athletes have to work on their core strength.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Your core serves as the foundation for your body's movements. If you have a weak core, all other areas of your body suffer. That's why we spend time training with weights *[motion to or pick up weights]* and doing lots of exercises to strengthen our core.

Did you know that it is important to have a strong foundation when it comes to faith and knowing what we believe? Today we will learn about a time when the early church leaders met together to figure out the answer to one of the core truths of Christianity: Can a person be saved by faith alone or is something else needed?

### Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • For the next few weeks as we meet together, we will be considering the question, *What is the Bible about?* The Bible gives us a firm foundation for our faith, so we must know what the Bible is all about. As we study God's Word together, we will discover that *the Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.*

### Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

**LEADER** • After Jesus' death and resurrection, He commanded His followers to spread the good news of the gospel all around the world. The disciples and other early believers were faithful to follow Jesus' command. They traveled to new places, leading others to Jesus. As the gospel spread and the early church was established, church leaders encouraged believers in their faith.

People like Paul, Peter, and Barnabas traveled to early churches and wrote letters to teach them the truths of the gospel and to address problems that came up as the churches grew.

- Bibles
- "The Jerusalem Council" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 15. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Jerusalem Council."

### LEADER • Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

This truth is foundational to our faith. It is one of the beliefs that separates Christianity from other religions. There is nothing extra needed for salvation. Jesus is the only way to salvation and eternal life.

There is never anything that we could do to earn salvation. It is the free gift of God. People will never be good enough or follow enough rules to save themselves. God offers this gift of salvation to all people through Jesus' death and resurrection.

When God commands His children to live a certain way, we aren't obeying as part of an effort to earn God's favor. Instead, we respond to the gift of salvation with joyful obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. We live with joy and gratitude because we were once dead in sin, but God has made us alive in Christ!

Our lives should show the world that we live for Jesus. God will give believers grace to grow in relationship with Him and be sanctified, or changed to be more like Jesus. Christians are representatives of the Lord on earth. Our attitudes and actions can help others see that we are followers of Jesus. Our actions and words should honor and glorify God.

## Christ connection

**LEADER** • We have been talking about the importance of having a firm foundation when it comes to our faith.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 165 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

There are some things we must know in order to provide this strong foundation. The church leaders met in Jerusalem to answer a tough question: Can a person be saved by faith alone or is something more needed? The early church agreed that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.

## Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 33, Session 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how they know if something they hear about Jesus is true. Guide them to discuss when and where they can read the Bible for themselves.

• "Unit 33, Session 1" questions from kids video



## Missions moment (3 minutes)

### LEADER • Salvation comes only through faith in

**Jesus.** That's the reason we want to tell everybody around the world about Jesus. Without Him, they cannot have eternal life. William Carey, a missionary hundreds of years ago, wanted to make sure that people in India heard about Jesus.

Play the missions video. Then pray, thanking God for missionaries who first brought the gospel to new countries.

• "What William Carey Left" missions video

## Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Acts 4:12.

### LEADER • Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.

Only Jesus lived a sinless life and was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. We can never earn salvation on our own through behaving a certain way or doing certain things. Salvation is the free gift of God

• Key Passage Poster  
• "In No One Else (Acts 4:12)" song

offered to us because of His grace and love.  
Lead kids in singing "In No One Else (Acts 4:12)."

### Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 13:5-6.

**LEADER** • Out of His mercy and grace, God has given us salvation through Jesus and eternal life. Let's thank Him for this free gift of love that He offers to us! Rejoice in the gift of salvation! Let's sing.  
Sing together "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy."

### Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

**LEADER** • Lord, thank You for the free gift of salvation You give us through Your Son. Thank You that while we were held captive by sin, You rescued us. Thank You for providing everything we need to be saved. You are all we need. May we live our lives in a way that pleases You. In Jesus' name, amen.

### Dismiss to apply the story

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10, 13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

• "Come, Ye Sinners,  
Poor and Needy"  
song  
• Bible

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

## LOW PREP

• dry erase board or poster board  
• marker

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

map. Tape a piece of yarn connecting the two countries.

**SAY** • William Carey was a missionary who left his home in England to go to India. He wanted the people there to hear about Jesus and be able to read the Bible in their own languages. *What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.*

Encourage kids to tape a piece of yarn leading from their location to a country in the world where they might like to visit. Ask kids why they chose that country.

**SAY** • Wherever God leads you in the future—even to another country—you can be a witness for Him.

### OPTION 2: Rules, rules

Before the session, make a list of rules on a dry erase board or poster board. List tasks kids must complete to win the game. Consider these, being sure to include the first one and the last one:

1. Read all the instructions.
2. Run in place for 10 seconds.
3. Turn in a circle three times.
4. Trade shoes with a friend.
5. Find something blue and hold it in your left hand.
6. Do nothing on the list but give the leader a high five to win the game.

Challenge kids to see who can finish first. Allow time for kids to work through the list and eventually discover that the only thing they have to do to win is come to you.

**SAY** • Wow! When did you realize you don't need to try to do many things to win, but you really only had to do one thing on this list to win? In today's Bible story, we saw that many people wanted to add a set of rules

or extra requirements to salvation. Paul and Barnabas disagreed, and they taught the truth about salvation. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He alone is all we need to be saved.

### Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for being the God of salvation and providing all that we need in Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Nothing More, Nothing Less" on the activity page. Kids should circle the true statements about what is needed for salvation and cross out the statements that are false.

• pencils  
• Journal Page  
• "Nothing More, Nothing Less" activity page,  
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.