

Use Week of:

Unit 33 • Session 1 The Jerusalem Council

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Acts 15

STORY POINT:

Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.

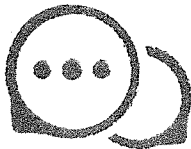
KEY PASSAGE:

Acts 4:12

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

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

INTRODUCE THE STORY
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TEACH THE STORY
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EXPERIENCE THE STORY
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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 preschoolers 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 teaching people—Jews and Gentiles, or non-Jews,—about Jesus. Many people believed, and God’s church was growing.

But some of the people in the church began saying that Gentiles could only be saved if they first followed the same rules as the Jews.

Paul and Barnabas knew this was wrong. They had a meeting with other church leaders to talk about what was true.

Peter stood up and told the leaders about the Gentiles, the non-Jews, who had believed the good news about Jesus. God had given them the Holy Spirit!

Peter said that Jews could not obey God’s law perfectly, so why should they tell non-Jews to obey perfectly? **Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way: by God’s grace.**

Everyone listened as Paul and Barnabas talked about how they had seen God save Jews and Gentiles too. Then

James showed how the words of the prophets showed that God wanted to save both Jews and Gentiles. **This was God’s plan all along.**

So the church leaders decided to write a letter to the Gentile

believers. The letter told the believers what they should not do now that they were believers.

Paul and Barnabas delivered the letter with Judas and Silas, and the believers were encouraged.

Christ Connection: The church leaders met to answer a hard question: Can someone be saved by faith alone? Yes! The early church agreed that Jesus is all we need. Anyone who trusts in Him will be saved.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Meet in a group:** Tell preschoolers you all are meeting in a group today. Pretend you are talking to them as part of the Jerusalem council as you tell the story.
- **Draw it:** Draw a church on a large sheet of paper or dry erase board. Write a *J* for Jews and a *G* for Gentiles inside the church. Point to each letter as you say the word while telling the Bible story. Emphasize God’s plan that both be part of the church.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Jerusalem Council

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 15

STORY POINT: Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 4:12

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

Welcome time

- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- "Find the Mail" activity page, 1 per child
- crayons or markers

Invite preschoolers to find and circle the ten pieces of mail in the picture.

SAY • You found the mail hidden in the picture. Do you like to get mail? In our Bible story today, some church leaders met together to talk about God's plan to save people. When they finished, they wrote a letter to some of Jesus' followers. Their letter may have looked like a scroll. Listen to the story to find out what they wrote.

List rules people follow

- dry erase board, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper
- dry erase marker or chalk

Invite children to help you make a list of rules people follow. Name places that are familiar to children, such as the playground, preschool or daycare, church, and home. Choose two or three. Write rules for each place on a dry erase board, chalkboard, or large sheet of paper.

SAY • The Jewish people had many rules! They had hundreds of rules! People who are not Jewish are called Gentiles. When some Gentile people starting following Jesus, some of the Jewish believers thought the Gentile believers should follow their rules too. Could you follow hundreds of rules? Listen to what happened in our Bible story.

Play a follow the rules game

Write names of places in your room (door, window, chairs, puzzle table) on strips of paper. Place the papers in a gift bag or basket. Write ways to move (jump, skip, walk backwards, wave your hands) on another set of paper strips. Place those strips in another gift bag. Invite preschoolers to take turns pulling a paper out of each bag. Guide them to "follow the rules" and move to that place and back in the way described.

- gift bags, 2
- marker
- small pieces of paper

SAY • You followed the rules for our game. In today's Bible story, some of the Jewish believers thought the Gentile believers should follow Jewish rules. They even said Gentile believers needed to obey those rules to be saved from sin! Do you think they were right? Listen to the Bible story to find out.

Transition to teach the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, turn the lights off and on, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Encourage children to listen to directions as they move to Bible study. Tell them to walk. Then tell them to jump. Turn around twice or tiptoe. Thank them for listening to directions.

- countdown video (optional)

TEACH the Story



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

- Bible
- bookmark
- Giant Timeline

Introduce the Bible story

Place a bookmark at Acts 15 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • The Book of Acts tells us about what happened after Jesus went to heaven. The disciples and the first missionaries began to tell people about Jesus. We know the stories in the Bible are true and help us know about God and His plan.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

SAY • Many people believed in Jesus, and God's church was growing. Then some people began to say that the new believers had to follow the same rules as the Jews. The church leaders met and agreed that Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way: by God's grace. **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved.

Practice the key passage

Place the key passage marker at Acts 4:12. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Create motions for preschoolers to use as they say the key passage. Use the key passage song video for inspiration. Be sure to emphasize the word "no" in your actions.

SAY • People in the church began to say that the Gentiles could only be saved if they followed the same rules as the Jews. Our key passage reminds us that we are saved when we believe in Jesus. Only Jesus can save us because He never sinned and He died for us. Anyone who believes in Him will be saved.

Sing the key passage song, "Salvation in No One Else," and the theme song, "The Gospel Is for Everyone."

- Bible
- Key Passage Marker
- Key Passage Poster
- "Salvation in No One Else (Acts 4:12)" song
- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Listen to our big picture question. *What is the Bible about? The Bible is about God's plan to save people through Jesus.* Remember all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells of God's plan to save people by sending Jesus. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved.

- Big Picture Question Poster



Missions moment

SAY • William Carey was a missionary who lived a long time ago. He lived in the country of England but wanted to make sure that people in India heard that **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** Show the missions video and pray, thanking God for missionaries.

- "What William Carey Left" video

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE The Story



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LOW PREP

Actions:

- keeping my room clean
- telling people about Jesus
- being nice to my brothers and sisters
- obeying my mom and dad
- praying every day
- being quiet while an adult is talking
- going to church
- giving food to people who don't have any

Jump for Jesus

Invite preschoolers to squat down. Explain that you will call out an action and ask if doing that action can save them. Preschoolers should say, "No," while remaining in a squat. But when you say, "Can Jesus save you?" preschoolers should jump up and shout, "Yes! Jesus alone!" Use the actions in the margin or create your own. Intersperse "Can Jesus save you?" throughout, as you name the actions.

SAY • Those are all great actions to do. God is honored and life works best when we do those things, but they cannot save us from sin. Only Jesus can save us because He is the only one who obeyed God perfectly. **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** Anyone who trusts in Him will be saved.

Sing a song

Lead preschoolers to sing the following lyrics to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?":

"Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Gentiles
Who is saved, who is saved?
All who trust in Jesus, all who trust in Jesus
By God's grace, by God's grace."

SAY • The church leaders met to answer a hard question: Can someone be saved by faith alone? Yes! God's plan

all along was to save Jews and Gentiles. The early church agreed that **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** Anyone who trusts in Him will be saved.

Make a people collage

Cut out a large cross from poster board. You may also tape together several sheets of paper to form a large paper cross. Guide children to find pictures of people in magazines or catalogs, cut them out, and glue them on the cross. Cut out people pictures before the session for younger preschoolers. Encourage children to work together to cover the cross with diverse people pictures. Display the cross in your room.

SAY • The Bible tells us that Jesus loves all people and that everyone who believes in Jesus will be saved. The church leaders met together and agreed that **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** We can choose to do good things and love others, but we are saved by trusting in Jesus, not because of the good things we do or the rules we follow.

- poster board
- magazines or catalogs
- blunt-tipped scissors
- glue stick
- paper (optional)
- tape (optional)

Tip: Consider finding images to print online if magazines or catalogs lack diversity.

Build church buildings

Print and cut apart the "Places of Worship" cards. Add a picture of your church building or where your church meets if possible. Invite preschoolers to sort the pictures into places of worship from today and Bible times. Comment that in today's Bible story, churches were just beginning. People may have met in homes, outside, and in other places. Name churches in your area that meet in non-traditional places such as schools, movie theaters, or other buildings.

Set out a variety of blocks, such as wooden blocks, cardboard blocks, or interlocking bricks. Encourage children work together to build a church building. Pray,

- "Places of Worship" printable
- scissors (adult use)
- blocks
- photo of your church (if available)

thanking God for your church and other Bible-believing churches in your area.

SAY • God's church was growing. God was adding both Jewish and Gentile believers to His church. Churches were meeting together in many different places. The church leaders came together in the city of Jerusalem to talk about what was true. **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.** That was true then, and it is still true today. God's church is still growing, and churches meet together in all kinds of different places all around the world.



Make a passport

Explain that a passport is an official booklet a person needs to go into different countries. Show preschoolers your passport if possible. Explain the different pages, and show them places you have traveled.

Give each child a sheet of paper. Guide them to fold their paper in fourths to create a "passport." Invite preschoolers to decorate the outside of their passports and draw a picture of themselves on the inside. Invite children to line up with their passports and pretend they are going to another country. Greet them and add a stamp or sticker to their passports.

SAY • When missionaries travel, they often go through an airport and get a special stamp in their passports. When William Carey traveled to India, he didn't take an airplane. They had not been invented yet. He took a boat. Maybe one day you will travel to another country by airplane or by boat. Let's pray that wherever we go, we will tell others that **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.**

Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Serve a small cup of fruit flavored O-shaped cereal to each child. Encourage children to follow a rule and make a pattern with their cereal, such as red-yellow-red-yellow. Suggest that while making a pattern with cereal is fun, we can eat it without making patterns and following rules too. Comment that some people thought that Gentiles could only be saved if they followed the Jewish rules. The church leaders agreed **Jesus is all we need to be saved from sin.**

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. What are people who are not Jews called? (*Gentiles*)
2. Whom did Paul and Barnabas meet with to talk about what was true? (*Other church leaders*)
3. What were some people saying the Gentile believers needed to do? (*follow the same rules as the Jews*)
4. How are Jesus and Gentiles saved? (*by God's grace*)
5. ***What is the Bible about? The Bible is about God's plan to save people through Jesus.***

Transition

When preschoolers finish their snack, they may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert
- paper cups and napkins
- snack food
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- fruit flavored O-shaped cereal (optional)

- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Key Passage Poster
- Big Picture Question Poster
- "Salvation in No One Else (Acts 4:12)" song
- "The Gospel Is for Everyone" song
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers