

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.

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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.”

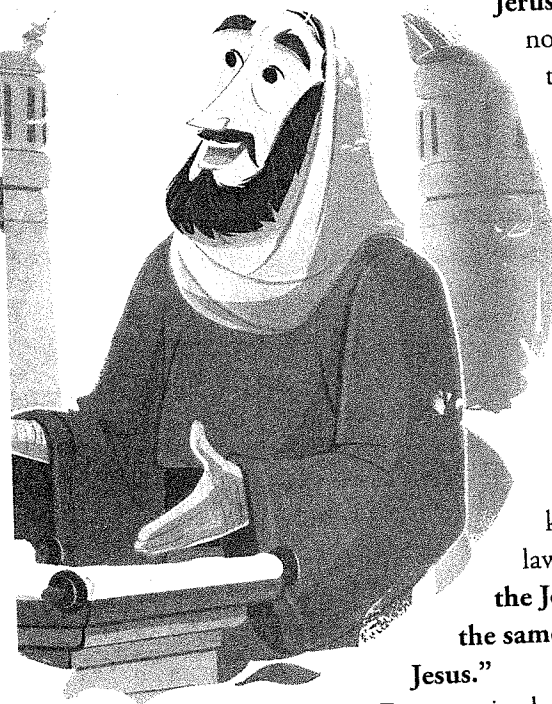
So the church leaders wrote a letter to the Gentile believers explaining some things they should not do now that they were believers.

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 raise their hand 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 share about a time they received money. Did they earn it for chores, or was it a gift? What did they do with their money?

SAY • You can receive money in two main ways: earning it with work, or being given the money as a gift. Salvation isn't like that. There's only one way to get it, and that's as a gift from God through Jesus. We can't earn salvation no matter how hard we may try. Today we will learn about the early church making sure to teach that only faith can save, not works.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Who Can Rescue?" activity page. For each scenario, circle the choice for who can rescue the person in trouble.

SAY • Depending on what kind of trouble you are in, you might need a different person to save you. Sin is our biggest problem, and only Jesus can save us from that problem.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Peanut butter plus

Provide each kid with a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them to list every ingredient they think could make a plain peanut butter sandwich even better. After a few minutes, allow the kids to share their ideas. Did anyone list something that no one else thought of?

SAY • A peanut butter sandwich can definitely be better when you add things to it, such as bananas, jelly, or honey. Salvation is not like that. We cannot add anything to our salvation. It is a perfect gift from God, and if we try to add to it, all it will do is mess it up so it's no longer true salvation. We'll learn more about that soon.

OPTION 2: Burden bearers

Form two groups of kids. Tell the first group to do 15 squats, and tell the second group to do 15 squats each while holding something heavy, such as a large bag of rice, a thick textbook, or a medicine ball.

SAY • Doing those squats with a heavy weight is much harder than doing them without the burden. Today we will learn about why Christians are no longer required to follow all of the Old Testament laws. The church understood that the Law caused an unnecessary burden since Jesus established the new covenant.

Transition to teach the story

**LOW
PREP**

• paper
• pencil

• heavy items, such as
large bags of rice,
thick textbooks, or
medicine balls

• "Who Can Rescue?"
activity page,
1 per kid
• pencils or markers

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: Decorate your space to look like a gymnasium. Place padded tumbling mats on the floor or around the walls. You may choose to arrange strength training equipment somewhere on stage, or display the theme background slide.

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 attire

[Leader enters wearing a modest cheerleading uniform.]

LEADER • Hey everyone! Welcome to our gym. This is where we train to be the best cheer squad in the state. Being a cheerleader is tough work. It takes lots of strength, incredible flexibility, amazing endurance, skillful coordination, and unbelievable mental fortitude. If you think the cheerleader's job is just to shout some happy chants while the real athletes play sports on the field, you couldn't be more wrong!

In fact, if you stick around the next few weeks, I'll explain just a few of the ways cheerleading requires just as much athleticism as any other sport. For

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

example, to be a cheerleader, you have to be able to lift up your cheer team partners, and sometimes even toss them into the air! And have you ever tried doing a handstand without strong arms? It doesn't go well.

You know, thinking about the heavy lifting required to be a cheerleader makes me think of our Bible story. It's about a time when the early church got together to figure out what parts of the Old Testament laws were still needed to be saved. Spoiler alert: Jesus did the "heavy lifting" for us!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we get too into the story, let's set up a good big picture question to guide our study. For the next few weeks, let's ask ourselves this: ***What is the Bible about?*** It may seem hard to answer, as the Bible has lots of different stories and lots of great lessons to learn. Even so, there's one story that goes through the whole Bible, though it's made up of many different books. I bet some of you know what that story is, too.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • If you said the story of Jesus, you're exactly right. All of the different stories in Scripture work together, almost like pieces of a puzzle, to tell one story about God's desire to show His glory by saving us. Over the last few weeks, we've talked a lot about the early church.

After Jesus returned to heaven, His followers got to

work spreading the good news about His life, death and resurrection. Many people believed, and despite the religious leaders trying to stop Christians, they kept spreading the gospel. As the church grew, they encountered various problems, like false teachers and confusion about what Jesus taught. The church leaders sometimes had to meet to make sure everyone was on the same page and teaching the true gospel. That's what our story today is about. It's called "The Jerusalem Council."

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 • The Old Testament laws were very important to God's people while they waited for the Messiah. The law showed people that they needed a savior. They couldn't obey God perfectly, and because God is perfectly holy, that meant their weak attempts at obedience would never be enough.

If you imagine sin as a broken bone, the Law was like an X-ray machine. It showed the problem, but it couldn't actually heal the brokenness. That's why Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and died the death we deserve. **Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.**

Some leaders in the early church weren't sure about that though. Occasionally they would tell Gentile believers that they needed to obey the full Old Testament law to be saved. But at the Jerusalem council, they discussed things and realized that

the Law cannot save anyone. But that didn't mean the Law was useless. The Law still contains many instructions that help us live for God, such as the Ten Commandments, but obedience without faith won't save anyone.

Christ connection

LEADER • We need a firm foundation for our faith. That foundation is Jesus. 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 the truth about Jesus. Guide them to discuss how to use their Bibles to find the truth.



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 faith in Jesus.

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

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

• "Unit 33, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

• "What William Carey Left" missions video

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

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

together Acts 4:12. Then sing the key passage song.

LEADER • This key passage comes from one of Peter's first sermons. The Pharisees wanted to force believers to stop preaching about Jesus, but Peter and John refused. Peter explained that **Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.**

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • There's no one who can save us other than Jesus. Thankfully, He is ready to accept anyone who comes to Him in faith. We are all sinners, and we are all invited to come to Him.

Sing together "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You that Jesus will save all who have faith. Help us to love You and trust in Jesus for salvation. Give us courage to preach the gospel daily, and wisdom to obey You in love. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

"Come, Ye Sinners,
Poor and Needy"
song

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.

APPLY 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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Hide the key passage poster somewhere in the room. Encourage the kids to find it by playing "Hot or cold." As the kids approach the poster, tell them they are getting warmer. If they wander away from the poster, tell them they are getting cooler. For added fun, consider using phrases like "you're freezing in the snow" or "you're boiling in lava" if they get extremely far from or close to the poster. When the kids find the poster, read the key passage together.

SAY • This key passage helps us understand the truth of the gospel. No one can save us but Jesus Christ alone. Some people in the early church thought that God's law was still part of salvation, but at the Jerusalem Council, they realized that **salvation comes only through faith in Jesus**, not through obeying the law.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

• Bibles, 1 per kid
• Story Point Poster
• Small Group Timeline and Map Set
(005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Acts 15. Ask which division Acts is a part of and who wrote it. (*New Testament History; Luke*) Use the New Testament Israel Map to show the kids where Jerusalem is. (*H4*) Remind the kids that the early church started there and grew outward.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Who gathered to decide if new believers had to fully obey the Old Testament law? (*the apostles and elders, Acts 15:6*)
2. Who explained that Gentiles received the Holy Spirit? (*Peter, Acts 15:8*)
3. How are people saved from sin? (*by grace through faith, Acts 15:9-11*)
4. Why can't we be saved by obedience to the Law?
Guide the kids to discuss the ways our hearts are dead in sin. We cannot obey God perfectly because our hearts lead us astray. We needed Jesus to come and obey on our behalf, die in our place, and rise again to defeat death.
5. Why is it important to obey God if obedience doesn't save us? *Remind kids that obedience is a sign of our love for God. Help them see that God saves us so that we are able to obey, not so that we can continue to disobey. When we have faith, the Holy Spirit changes us so that we want to obey God.*
6. How can we learn more about God and how to obey Him? *Guide the kids to discuss the Bible's role as our perfect source of truth. Help them understand that it teaches us what is true about God and about ourselves. Talk to them about ways to study Scripture and the importance of reading the Bible daily.*

SAY • **Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus.** The early church had some members who were a bit unsure about this, so the leaders met together to discuss. Peter, James, Paul, and Barnabas all helped everyone see that faith is all we need to be saved. After we are saved, the Holy Spirit helps us obey.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

• world map
• yarn
• tape

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

**LOW
PREP**

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: From England to India
Ask volunteers to find England and India on a world 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—whether down the street or to another country—you can be a witness for Him.

OPTION 2: Chores charades

Invite the kids to take turns acting out their most disliked chore. Allow the other kids to guess which chore they are pretending to do, and then allow the actor to explain why he dislikes that chore so much. After each kid, allow a few minutes to discuss why that chore is likely still important to complete.

SAY • The Old Testament Law likely felt like a chore to many of the believers. There were lots of details and technicalities that would have been hard to keep track of. However, just because the law cannot save us doesn't mean that we shouldn't still obey certain parts of it.

God's law helps us see how God wants us to live.

When we have faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in us and gives us the power to obey God. We cannot earn salvation through obedience, but when we love God we will want to obey Him. **Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus**, but that doesn't mean we get to live however we want to after we believe the gospel.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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.