



Part 4: Simple Access
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Highlights from Acts 1-14

- The “ekklesia” begins as a movement – and actually moves
- Thousands are saved and baptized in the powerful name of Jesus
- The church touches thousands with their love and boldness
- Persecution breaks out against the church
- Stephen becomes the second martyr of the church
- Saul persecutes the church but then is saved by Jesus (name changes to Paul)
- Paul begins his missionary effort and the church continues to grow

**20 years later, the Early Church is confronted
by a question that is still being asked today:**

Who gets in, and what do they have to do
to become a part of the church?

An Early Church Answer

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.” – Acts 15:5

Modern Translation: In order to be a part of the church, you have to
have surgery and follow 613 laws from the Old Testament.

Peter’s Appeal

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

Believe



Behave



Belong

vs.

Belong



Believe



Behave

James’ (the Brother of Jesus) Appeal

It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. – Acts 15:19

(Continues on back)

How do we make it difficult for people who are turning to God?

- We create man-made rules and expectations that disqualify people
- We forget the price Jesus paid to save us
- We reinforce the idea of “us” and “them”
- We exchange Grace for Law because it’s cleaner and easier on those inside the church

Three Simple Decisions We Must Make as a Church

- 1) To be bold in our inclusion of people who are far from God
- 2) If we are going to make a mistake, we must err on the side of grace
- 3) We have to refuse to protect our past at the cost of advancing into God’s future

Next Steps

It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God (Acts 15:19). Here are two specific ways you can follow James’ advice:

Help with Trunk-or-Treat. This annual event is one of the ways we make it easy for unchurched people to experience who we are as a church. Trunk-or-Treat draws thousands of kids and parents from the community and sends a clear message that we welcome them as they are. Take a look at the green insert in today’s program for opportunities to serve, and respond today.

Volunteer with Guest Services. When an unchurched person finally crosses the threshold into CTK, the way we treat them is vital to their view of Christians, the Church, and even God himself. Creating a welcome atmosphere and providing clear information to newcomers is another way we make it easy for those who are turning to God. Check out the green insert for opportunities to serve on weekends, and respond today.

Small Group Questions



- 1) How do you decide who gets included in your friendship circle? What criteria do you use to determine who is in and who is out?
- 2) Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. Why is judging people based on their exterior so dangerous?
- 3) What kind of man-made rules have you experienced when it comes to being accepted into the church?
- 4) Do you have concerns about choosing Grace over Law? Can you think of any examples from the life of Jesus that might show you how he handled this dilemma? (A couple hints: the calling of Matthew; Zacchaeus; the adulterous woman.)
- 5) What is the biggest spiritual lesson you have learned in the Simple series?
- 6) How can we pray for you tonight?