

January 8-14

For personal devotion: Acts 15:1-30

Read this passage multiple times throughout the week and use these questions to begin a time of reflection. It might be helpful to consider only one question each day to help sharpen your focus:

- *Take a minute or two to imagine yourself in this story. Specifically, can you empathize with Paul and Barnabas? How do you think you'd be feeling? What would be your strongest arguments for change? How does this emotion compare to today's debate?*
- *Again, imagine yourself in the story, this time as those who wanted to uphold the Jewish law. Can you empathize with this group? What emotions would you be feeling? What would have been your strongest arguments for keeping things the same? How does this compare to the debate today?*
- *Look closely at the way these two groups treated each other. What is one thing about their relationships that you would want to duplicate in our conversation today? Is there anything you would not want to duplicate?*
- *Verse 4 is worth noting. "When they came to Jerusalem they were welcomed by the church..." Paul and Barnabas come to Jerusalem carrying a hornets nest. They are challenging a millennia of theology and yet they are welcomed [in Greek: received with delight]. How can you receive with delight those who you don't agree with on this issue? Be specific.*

For personal devotion: Apostles' or Nicene Creed

Reflect on one or both of these ancient statements that outline essentials Christians have held for millennia. What phrase stands out to you? What challenges you? What provides encouragement?

Valuable reading this week:

This week and next we'll be providing resources to expand and challenge you. We are not advocating that you should agree with everything in these pieces — but we do believe that they are fair, balanced and written by people who are looking to bring the Body of Christ together, not apart. Our hope is that they will inform, challenge and push you to think deeply about this issue.

1. Go to: <http://www.respectfulconversation.net/>
 - Scroll down to **Topic #2**. Read both essays. If at all possible, also read each response. It. Is. Worth. Your. Time.
2. To the organization's credit, the Gay Christian Network publishes two thoughtful, opposing viewpoints of this issue on their website. Read both. <https://www.gaychristian.net/greatdebate.php>