

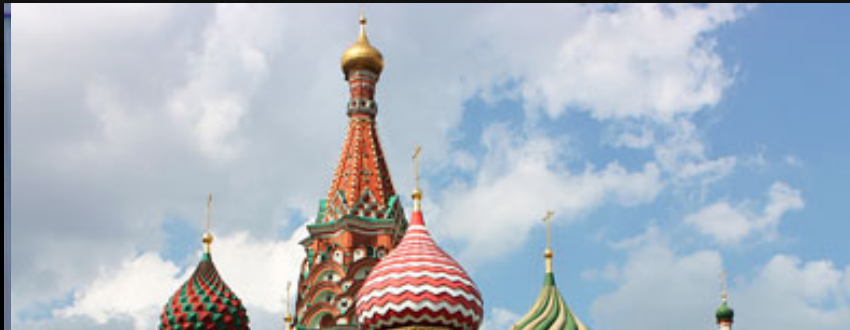
MAKE IT EASY

to come to God

Acts 15:1-21



WHICH ONE IS NOT A CHURCH?



WHERE CAN A PERSON BE SAVED FROM SIN?



BACKGROUND

- **Acts 10-11**
 - Peter's vision
 - Cornelius' household salvation
 - **Names**
 - Simeon = pure Hebrew form of Simon, i.e., Peter
 - James = Jesus' brother, author of the Book of James
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ACTS 15:1-5

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. ³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.”

ACTS 15:6-12

⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”¹² And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

ACTS 15:13-21

¹³ After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. ¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

¹⁶ “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things ¹⁸ known from of old.’

¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰ but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. ²¹ For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

STORY

- The dispute
 - Peter recalls God's message.
 - James calls for compromise.
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REQUIREMENTS

- **No food sacrificed to idols**
- **No meat of strangled animals or blood**
- **No sexual immorality**



RATIONALE

- **Make peace in the Church**

- For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues
- Laws of Noah

- **Sexual immorality**

- Basis: love of husband or wife
- Trust / roots vs betrayal / devastation



MAIN POINT

- we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God. (*ESV*)
- we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. (*NIV*)
- Make it easy for people to come to God. (*paraphrase*)



WHY?

- **God loves the world!**
 - **We should, too.**
 - *II Pet 3:8* ...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance
 - **Charles Peace at his execution**
 - Sir, if I believed what you ... say that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees ..., just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!
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ADDITION = SUBTRACTION



ADDITION: ANY UNNECESSARY REQUIREMENTS

- **Galatians 2:11-14**

- But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- **Christianity adapts and transforms**

- **No** need to abandon family, culture, traditions

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TODAY?

1. “They have to come to our church.”
2. We do: We’re not going to them.
 - Beliefs we borrow from the world
 - Confusion between gift and command
 - Inadequate goals and training
3. False perceptions of us in the world



THEY HAVE TO COME TO OUR CHURCH

- **Introduce Jesus, not the church**
 - SJ (Hermie at CityTeam): 85% won't come if invited.
 - Some people like Jesus but hate the institutional church.
 - Go to their turf.
 - Start with Jesus.
- **We still need church.**
 - Where our kids were discipled and remain
 - Where we are fed deeply

Go!

WHAT WE DO MATTERS AS MUCH AS WHAT WE BELIEVE.

- Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit
- Church in Acts was led by the Holy Spirit
- Not only theology but also obedience
 - At *work* we refine management, communication, manufacturing methods.
 - At *church* we should not assume any focus on method “is manipulation.”
 - ✓ Improving ourselves is not sin.
 - ✓ The Holy Spirit leads both in the planned and the spontaneous.

Choose a
method and
GO!

BELIEFS WE BORROW FROM THE WORLD

- I have to “earn the right” to talk about Jesus
 - Fact: Jesus already earned the right (Mat 28:18).
 - The longer we wait, the harder it gets to share the Gospel.
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CONFUSION BETWEEN GIFT AND COMMAND

- **“I don’t have the gift of evangelism.”**
 - Don’t confuse specialized gift (e.g., teaching) with obedience to universal command (e.g., love).
 - Truth: evangelism is hard work—not easy for anyone.
 - We do it because we want to obey Jesus.
 - Reward: Joy when one life is saved!



THE COMMAND IS ALL OVER THE NEW TESTAMENT

- **I'm a disciple.**
 - Disciple is follower as well as learner.
 - So I should obey the commands Jesus gave His disciples.
 - **John 15:26-27**
 - When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And ***you also must testify***, for you have been with me from the beginning.
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OUR GOALS ARE INADEQUATE

- **Jesus commanded: “Make disciples”**
 - Spiritual conversations are a means to an end.
- **But the goal is unattainable!**
 - All things are possible in Christ.
 - Pray, persevere, depend on Him
 - Training: make it less difficult to obey!
- **End vision: Entire world hears the Gospel (Mat 24:14)**

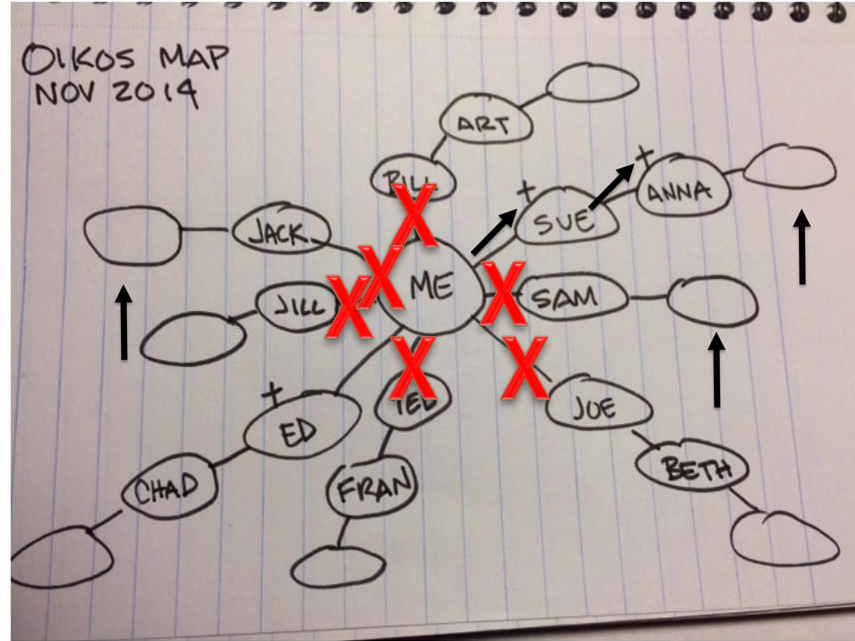


INTENTIONAL JESUS-CENTERED DISCUSSION

- **Disciples are made through intentional, Jesus-centered discussion.**
 - They have to own their own beliefs.
 - They have to discover the truth. Ask simple questions.
 - Listening is more effective than teaching (in our context).
 - **Repeated sessions focused on Scripture**
 - **Life counsel originating from Scripture**
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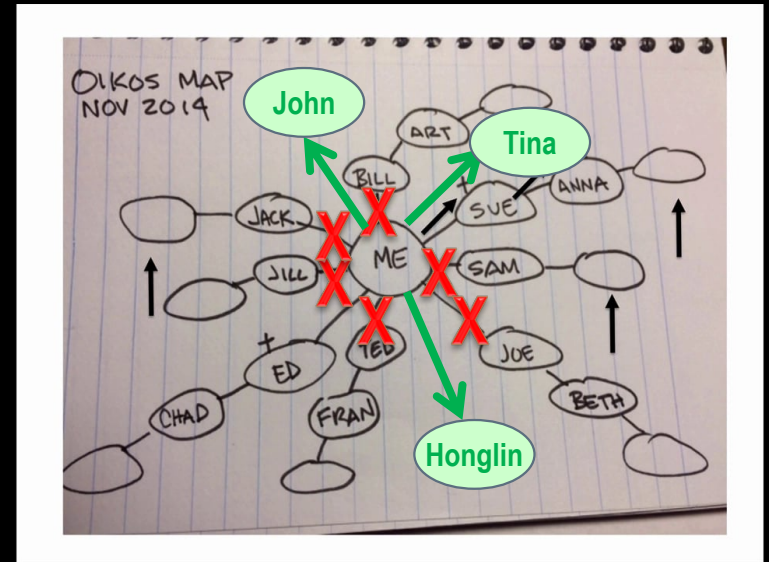
NATURAL PATH FOR THE GOSPEL

- *Oikos*: network of relationships
- What if my *oikos* is no longer responding to the Gospel?



WE'RE NO LONGER WITNESSING

- Our *Oikos* is stale
 - Revisit your list of friends, relatives, colleagues: missed anyone?
 - Go meet more people
 - Spread the seed widely (Mark 4:1-20)
 - ✓ Mark 1:38
 - ✓ Rom 15:23



MAKE IT EASY

- **Nothing fancy**
 - Just the Bible and people
 - Always reproducible (t4t)
- **Priesthood of all believers (even new ones)**
 - Baptize quickly
 - Release disciples and grant immediate authority to reproduce themselves
- **Rely on the Holy Spirit**
 - Be prepared for mess and learning

Mt. 5: 30-32	My wife	I will
And if your rt. hand causes U to sin, cut it off + throw it away. It is better 4 U to lose 1 part of your body than 4 your whole body to go into hell.	Even if your eye or rt. arm were t. cause of U violating Gods cmdts., you're better off w/o them. You'd rather go to hvn missing appendages than to be entirely condemned 4ever.	sacr. my laziness, secur., comfort, 4X to adv. t. K&F.
It has been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must	In t. OT Moses wrote that a L has to issue formal	-go out w/ David in today in ded. to Yes - obey inspite of fear cut off t. flesh + G2

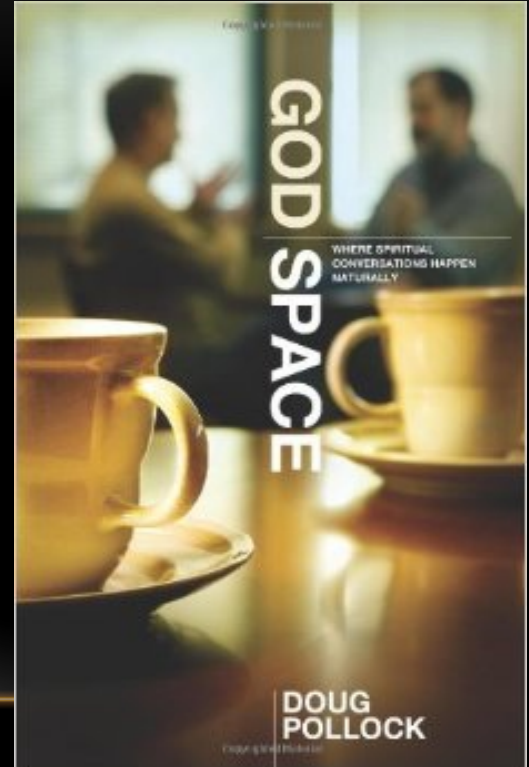
FALSE PERCEPTIONS OF US IN THE WORLD

- **Even the best of us are misunderstood**
 - Paul was driven out of town
 - Paul & Barnabas called Hermes & Zeus
- **In our environment**
 - We're perceived as political
 - We're assumed to be prideful



WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT, TOO

- Listen more
- Accept responsibility for Church failings
- Ask wise questions
 - I'm wondering...



EXPAND YOUR OIKOS

- Kids Club
- Teen Challenge
- Foster the Bay
- Any Gospel-centered ministry
 - Is it bearing fruit?

