

Sunday, May 18, 2025

THE FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

Acts 15:1-18

KIDS
3RD-6TH

NL

Key Verse:

“On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Acts 15:11

The Point:

God’s will is revealed in Scripture and conversation with each other.

Making Connections:

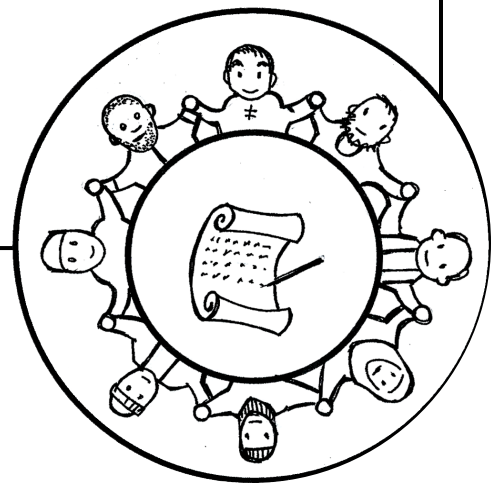
Birth of the Church

Bible Nuts & Bolts:

Gentiles

Spiritual Practice:

Fellowship



BACKGROUND

Making Connections

As we continue looking at the birth of the church, we find the apostles returning to Jerusalem. They have met with many successes in spreading the gospel, but along with the growth of the church comes challenges. In Jerusalem, they come together to work through some of these challenges, and provide for us a model of civil discourse. Today's story shows the apostles respectfully expressing dissension, considering their history, and working towards consensus in their understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Story Summary:

The First Church Council

Following Pentecost, Jesus' apostles traveled, spreading the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. Not surprisingly, there is uncertainty about how the gospel should be interpreted for these two traditions. Do the Gentiles need to follow the Law of Moses to be saved? Church leaders, including Paul and Barnabas, come back to Jerusalem to meet together and address these questions.

When they arrive in Jerusalem, the apostles report of all their successes, particularly how many Gentiles have come to follow Jesus and how much God is working through them. But there are those who believe that, since at this time the church was a Jewish movement, Gentiles will not be saved until they are circumcised (a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham) according to the Law of Moses, as Jews are required to do. There is clear division, but there is also clear respect.

The apostles remember the Holy Spirit coming for all, and they take into consideration how old traditions impact this new church. They listen carefully to each other, taking into account what they have learned from their work thus far.

The apostle James brings this passage to a close by reminding the early church leaders—and us—that while our traditions help identify people as followers of God, the good news is Jesus, news for all people.

The Point

God's will is revealed in Scripture and

conversation with each other. The early church had disagreements, just like modern churches have disagreements. Sometimes, there are issues so divisive that they threaten the effectiveness of the church in our ability to spread the good news. In these times, it is good to see how the early church handled conflict. We see the early disciples acknowledging their differences, and respectfully considering their understanding of the work of God in the world.

Bible Nuts & Bolts:

Gentiles

Today's Scripture focuses on how the gospel is for the Gentiles. But who are the Gentiles? What is their significance in this story and the Bible? When we see the term "Gentile" in the New Testament, we know that the reference is to someone who is not Jewish and who may be considered pagan (followers of other gods). By the time of Jesus, tension between Jews and Gentiles was at a high point, and so it is significant that Jesus and his followers declared the good news was for all, regardless of their origin.

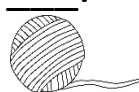
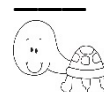
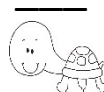
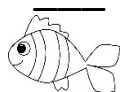
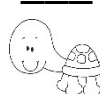
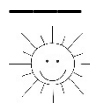
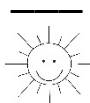
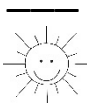
Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

How do we support each other in true fellowship? How do we form relationships that weather the good and bad, and support each other in all aspects of life? We must be committed to working with each other, to listening to each other, and to trusting each others' visions.



Acts 15

Write the first letter of each picture above it.



Acts 15

Use the chart to replace the number with the letter.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

 7 15 4 8 1 19 13 1 4 5

 1 12 12 8 9 19 23 15 18 11 19

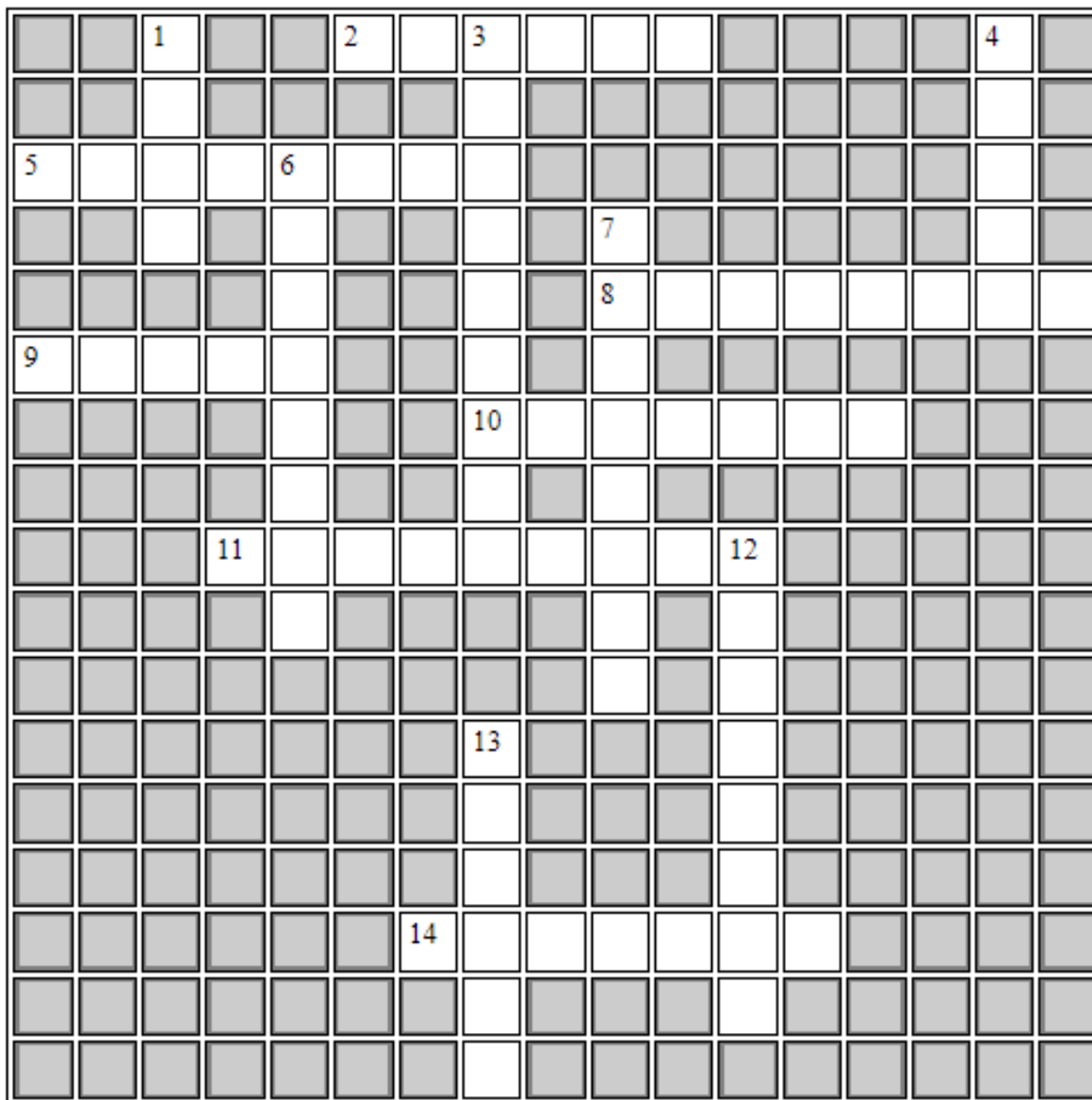
 11 14 15 23 14 20 15 21 19

 6 18 15 13 5 20 5 18 14 9 20 25

Acts 15

Word Bank

Barnabas, Gentiles, Jerusalem, Mark, Silas, apostles, church, disciples, elders, eternity, heart, letters, miracles, prophet



Across

2. The older men chosen to make decisions for the church
5. Who Paul was traveling with
8. Know to God from ____ are all His works.
9. Paul took this person with him
10. The message was sent by this with the apostles
11. Where the apostles met to discuss issues
14. A spokesman for God

Down

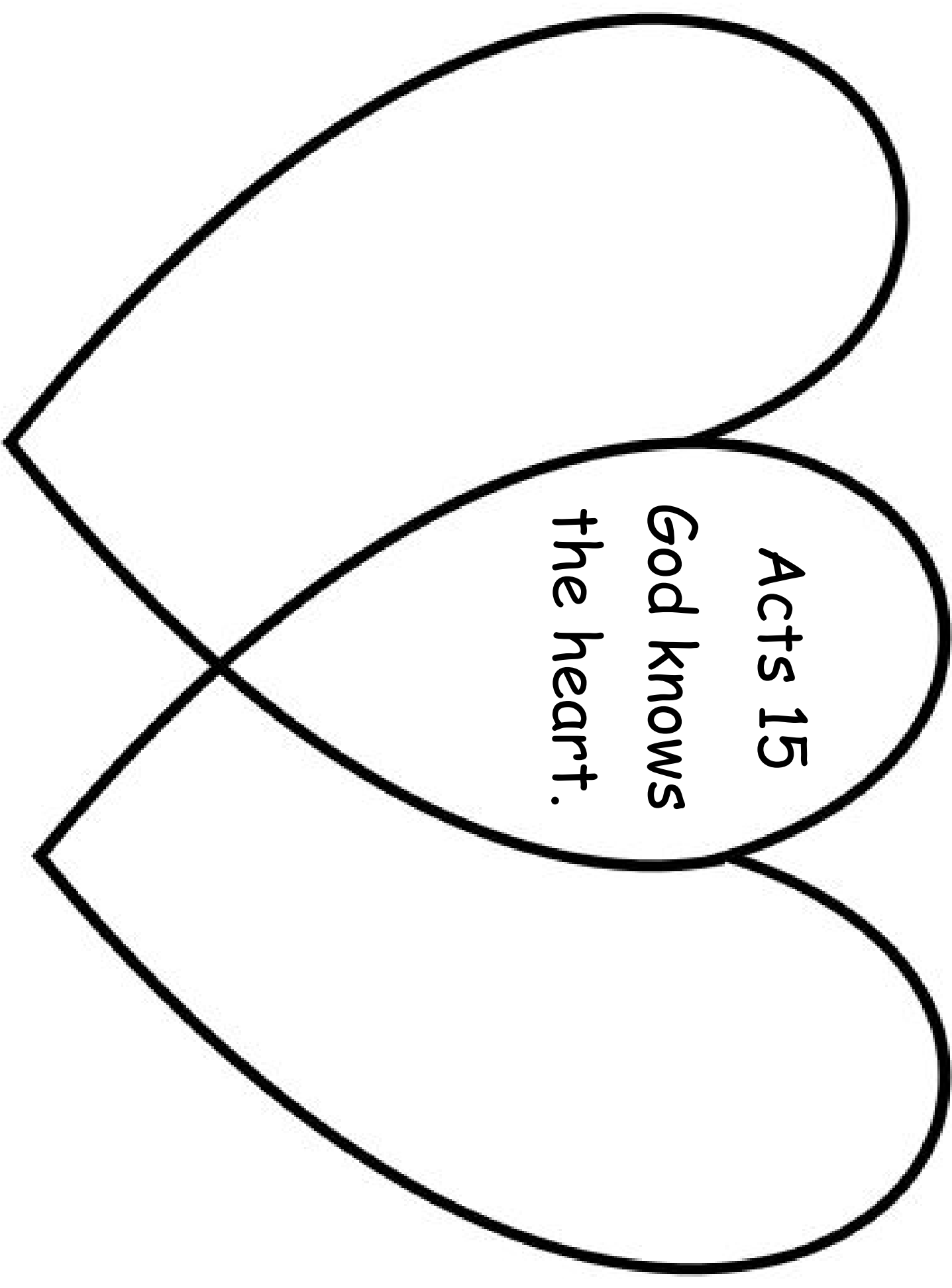
1. Barnabas took this person with him
3. The followers of Jesus called this in verse 10
4. God knows your ____
6. The men Jesus picked to teach others about Him
7. The new group of people learning about Jesus
12. An instant act of God
13. The people following Jesus are called this

Acts 15

Find the underlined words below.

K A E C I K A I G H R S P
C B K R T R P T E C A H E
A A C C S A B A N R A B T
H A L S A M H P T R P E E
E C E A H P O O I I S U R
H P O L O H R S L L R E P
I C A I D O E T E I S J A
S Y H S T E M L S S P S S
J C T U S N R E P A Y R T
S A M A R I A S U R P Y C
A T M R R C I L I C I A A
O H N E P I H A E D U J I
J E R U S A L E M O S J S

Acts
Antioch
apostles
Barnabas
church
Cilicia
Cyprus
elders
Gentiles
James
Jerusalem
Judea
Mark
Moses
Paul
Peter
Pharisees
Phoenicia
Samaria
Silas
Syria



Acts 15
God knows
the heart.

Acts 15:8

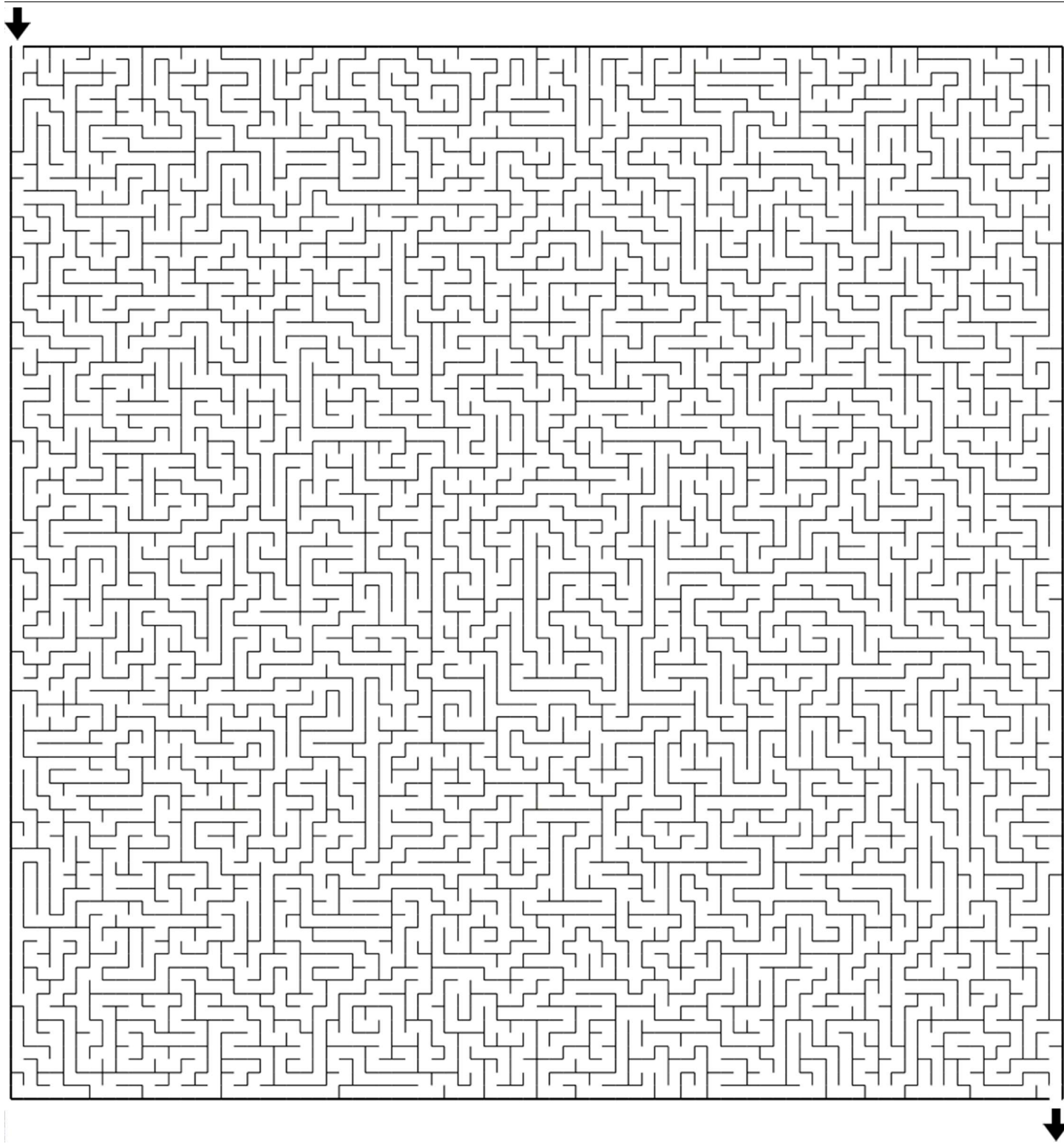
"God, who knows the heart, testified about them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just like he did to us."

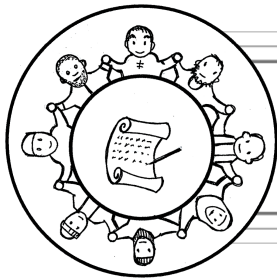
Name _____ Date _____

Children's Puzzle: Super Hard Maze!



Enter at the 'In' arrow and exit at the 'Out' arrow!





THE STORY @ HOME

KIDS
3RD-6TH
NL

Living the Word: Teaching Kids God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 3 (2024-2025)

LAST WEEK

The Holy Spirit directs a disciple named Philip to continue to spread the good news. Philip encounters an influential man from Ethiopia and teaches him about Jesus (Acts 8:26-39).

THIS WEEK

A major disagreement arises in the early church, so the apostles gather together to discuss it and come to an agreement. This is the first church council (Acts 15:1-18).

THE POINT

God's will is revealed in Scripture and conversation with each other.

STORY SUMMARY

The First Church Council

Following Pentecost, Jesus' apostles spread the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. The question arises: do the Gentiles need to follow the Law of Moses to be saved? The church leaders meet together in Jerusalem to address this question. They share their experiences and concerns, listening carefully to each other. They agree that since the Holy Spirit comes to the Gentiles in the same way as the Jews, they should not be required to follow the Jewish laws. The apostle James reminds the early church leaders that while our traditions can be helpful, the good news of Jesus is for all people.

BIBLE NUTS & BOLTS

Gentiles

Today's Scripture focuses on how the gospel is for the Gentiles. But who are the Gentiles? In the New Testament, the word "Gentile" refers to someone who is not Jewish, and therefore does not follow Jewish laws. Tensions between Jews and Gentiles were high, and so it is significant that Jesus and his followers declared that the good news was for all.

PRACTICE: FELLOWSHIP

How do we form relationships that weather the good and bad, and support each other in all aspects of life? We must work with each other, listen to each other, and trust each others' visions. Throughout the week, work together to approach disagreements by listening to each other and reflecting on what you each have learned from God.

NEXT WEEK

In a letter, Paul writes about how he became a follower of Jesus. He proclaims that a relationship with God comes from trusting Jesus, not what we do (Galatians 1:13-17; 2:11-21).

Family Discussions

Use the questions below or other questions you think of to discuss today's Scripture reading (listed above) with your family.

- ✚ Where do you see the message that "It is GOOD" in this Scripture?
- ✚ What does this Scripture have to do with our lives today?
- ✚ What part of this Scripture is the most interesting to you? Why?

Family Devotions

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? How should we respond?

Sunday—Read Acts 15:1-18

The first church council is convened in Jerusalem to address concerns. Choose a topic or concern that your family should address, and follow the example of the first church council as you listen to each other and work towards consensus.

Monday—Read Acts 13:1-12

Paul and Barnabas are commissioned and encounter a challenge in Cyprus. Reflect together about things that make it hard to see and be God's love in the world.

Tuesday—Read Acts 14:8-20

Paul performs a healing, which causes a great misunderstanding. Share a time when you thought you were being helpful but people misunderstood.

Wednesday—Read Acts 15:22-35

The council, which met in Jerusalem, sends a letter to the Gentiles and apostles in Antioch. Write letters together to people in your life who need a reminder that they are loved.

Thursday—Read Acts 16:11-15

Lydia, a merchant, started believing in Jesus and invited the apostles to her home. Invite someone to your house for a meal or conversation. Everyone should participate in the hosting!

Friday—Read Acts 17:16-31

While in Athens, Paul delivers a speech to the Athenians about why idolatry is not the way to God, but that God is near, looking for repentance and relationship. Look at a map to find Athens, and notice how far the good news is traveling.

Saturday—Read Acts 22:6-21

Saul encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus and his life is transformed, convicting him to take the message to the Gentiles. Take turns leading blindfolded family members around. How important is it to Saul to regain his sight?