5

Strangers Among Us

Key References: Acts 15:1-19; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 19, pp. 188-200; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 76-78; Our Beliefs nos. 5, 12, 14.















Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 46.

powertext

"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:11).

powerpoint

We follow Jesus' example when we love and accept others.

Do you keep a journal? Many believe that Luke kept one. Like any good journalist, he would have interviewed lots of people. Let's imagine what Luke might have heard from a person who served Paul.

I couldn't understand why they were arguing. I thought anyone could accept and follow Jesus. Paul's servant explained that the Jews thought that the new converts had to become Jews first and follow their customs.

I strained to hear the conversation. It sounded as if they were finally agreeing on something.

"I think Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles there," someone said. "Let's find out what their opinion is about this."

"That's a good idea, but some local elders should go as well," another replied.

"Good, we'll leave as soon as possible," Paul said. "We need to get this straightened out quickly."

We traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria so Paul could encourage Christians along the way. In Jerusalem the believers met us at the city gate.

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Sunday

READ Read Acts 15:1, 2 and this week's lesson, "Strangers Among Us." Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for creating us unique and diverse.

Monday

READ Read Acts 15:3.

THINK Why is it encouraging to share with people your conversion experience or that of others? How could telling others about how you have accepted Jesus help someone who is thinking about making that decision?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you be gentle when telling others about your beliefs.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 15:4.

THINK Like in the early Christian church, you are welcome in any Adventist church you may be visiting. How does that make you feel?

PLAN Plan how you will welcome visitors coming to your church when you have the opportunity.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to help you extend a warm welcome to all visitors who are coming to your church.

When Paul told them the reason for our visit, everyone agreed that a special meeting needed to be called. They set the time for several days later.

I was surprised at how many people had come to hear Paul and Barnabas. But I also knew that there were lots of people with their own ideas about Gentiles accepting Christ. They would all want to have their own say during the meeting.

Paul and Barnabas opened the meeting by telling of their first mission-



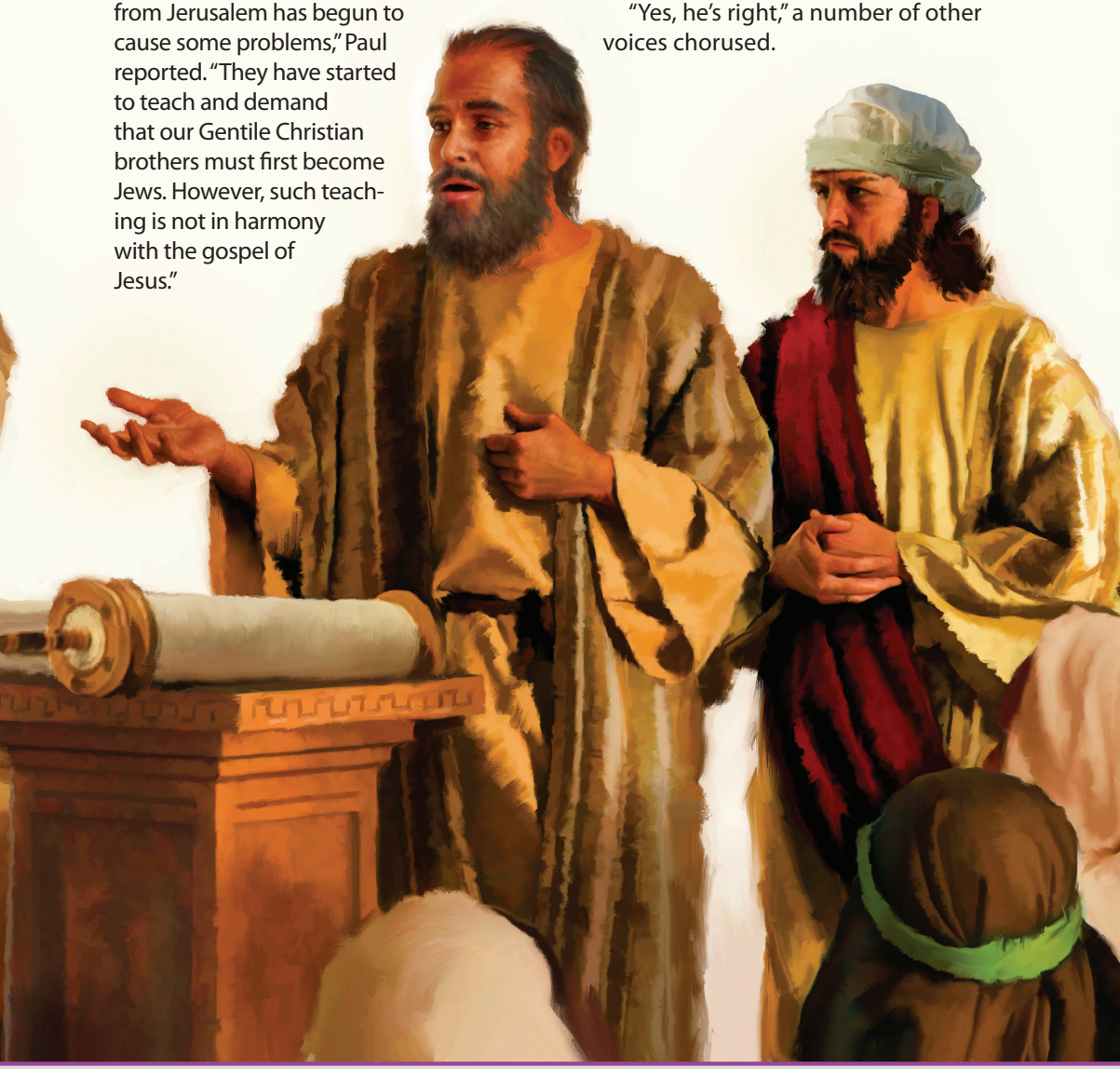
ary journey. They told about some of the miraculous things God had done. Paul saved the most important information for last—the large number of Gentiles who were eager to listen to the gospel message and accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

"A group that came to Antioch from Jerusalem has begun to cause some problems," Paul reported. "They have started to teach and demand that our Gentile Christian brothers must first become Jews. However, such teaching is not in harmony with the gospel of Jesus."

Just as I thought it would, murmuring arose from the group.

"How can you take that kind of position?" demanded one of the leaders. "These Gentiles must submit to becoming Jews and promise they'll obey the laws of Moses before they can follow Jesus."

"Yes, he's right," a number of other voices chorused.



5

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 15:5-9.

THINK Think about someone from a different culture or background. How do you treat them? How do those around you treat them?

ASK Ask an adult to tell you of someone from a different background who is in need of help. Think about ways you could reach out to that person. Do it soon.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God for courage to defend those who are wronged by others.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 17:26, 27.

THINK What do these verses tell us about God's acceptance of all people?

BEFRIEND Try to become friends or pen pals with someone from another culture or nation.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that He loves and accepts everyone and that we can serve Him by doing the same.

Friday

READ Read Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9; and 14:6.

THINK What do these verses tell you about God's plans for His people from every nation?

SEARCH Look in an encyclopedia or ask an adult to help you find out how many nations, languages, tribes, and people are living on the earth.

SAY Repeat the power text from memory.

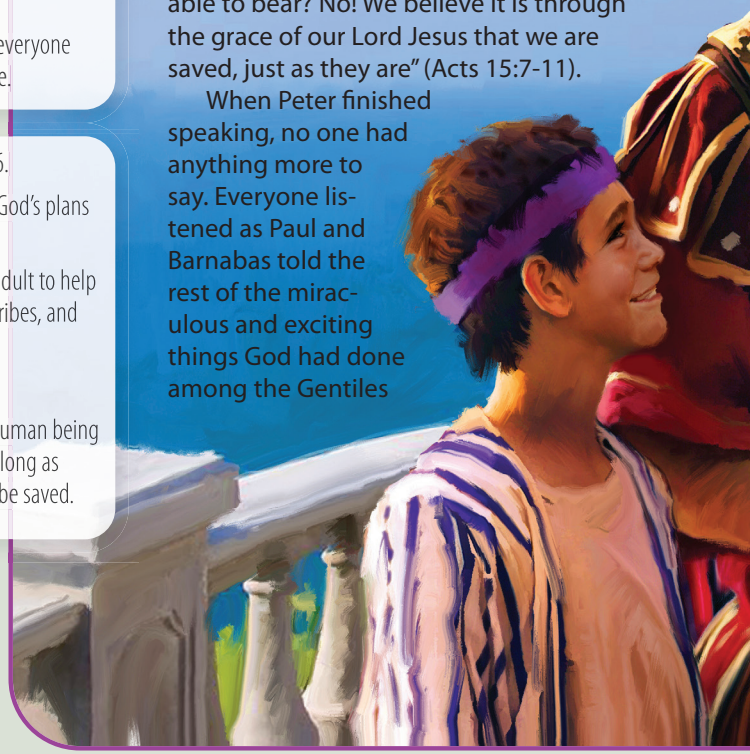
PRAY Thank God that through Jesus every human being is welcome into God's Kingdom in heaven as long as they accept God's grace and the invitation to be saved.

"We disagree," another said. "God accepts everyone who receives Jesus, His Son. The important thing is that the Gentiles hear and accept the good news about Jesus."

The discussion went back and forth for a long time. Finally, motioning for silence, Peter, one of the apostles, stood up.

"Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:7-11).

When Peter finished speaking, no one had anything more to say. Everyone listened as Paul and Barnabas told the rest of the miraculous and exciting things God had done among the Gentiles



during their journeys.

Finally James rose to speak.

"Brothers, listen to me," he began. "[Peter] has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

" 'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things'—things known from long ago.

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (verses 13-21).

The argument was over. The Holy Spirit had brought everyone to agreement. The next step, they decided, was to elect people to take the good news back to the Gentile believers.



PUZZLE
5

WHY BE KIND

Insert the missing vowels in this verse to read why we should love and be kind to all people who are not our brothers and sisters in Christ. The numbers of missing vowels for each line are given.

a	e	i	o	u	
4	5	1	2	0	W__ __r__ th__r__f__r__ Chr__st's __mb__ss__d__rs,
4	3	2	3	3	__s th__ __gh G__d w__r__ m__k__ng h__s __pp__ __l thr__ __gh __s.
1	3	2	3	1	W__ __mpl__r__ Y__ __ __n Chr__st's B__h__lf:
0	3	1	3	0	B__ r__c__nc__l__d t__ G__d.
1	4	2	5	1	L__t __s n__t b__c__m__ w__ __ry __n d__ __ng g__ __d,
3	5	2	2	0	f__r __t th__ pr__p__r t__m__ w__ w__ll r__ __p __
1	3	2	2	1	h__rv__st __f w__ d__ n__t g__v__ __p.

SECRET OF SUCCESS

Instructions: Take two letters that are next to each other from each word on a line, reading left to right, to form a new six-letter word in the circles. We have given you the first one to get you started. The letters in the shaded circles form the answer to this puzzle.

All of the answers can be found in Galatians 1 and 2.

1. Declare, display, show (Gal. 1:16)
2. Second in time (Gal. 2:5)
3. Truth, the story of Jesus' death (Gal. 1:11)
4. Not any more, no __ __ __ __ __ __ (Gal. 2:20)
5. Go after, disciples __ __ __ __ __ __ their master (Gal. 2:14)
6. Talk about God, sermon (Gal. 1:16)
7. God's house, place of worship (Gal. 1:13)
8. Save, Jesus' death was His way to __ __ __ __ __ __ us (Gal. 1:4)

Puzzle Clue: Jesus, our Savior, will live in your heart, by grace, and e__ __ __ __ __ __ __ you to live like He did.

