

# Responding to Doctrinal Conflict Among Believers

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Followers of Jesus Christ can and will have strong convictions that are contrary to the truth of the gospel.

- <sup>1</sup> 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.”  
Acts 15:1 (ESV)
- <sup>5</sup> 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 15:5 (ESV)

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The first step in correction is to personally engage those holding a position contrary to the gospel message.

- <sup>2</sup> 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.  
Acts 15:2 (ESV)

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The witness of proven leaders in God's church provides discernment on God's teaching and activity.

- Examine the activity of God.
  - The work of God among the Gentiles in the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas.
    - <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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.  
Acts 15:3-4 (ESV)

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The witness of proven leaders in God's church provides discernment on God's teaching and activity.

- Examine the activity of God.
  - The work of God among the Gentiles in the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas.
    - <sup>12</sup> 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 15:12 (ESV)

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- Examine the activity of God.
  - Peter's encounter 10 years earlier with God's work in the house of Cornelius
    - <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, <sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> 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? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." Acts 15:7-11 (ESV)

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The witness of proven leaders in God's church provides discernment on God's teaching and activity.

- Examine the Word of God.
  - <sup>13</sup> After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup> Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup> And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup> "'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, <sup>17</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup> known from of old.' <sup>19</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, Acts 15:13-19 (ESV)

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Recognize that all of us must bring our values and practices into alignment with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- <sup>19</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." Acts 15:19-21 (ESV)

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