

fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:22). To learn how God has set aside the old covenant, read 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 and Hebrews 8:6-13.

Find in **Acts chapter 15**:

- What some Jewish believers thought one had to do to be saved. [*Answer: See verse 1*]
- What law the believing Pharisees (a strict Jewish sect) wanted to force non-Jews to obey. [*See verses 2-5. The Old Testament law was for ancient Israel, not for those who follow the New Testament.*]
- Peter's advice. [*See verses 6-11*]
- Among what people Paul and Barnabas had seen God work miraculously. [*See verse 12*]
- What James proposed that solved the problem. [*See verses 13-21*]
- The outcome. [*See verses 22-31*]

## 2. Plan with co-workers activities to do during the week

Visit believers who do not yet serve others, and help them to do so. Begin any of the tasks listed above that your flock lacks.

## 3. Plan with your co-workers the upcoming worship time to meet current needs.

**Describe** the tasks that God requires of every congregation and their corresponding gifts of the Spirit.

**Explain** how James and others kept harmony among believers. Ask the questions listed above.

Let the **children** present what they have prepared.

To introduce the **Lord's Supper**, read John 17:18-24. Explain that Jesus prayed for our loving unity when He instituted this sacrament.

Meet in **groups** of two or three to talk about spiritual gifts, plan and pray for one another.

**Memorize** together Ephesians 4:14-17.

**Prayer.** "Lord, help us to respect other people's gifts and not boast of ours."

## Organize the Members of the Flock to Serve

Oversee God's People Wisely, As James Did in Jerusalem

Those who teach children should read study #83 for children.

### 1. Prepare your Heart with God's Word and Prayer.

Find in 1 Corinthians chapters 12–14 how to use spiritual gifts:

- For whose good God gives us spiritual gifts. [1 Cor. 12:4-7]
- Who decides which gifts a believer receives. [1 Cor. 12:8-11]
- To what the gifts and their uses are compared. [1 Cor. 12:12-31]
- The right motive for using our gifts. [1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1-13]
- How to correct excessive emphasis on one gift.[chapter 14]

**God gives to believers different gifts**, often more than one, so we will serve one another and our neighbours.

- The Holy Spirit harmonizes our different tasks in love, just as a body's organs work together.
- Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:11-16 list many spiritual gifts.

### Wise overseers organize believers to do these tasks that God requires of every flock:

- Serve people who suffer (Matt. 25:31-46) and pray for them (John 16:24). The task of prayer includes intercession and spiritual warfare against evil spirits. The two halves of the heart suggest the corresponding gifts of compassion (Rom. 12:8) and faith (1 Cor. 12:9). When these two gifts work together by faith, our salvation yields good works (Eph. 2:8-10). Jesus healed many who had faith, including a leper and a centurion (Matt. 8:1-13). Many Old Testament believers showed great faith by their deeds (Heb. 11).

Admonish and help others to grow in Christ (Col. 1:28). The brain's two halves remind us of the corresponding gifts of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8). Solomon is an example (1 Kings 3:5-28).



- Comfort people (2 Cor. 1:3-7) and discern spiritual problems (1 Cor. 2:14). The two eyes correspond to the gifts of prophecy (which serves mainly to comfort and strengthen, 1 Cor. 14:2-3) and of discerning spirits (1 Cor. 12:10). Isaiah is an example of both (Isaiah 40:1-14).
- Prepare believers to edify their flock and to train leaders (Eph. 4:11-12). The mouth means the gift of teaching (1 Cor. 12:28). Ezra is an example (Neh. 8), also Paul (2 Tim. 2:2).
- Convince unbelieving foreigners by speaking their language (1 Cor. 14:22). The tongue means the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10). The apostles on Pentecost did so (Acts 2:1-18).

- Keep believers and their leaders firm in the faith and doing their God-given tasks (1 Cor. 14:26; Acts 14:21-22). The two ears illustrate the gifts of encouragement (listen to people in order to exhort and serve them, Rom. 12:8) and interpreting tongues (1 Cor. 12:10). Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38).
- Serve the body of Christ and care for the needs of others (Gal. 5:13; 6:10). The two arms correspond to the gifts of serving (Rom. 12:7) and of helps (1 Cor. 12:28). The first deacons in Jerusalem served the widows (Acts 6:1-6).
- Heal the sick (Luke 10:9), and give (Luke 6:38). The two hands recall the gifts of healing and miracles (1 Cor. 12:9-10), and of giving (Rom. 12:8). Paul healed Publius' father (Acts 28:7-8) and Dorcas gave generously (Acts 9:36).
- Lead the way for others to follow (1 Cor. 11:1). The two legs display the gifts of leading (Rom. 12:8) and administration (1 Cor. 12:28). David did both (1 Sam. 23:1-5; 2 Sam. 5).
- Proclaim Christ (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8). The two feet signify apostleship (missionaries) and evangelism (Eph. 4:11-12). Paul was an example of both (Rom. 15:20-21).

**Read Acts 15:1-31** to see how James and elders of different congregations (Jewish and non-Jewish) solved a serious dispute about religious practices, in order to work in harmony. James was a prominent shepherd in Jerusalem where there were two major cultures in the congregations.

**Background.** The Jews for centuries had embraced the Old Testament law, which required animal sacrifices, marrying a dead brother's wife if he left no heirs, killing people who worked on Saturday, worshiping only in Jerusalem, and many more detailed regulations.

- Most Gentile (non-Jewish) believers in Christ knew nothing about those ancient Israelite laws. Even today, some believers bring the old law into the New Covenant instead of letting the Holy Spirit guide them.
- Jesus said that we now fulfil the law of God by we simply loving Him and our neighbour as we should (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10). Love is a