



ORIGINS (Part 5) - “The Struggle of Distinction”

Acts 15:6–11 NIV

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “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. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 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? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

Acts 15:19 NIV

19 “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Acts 15:24-29 NIV

24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. 25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul—26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. 28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: 29 You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Key Points

- Our unity depends on willing cooperation and deep trust, where we’re dependent upon God’s Spirit and each other.
- Nothing really governs our sexual desire and attraction.
- We are all affected by the sexual brokenness in our world.
- Our culture tells us that our sexuality is the most important part of us.
- Sex has been removed from anything that tethers it to fidelity and has become a commodity that is exchanged or traded and a performance to be graded.
- Many of us have fallen for the lie that our sexual appetites should be satisfied but not governed.
- Sexual desire tends to drift towards more and more licentious behavior, rather than restraint.
- Ungoverned sexual desire and unclear sexual vision are the cause of great harm.
- We need a vision of the human experience in which sex and sexuality find their proper place.
- Possessing a sexual ethic is not about moral compliance, but rather being a distinct witness in a chaotic world.

READ

Open your time together by reading the Scripture passages on Page 1.

- Discuss Peter's argument in Acts 15:7-11 regarding God's acceptance of Gentiles into the faith. How does this passage challenge traditional beliefs about who can be included in God's kingdom?
- Explore the significance of the requirements listed in Acts 15:29, such as abstaining from food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. How do these guidelines reflect the early church's efforts to maintain purity and unity among believers? How were they a push for believers to live distinct lives?

REFLECT

- How can Christ's invitation to view others in a reoriented way impact our relationships and interactions with those around us?
- Our culture often elevates sexuality as the most important aspect of identity. How does this perspective shape societal norms and individual beliefs?
- How has the prevalence of sexual brokenness in our world influenced your perspective on relationships and intimacy?

RESPOND

- Reflect on the statement "Many of us have fallen for the lie that our sexual appetites should be satisfied but not governed." Have you personally encountered this belief? How does it manifest in society?
- Imagine a world where sex and sexuality find their proper place in the human experience. What does this vision look like, and how can it be achieved?
- What do you believe should govern sex and our sexuality? How should it be expressed? What makes you answer in the way that you do?

PRAY

Close your time together with prayer requests. Ask how you can pray, support, and lift one another up. Pray over these requests collectively or by breaking into prayer partners.