

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 9, 2018
Lesson Title: "True Grace"
Lesson Passage: Galatians 2:11-21

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In Galatians 2:11 Paul recalls something that happened in Antioch. Just as Jerusalem was the center of Judaism, Antioch was the cradle of Gentile Christianity. Before visiting Antioch, Peter had already agreed that God meant to include uncircumcised Gentiles in his kingdom (Acts 10:34-35). But Jewish tradition had it that a pious Jew would risk spiritual contamination by eating with Gentiles. Peter had initially ignored this tradition; but, fearing censure from a delegation of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he separated himself from the Gentiles at the dining table. Since this behavior threatened to undermine the fellowship of Jewish and Gentile Christians, Paul confronted Peter about his conduct in front of the congregation (Gal. 2:11-12, 14).

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the issue that had provoked the encounter between Paul and Peter. (2) Summarize the basic elements of Paul's gospel.

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BEGINNING THE LESSON

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Read the following scriptures, all written by Paul: "Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4). "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone" (2 Tim. 2:24). Then read Gal. 2:11: "But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him in public, because he was clearly wrong" (TEV). Then ask this question: How could the man who urged Christians to live in peace and harmony let himself be drawn into an embarrassing public confrontation with Peter in front of the congregation at Antioch? Let class members respond, then say, "The answer is that something big was at issue; something of such importance that it could have altered the course of the Christian movement for years to come."

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TEACHING PROCEDURES

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1. Read Galatians 2:11-14a; then comment on the passage: (1) When Peter had first come to Antioch, he had freely dined with Gentile believers. But, later, some brothers who still held to the old Jewish customs had come to Antioch from Jerusalem, and this had caused Peter to distance himself from the Gentile Christians (vv. 11-12). (2) The Good News Bible describes the result: "The other Jewish brothers also started acting like cowards along with Peter; and even Barnabas was swept along by their cowardly action" (Gal. 2:13). (3) Had Paul failed to challenge Peter, his silence would have conceded that it was okay for Jewish Christians to treat Gentile Christians as second-class

citizens of the Kingdom. So, having no other choice, Paul "opposed him to his face" in front of the congregation (v. 14a).

2. Comment on the argument that Paul leveled against Peter (v. 14b):

(1) He said, "You are a Jew, yet you have been living like a Gentile, not a Jew." (In eating with the Gentiles Peter had disregarded Jewish laws, and therefore was "living like a Gentile.") (2) He then asked, "How then can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" EXPLANATION: In Jerusalem, Peter had agreed that Gentiles could enter the Kingdom without following the Jewish law; but, now, his reversion to Jewish regulations in Antioch implied that he was renegeing on that stance. Paul's point was that it was hypocritical for Peter to ignore the requirements of the law (i.e., by eating with Gentiles), yet insist that Gentile Christians conform to the law. APPLICATION: Paul had to challenge Peter's inconsistent conduct openly "before them all" (2:14), because Peter's sin against the Gentile Christians had been committed openly. NOTE: There is no evidence in Galatians, or in Acts, that Paul and Peter had a permanent falling-out. In fact, Peter later referred to Paul in one of his epistles as "our beloved brother" (2 Pet. 3:15).

3. *Call attention to the repeated use of the word "justified" in Gal. 2:16-21, and use the concept of justification to summarize the basic elements of Paul's gospel:* (1) "Justify" is a legal term that means "acquit a guilty person of the charges against him." When God justifies the sinner, He clears him of all guilt. (2) Justification is an act of grace. It is an unearned, undeserved gift from God. The sinner does not win acquittal by keeping the law; he can only respond to God's grace through faith in Christ. (3) Justification is made possible by the death (Gal. 1:3-4) and resurrection (1:1) of Christ. (4) Since justification comes by faith, the believer lives by faith (2:20b), not by ceaseless efforts to meet the requirements of the law. (This is the meaning of "died to the law" in Gal. 2:19.) (5) Faith is more than agreement with a set of doctrines, and more than living according to a moral code like the law. To depend on keeping the law is to put emphasis on one's own powers to do what is required. This is why Paul says, "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." (2:20). To have faith in Christ is to enter into a relationship with him. Being "crucified with Christ," the believer gains freedom from the power of sin, death and the law; being raised with Christ, he walks in newness of life. (6) If a person could be put right with God through the law, Christ's death was entirely unnecessary (v. 21).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A final thought: Paul's willingness to stand his ground in behalf of an important principle is admirable. But having the courage to take a stand should be balanced by having the wisdom to know what stand to take. Christianity is fraught with controversies over minor matters. Sometimes, conviction can devolve into mere stubbornness.

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