

Leader's Guide

Session 2: Galatians 2

How do you feel in times when you are required to work on a team? Do you enjoy working alongside others? Why or why not?

When have you seen teams work well? When do they fail? What factor does unity play in the success of a team?

Unity is vital to any team—especially to the family of God. Part of this chapter of Galatians looks at divisions that occurred when conflict threatened the unity of key church leaders.

read

Read Galatians 2.

watch

Show Session 2: *Galatians 2* (12:20 minutes)

discuss

In our last session, we left off with Paul describing his conversion experience in order to demonstrate how he received the gospel.

Why did Paul take the time to detail his conversion experience? What was he trying to accomplish?
(He sought to legitimize himself as an apostle by showing that he had received the same gospel as the other apostles, but independent of their teaching.)

According to verse 12, how did Paul receive the gospel he preached?

Beginning in verse 18, Paul offers a series of three “then” statements stretching into chapter two that further demonstrate the independence of his apostleship from that of the Jerusalem church.

What are the three movements Paul indicates in verses 1:18, 21, and 2:1?

Following his conversion (1:11–1:17):

1. After three years, *then* he spent fifteen days in Jerusalem with Peter (1:18).
2. Following this meeting, *then* he went to Syria and Cilicia (1:21).
3. After fourteen years, *then* he returned to Jerusalem (2:1).

Leader: *If there is any confusion about the name “Cephas” introduced in 1:18, explain to your group that it is simply the Aramaic spelling of the word “rock.” The Greek spelling is “Petros,” which we commonly pronounce “Peter.” Both are versions of the name Jesus gave to His apostle (see John 1:42).*

According to 1:18, how long had Paul been a Christ-follower before he met any of the apostles?

As we begin chapter two, Paul has made it clear that there is only one gospel (1:6–10) of which he was a recipient through a face-to-face encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ (vv. 11–17). Following his conversion, he spent three years sharing the gospel with Gentiles before meeting with Peter in Jerusalem for fifteen days, which was his first encounter with an apostle. Someone read 2:1–10.

According to 2:1, how long had it been since Paul had visited the apostles in Jerusalem?

In other words, aside from the fifteen-day visit noted in 1:18, Paul had been preaching the gospel to the Gentiles for upwards of seventeen years apart from regular interaction with the apostles in Jerusalem.

What happened when he met with the apostles in Jerusalem for the second time? (Verses 7–9 explain that they affirmed his message and extended fellowship to him.)

In verse 7, what responsibility does Paul describe God entrusting to him? (Preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, or Gentiles)

What responsibility does he describe God entrusting to Peter? (Preaching the gospel to the circumcised, or Jews)

Why are these significant points to make based on what we've seen so far in Galatians?

As we learned in the previous session, a subversive group had begun to trouble the Galatian church in two specific ways: they were teaching a works-based salvation founded on the Law of Moses and they were seeking to discredit Paul's apostleship. With his comments in 1:11–2:10, Paul makes it clear that

the gospel he received independent of the apostles—from Christ Himself—is the same gospel they were preaching. His point was not to clarify a difference between their gospels, but to emphasize a distinction in the spheres in which God had called them to preach the gospel.

In this session, Kyle explained that there is a difference between being set free and actually living free. **How did he describe the goal of the gospel?** (To create a life that looks completely different from our former life.)

So while the gospel releases us from the grasp of sin to a life of freedom, it also defines freedom in specific ways. We are not free to live however we want—which is how we lived before we knew Christ—but in the way God has set forth in His Word, which is the path to true joy.

What were the three “demands” that Kyle said the gospel makes on our lives?

1. It demands unity.
2. It demands humility.
3. It demands sanctification.

Someone read verses 11–14.

What was Peter doing that made Paul so angry? (When leaders of the Jerusalem church visited Antioch, including James, Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles.)

Why did Paul care about Peter’s eating habits? (Because it caused racial division and added requirements to the gospel, the very topic he wrote against in chapter one.)

Go Deeper

Learn more table fellowship from the following passages: Lev. 7:26–27; 11; Matt. 15:16–20; Acts 10

What do the Leviticus passages list as examples of “unclean” foods for the Jewish people? (pork, certain birds and hooved animals, insects, anything not drained of its blood, etc.)

How does Jesus redefine this idea of uncleanness during His earthly ministry? (He absolves the ceremonial observance of abstaining from certain foods by pointing to the underlying truth of the law—an unclean heart.)

Was Peter aware of this truth prior to Paul confronting him in Antioch? (Yes, the vision he received in Acts 10 made it abundantly clear.)

How does this context further shade the hypocrisy of Peter?

Despite having walked with Jesus Christ and experiencing an explicit vision, Peter reverted to his old ways and separated himself from dining with Gentiles in the presence of the Jewish leaders. His actions revealed an inconsistency in the gospel he claimed to believe, one that we are prone to as well.

Historically, the Jewish community separated itself from the Gentile (non-Jewish) communities. Throughout the Old Testament, we see a narrative of God creating the nation of Israel with the purpose of blessing the nations, which they were instructed to do primarily through a close adherence to His Law. However, following Pentecost the ceremonial aspects of the Law—dietary restrictions, circumcision, and so on—were set aside and salvation was extended to the Gentiles by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. So the simple act of Peter refusing to eat with the Gentiles was an external profession of his disbelief in this truth.

Bearing in mind the story of Peter throughout the Gospels, we know this isn't the first time his dedication to Christ has been distracted by external circumstances (see Matt. 14:22–36; Luke 22:54–62; John 21:19–23). But his example does serve as an important warning to us today. **What does Peter's example demonstrate for us?** (Primarily, that even great leaders have the potential to fall.)

In contrast, what does Paul's example demonstrate for us? (The purity of the gospel is paramount and that standing up for it can be a lonely position.)

In what ways has your commitment to Christ left you feeling isolated at times the way Paul must have been while confronting Peter?

This scene demonstrates the ease we all experience with seeing some people as “other,” like Peter did with the Gentiles.

In what ways can you relate to Peter's actions? How have you distanced yourself from others in the past? For what reason? (pride, fear, prejudice, etc.)

How does such division threaten the message of the gospel? (Through faith in Christ, we are first and foremost children of God. Treating one another preferentially degrades that truth.)

Following Christ is costly, but it is worth it. To do so faithfully, we need to remain rooted in God's Word, but also engaged in community to stay accountable in our walk. Without a Paul who is willing to point out inconsistencies, we may never see our blind spots.

How would you describe the level of spiritual accountability present in your life?

What could you do to be intentional about pursuing deeper relationships with other believers for the purpose of walking faithfully with Christ?

As Kyle pointed out in this passage, the gospel demands unity because of the truth of who we are through faith in Christ. But it also demands humility. Let's take a look back at an earlier passage. Someone read verses 6–8.

How did Kyle describe these verses as revealing humility in Paul? (By focusing on Paul's statement that the influence of the apostles was not as important to him as the purity of the gospel.)

Kyle referred to the gospel as something that creates an "open concept" among the body of Christ. It tears down walls built by race, socio-economic states, personal preference, and so on. However, one of the walls that can keep us from true humility is the fear of what others may think of us for our faith.

How does the fear of what others think of us demonstrate a lack of humility? (Ultimately, by placing us at the center of the equation rather than God and His gospel. We are more concerned with how we look than the mission of the gospel.)

In what ways do you struggle with the fear of what others think of you? How does it affect your relationship with Christ?

What are some ways you could begin to intentionally confront your fear of others over the next week?

As Kyle has pointed out, the gospel demands unity and humility, but according to this passage it also demands sanctification. Someone read verses 15–21.

What does “sanctification” mean? How would you define it? (Kyle described it as “the process of being made holy, clean, useful, and set apart for a purpose.”)

Where do you see Christ-centered sanctification in verses 15–21? (Kyle pointed to verse 16 and 19–20 as examples where Paul underscores our inability to make ourselves pure through our own efforts.)

According to verse 20, how are we freed to a live a life committed to God? (Through death. We are crucified with Christ by faith so that He lives in us.)

When we think about the idea of “freedom,” we often view it as a license to live however we please. But the gospel of freedom calls us to a specific life, not simply for the sake of obedience to God, but because every other way leads to death.

How do you react to the idea of the gospel having “demands” on your life, especially in regards to your sanctification?

As you reflect on your life up to this point, can you identify with Paul’s recognition of his failure to live up to the law in verse 19? What are some specific ways your life has changed since coming to know Christ?

What are some of the areas God is sanctifying in your life today? Where would like to grow in your walk with Him?

last word

Our life with Christ requires intentionality. He has laid out a way for us to live according to His Word, but that way is not meant to rob us of joy. Rather, it is meant to lead us into the depths of joy. His commands steer us away from what leads to death and destruction.

However, we share the same fallen struggle as Peter illustrates in this chapter. We are prone to wander and return to our former ways. The truth is that wherever you are in your walk with Christ today, God is trustworthy. Allow Him to lead you and take bold steps of obedience wherever He calls you to go.

live it out

Pray: Ask God to reveal how He’s been sanctifying you. Pray for tangible growth in that area each day this week.

Resolve: If you're in conflict with another believer, do all you can to reconcile with them. Forgive and ask for forgiveness, pray for that person, or initiate a time to talk through your conflict.

Journal: Answer the question, "Do I fear what people think of me?" this week. As you reflect on that question, write out a prayer to God, confessing your fears to Him.

Hold Accountable: Meet up with a trusted Christian friend to confess sin and hold each other accountable. Talk about what God has been teaching you lately and challenge each other to take one step of obedience.

?Imitate: Read Philippians 2:1–11 to learn more about what it means to imitate Jesus's humility. Ask God to grow you in humility and consider committing this passage to memory.