

**QUESTIONS TO USE IN GROUP
OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

LAUNCHING (Choose one or two to introduce passage.)

1. What customs, if any, did you observe in your family growing up which reflect your ethnic background (e.g., at Christmas? In menus)? To what extent do you or others consider you a hyphenated-American (e.g., Armenian-American, African-American, Fil-Am)? What's your feeling about retaining a familiar culture or dumping it?
2. When did you realize that you had achieved adult-level freedom from your parents' control? Choose **one, share if you wish:**
___ A. "When I went away to college/university."
___ B. "When I got my driver's license."
___ C. "When I ran away from home and survived for a while on my own."
___ D. "When I realized my parents could not MAKE me do anything" (at whatever age).
___ E. "I still feel my parents' shadow falling on my life from time to time."
___ F. "No comment."
___ G. Another option? _____
3. When you've had opportunity to travel, have you ever tried to live by the maxim, "When in Rome, live as the Romans do"? If so, how did it work (or not work) for you? [Or do you hit the nearest McDonald's wherever you are in the world?]

UNDERSTANDING Galatians 2:11-21

1. Briefly summarize the historical background (Gal. 1:11-2:14), explaining both the chronology of Saul/Paul's life as related in this passage and the reason he included this historical account in his letter.
2. As reported by Paul, what motives were driving the behavior of:
A. Peter? (vss. 11-14)
B. "Other Jews"? (vs. 13)
C. Paul? (vss. 11-21)
3. What makes the Law so impotent, according to Paul's arguments?
4. According to this passage, what is *justification*, theologically-speaking? How important is it for

Christian believers to understand vss. 15-16? Is it important enough to die for? [Some of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation did!]

5. "Is 'justification by faith' a legal fiction? An excuse to keep on sinning? Or a new reality that leads us away from sin? Why?"¹
6. How would you describe the "dead life" recommended by Paul (vs. 20)? How does it work practically? Is it possible to live according to verse 20 if you're not a pastor or missionary? If so, how?

REFLECTING on Gal. 2:11-21

1. What's your honest reaction to this quotation? *"Is it any stretch of the truth to suggest that consistency between faith and practice is one of the hallmarks of the deeper life?"*²
2. Depending on your upbringing, you may (or may not) struggle with a bygone law-oriented version of the Christian faith. What examples from your past may still haunt you in some measure today, even though you realize you are saved by faith in Christ's regenerating power, not in keeping "the rules"?
 - For example, if you were taught that working on Sunday was wrong, you might have some sense of guilt if you mowed your lawn or did other yard work on Sunday.
 - **Please share** as you feel led to do so.
3. "What difference would it make to you if Paul's gospel was wrong, and you did have to earn your way to God by keeping the Jewish laws?"³

FURTHER REFLECTION (on your own)

• **Most Americans are descendants of immigrants, if not 1st-generation Americans. All faced identity issues as they entered a new land. Likewise early Christians, many of whom had been Jews, struggled with the meaning of their "Jewishness" in the context of their new faith. Today, how do believers live *Christianly* in a suburban culture of affluence, comfort and privacy?**

FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

Passage: Galatians 2:11-21

Also read 1:11 — 2:10 for helpful background data.

¹ *Serendipity New Testament for Groups*, page 361.

² *Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 65.

³ *Serendipity New Testament for Groups*, page 361.

1. Paul [along with his *Community Group*, see Gal. 1:2?] seeks in this letter "... to bring out in various ways the truth that the Judaistic form is the lower stage [of the Christian life], and the Gospel of freedom which had been delivered to the Galatians the higher stage."⁴
2. **Who's who?** Get acquainted with the persons involved in this great drama.
- **Paul** (Saul of Tarsus). God's chosen man to take the Gospel to the Gentile world. In Galatians, he writes a hot, perhaps hasty letter, but still shows "respect and admiration" for Peter and James, does not make himself appear to be superior.⁵
 - **Peter**. The public face of the Apostolic band, perhaps a "first among equals," starting on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40) where he became an "intrepid preacher" of the risen Christ. Persecuted and imprisoned repeatedly. Opened the door of the church to Gentiles (Acts 10). At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:9-11) spoke up for Gentile Christians.
 - **James**. Brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19). Was head of the Church at Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17; 15: 13-29). Authored *James*.
 - **Gentile believers in the Antioch congregation** (2:14).
 - **Jewish believers in the Antioch congregation** (2:15).
 - **Barnabas**. Jewish convert to Christianity early on (Acts 4:36). Pastored the congregation in Antioch (Acts 11:22--26); recruited Saul of Tarsus to join the pastoral team there. Partnered with Saul/Paul in missionary journeys.
 - **Jesus Christ** (vs. 16). The risen Messiah; the incarnate Son of God! Had revealed Himself to Saul. The Redeemer (Gal. 3:13).
 - **God** (vs. 19). Sent His Son and His Spirit for believers' benefit. A God of grace (1:1, 15; 2:21; 3:18).
3. **Where:** Gal. 2:11-21 reports on events which had happened in **Antioch**, the leading city of Syria and third leading city in the Roman Empire. A thriving congregation existed there, under the leadership of Barnabas, Saul, and others.
4. **When.** Read Acts 15:30-36, which probably preceded the event reported by Paul in verses 11-14.
5. **"I opposed him to his face"** (vs. 11)
- Paul uses another important event from his life as a negative example of consistency, an incident in which he criticizes Peter's hypocrisy."⁶
 - "The impetuous, vacillating, blundering, coward Peter is rebuked face to face by the righteously indignant Paul, that ... he at least may not prove a hindrance to the cause of liberty."⁷
 - Paul "reproved him to his face, freely spoke his mind to him, boldly resisted him, honestly endeavoured to convince him of his mistake. ..."⁸
6. **Peter "... began to ... separate himself."** (vs. 12)
- The men coming from James "... threatened Peter to tell James and the church about his conduct and they reminded Peter of his previous arraignment before the Jerusalem Church on this very charge (Acts 11:1-18)."⁹
 - "... the timid conduct of St. Peter, who, by withdrawing from the Gentiles, led others to think that these ceremonies were necessary."¹⁰
- For Peter to exhibit inconsistent behavior "... from fear of people who are themselves in the wrong seems to be doubly reproachable."¹¹
 - "His conduct did not agree with the true sentiments of his mind ... which must be very staggering to the believing Gentiles, to see so great a man behave in such a manner ... as if they were persons not fit to converse with, and as if the observance of Jewish ... ceremonies was necessary to salvation."¹²
 - The bottom line, "fearless Peter" was afraid!
7. **"... even Barnabas was led astray."** (vs. 13)
- "... the inconsistency detected by Paul was ... so subtle that it confused even Paul's companion in ministry, Barnabas."¹³
 - "It was a solemn moment when Paul saw the Jerusalem victory vanish and even Barnabas desert him as they followed the timid cowardice of Peter."¹⁴
8. **Forcing "Gentiles to follow Jewish customs."** (vs. 14)
- "You [Peter] do not observe Jewish customs, especially dietary restrictions."¹⁵
 - "Really Paul charges Peter with trying to compel the Gentiles to live all like Jews ... the very point at issue in the Jerusalem Conference when Peter so loyally supported Paul. It was a bold thrust that allowed no reply."¹⁶
 - "The Gentile Christians at Antioch really had no option but to suffer the rejection and second-class status brought about by Peter's hypocrisy."¹⁷
 - "They [the legalistic teachers] violated the simplicity of the gospel of free grace by insisting that circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law must be added to faith in Christ in order to assure salvation."¹⁸
9. **"Observing the Law" vs. "faith in Jesus Christ."** (vs. 16)
- The **key verse** of the whole letter!
 - "The **law** comprises everything in Scripture which is a revelation of God's will in the form of command or prohibition, while the **gospel** embraces everything, whether it be in the Old Testament or in the New, that pertains to the work of reconciliation and that proclaims the seeking and redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus."¹⁹
 - The two ways of getting right with God are here set forth: by faith in Christ Jesus, [or] by the works of the law (by keeping all the law in the most minute fashion, the way of the Pharisees). Paul knew them both (see Rom. 7). ... The same plan exists for Jew and Gentile."²⁰
 - "Hitherto St. Paul had been considering that single question, 'Are Christians obliged to observe the ceremonial law?' But he here insensibly goes farther, and ... shows that what he spoke directly of the ceremonial included also the moral law."²¹
10. **"... justified by faith in Christ."** (vs. 17)

⁴ *St. Paul, The Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, by Wm. Ramsay, page 188.

⁵ *St. Paul, The Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, by Wm. Ramsay, page 57.

⁶ *Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 63.

⁷ *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*, by Frank Goodwin, page 58.

⁸ *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

⁹ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

¹⁰ *MORNING & EVENING: DAILY READINGS*, by Charles Spurgeon.

¹¹ *Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 64.

¹² *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

¹³ *Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 64.

¹⁴ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

¹⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1783.

¹⁶ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

¹⁷ *Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 66.

¹⁸ *Unger's Guide to the Bible*, by Merrill F. Unger, page 285.

¹⁹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 612.

²⁰ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

²¹ *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, by John Wesley.

- I can face the holy God without even a twinge of guilt or shame because I am cloaked in Christ's righteousness and that's all He sees.
- "The pardon granted in justification applies to all sins, past, present, and future, and thus involves the removal of all guilt and of every penalty."²²
- ". . . the faith is the instrument by which we appropriate Christ and His righteousness."²³

11. "I have been crucified with Christ. . . ." (vs. 20)

- "I have been crucified with Christ. One of Paul's greatest mystical sayings. . . . Paul died to the law and was crucified with Christ. He uses often the idea of dying with Christ and burial with Christ also."²⁴
- ". . . to accept Christ by faith is an extremely radical act. . . . more radical and difficult than keeping the Law. . . . Faith . . . requires crucifixion with Christ, or death to self."²⁵

12. "I no longer live." (vs. 20)

- "Every sinner who is regenerated is directly connected with Christ and receives his life from Him."²⁶
- "So complete has become Paul's identification with Christ that his separate personality is merged into that of Christ. This language helps one to understand the victorious cry in Rom. 7:25.²⁷ It is the union of the vine and the branch (John 15:1-6) Paul has the closest personal feeling toward Christ."²⁸
- Sanctification is ". . . a work of God, as a fruit of the union of life with Jesus Christ."²⁹

13. "Christ lives in me." (vs. 20)

- I cannot change my ways but Christ is able.
- "Christ . . . is a fountain of life in my inmost soul, from which all my tempers, words, and actions flow."³⁰
- ". . . Who was not only the author and maintainer of his [Paul's] spiritual life, but the life itself; he was formed in his soul, dwelt in his heart, was united to him, was one with him, whence all vital principles and vital actions sprung, and all the . . . comforts of a spiritual life flowed."³¹
- "Christ lives and reigns in him, and he lives here on earth by faith in the Son of God, which works by love, causes obedience, and changes into his holy image. Thus he neither abuses the grace of God, nor makes it in vain."³²
- "The old life is laid aside, and the new life is a Christlike life, due to the spirit of Christ. He is now merged in Christ."³³

14. "Christ . . . loved me and gave Himself for me." (vs. 20)

- Jesus Christ ". . . took the place of sinners, and . . . their guilt was imputed, and their punishment transferred, to Him."³⁴

- "God distributes His blessings to men in a free and sovereign manner, not in consideration of inherent merit of men. . . ."³⁵

²²*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 514.

²³*Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 520.

²⁴*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

²⁵*Galatians*, by David K. Huttar, page 68.

²⁶*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 451.

²⁷Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God --through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

²⁸*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

²⁹*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 532.

³⁰*Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, by John Wesley.

³¹*An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

³²*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, by Matthew Henry.

³³*People's New Testament Commentary*.

³⁴*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 376.

³⁵*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 428.