



DISCIPLES & THE EARLY CHURCH

Unit 3 • The Galatian Church

UNIT DESCRIPTION

The letter to the churches in Galatia sharply addresses their misconceptions and false teachings regarding grace. Evidently Judaizers had influenced many in the churches of Galatia. "Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed, among other things, that a number of the ceremonial practices of the OT were still binding on the NT church. Following Paul's successful campaign in Galatia, they insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide by certain OT rites, especially circumcision. They may have been motivated by a desire to avoid the persecution of Zealot Jews who objected to their fraternizing with Gentiles (see 6:12). The Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that out of a desire to make the message more appealing to Gentiles he had removed from the gospel certain legal requirements.

"Paul responded by clearly establishing his apostolic authority and thereby substantiating the gospel he preached. By introducing additional requirements for justification (e.g., works of the law) his adversaries had perverted the gospel of grace and, unless prevented, would bring Paul's converts into the bondage of legalism. It is by grace through faith alone that man is justified, and it is by faith alone that he is to live out his new life in the freedom of the Spirit." [1]

The letter can be divided into 3 sections:

1. The Gospel of Grace Defended
2. The Gospel of Grace Explained
3. The Gospel of Grace Applied

Chapters 1 and 2 lay out Paul's apostleship and authority. When Peter strayed from the truth (Galatians 2:14), Paul publicly confronted him and publicly defended grace. Chapters 3 and 4 explain the gospel of grace and chapters 5 and 6 apply grace to everyday life.

[1] NIV Study Bible, Copyright @ 1985 by the Zondervan Corporation, p. 1779.



THE TRUTH ABOUT GRACE

Disciples & Early Church • U3#1 1st-3rd Gr. • Aug.18, 2024

Concept

God's gospel is grace and grace alone.

Goal

Students will learn what it means to stand up for God's truth because the gospel of grace is true and must be defended.

Passage

Galatians 1:6-11; 2:11-16

Key Verse: "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you." Galatians 2:5

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Learning Activity #2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garbage bag of unusual apparel items, e.g., wild ties, crazy hats, wigs, bathrobe, large coats, belts, jewelry, shoes* (teachers provide) 	<p>Activity Station:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Paul stood up for God's truth" on cardstock, 1/student</i> • <i>Copy paper, 5 sheets/class</i> • <i>3 hard-cover Bibles or other books</i> • Scissors • Markers • Glue sticks

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information (for the teacher)

Disciples & Early Church • U3#1 1st-3rd Grade • Aug.18, 2024

Many of the Jewish people of the first century were inundated constantly with Mosaic Law, rules regarding the Sabbath, how to approach God, who they could relate to and even rules about food. This mixture of God-given and man-made laws was at the very core of Jewish identity. They dictated who they were, their values, actions, and culture.

We, too, all have a set of "rules" that dictate who we are, our values, actions, and culture. We need to constantly evaluate the "rules" that govern our lives. We must keep them in line with God's truth and discard those that oppose it. The Bible calls us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2). Because our actions and our attitudes result from our thoughts, we must learn to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Sometimes this may mean swimming against the current of society and standing firm against the pressure of the world. And sometimes it may mean swimming against the current of Christians who do not or will not understand grace. Often we must graciously stand firm against the pressure of fellow believers.

“At Antioch Peter discovered a community of Jewish and Gentile Christians living together and, in particular, eating together in apparent disregard of Jewish dietary customs. This was probably against the practice then prevailing in Jerusalem..., but God had already shown Peter what he was to do in such situations. God had told Peter in the vision of the great sheet, 'Do not call anything unclean that God has made clean' (Acts 10:15). So Peter, no doubt remembering this and being impressed with the example of Jewish/Gentile harmony, joined with other Jews in eating with his Gentile brothers. According to Paul, Peter did this for some time, because the imperfect tense of the verb implies that he ate with the Gentiles not once, on a single occasion, but on a regular basis, habitually. In this decision, Peter went beyond the letter of the decrees of the council... Now Peter was declaring that the Jew as well as the Gentile was free from Mosaic legislation.”

[1] Gaebelin, Frank E., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10, © 1976 by the Zondervan Corporation, pp. 445-446.

Set Up

- For the **Object Lesson**: As students arrive, pull 5 trustworthy students aside and ask them to be part of a secret experiment with the class. When the instruction to “walk” is given, they are to walk in a circle but they are not to let anyone know that they have been given that instruction.
- Arrange to perform the DRAMA with another class, if desired.

Activity Stations:

- **Craft – Stand-Up Paul Card**

- **Instructions:** Give each student a printed cardstock page with “Paul stood up for God’s truth,” a vertical line the length of the page, the drawing of Paul and a 1” x 5 ¼” strip. Cut along the vertical line from the top to the bottom. Fold the larger piece of cardstock in half so that the words “Paul stood up for God’s truth” are on the inside of the card. From the remaining piece of cardstock, cut out the 1”x 5 ¼” strip. Fold the strip in half along the dotted line and crease the fold. Open it up, fold the ends toward the center fold, fold along the other two dotted lines and crease so that there are four quarters (#1-4). To construct a three-dimensional square, put glue on quarters #1 and #4 and glue them to the card so that the ends touch along the inside fold line of the card with #1 on the top and #4 below the fold line. Color Paul as desired. Cut out the box around the drawing of Paul. Put glue on quarter #3 and glue Paul to it so he is upright when the card is opened. Close the card making sure that Paul goes face down inside. Open the card and Paul will stand up.
- While the students are working tell them that today they will learn that Paul stood up for the truth when it wasn’t popular. He didn’t give in to what other people thought because he stood up for God’s truth. All of us often give in because we care more about what people think than what God thinks.

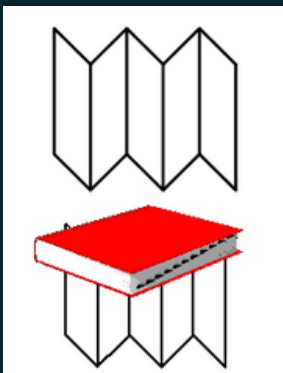
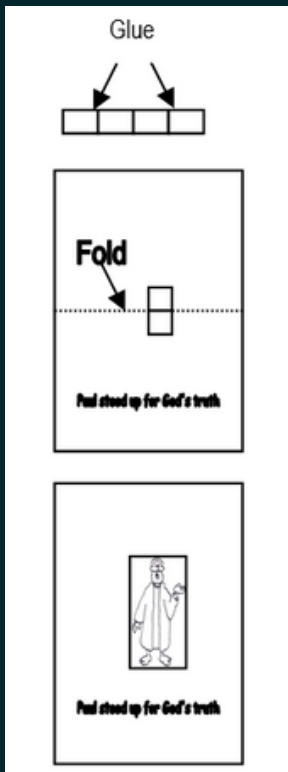
- **Demonstration – Stand Up Under Pressure**

- **Instructions:** Give the students a piece of copy paper and a hard-back Bible or other book. Have them try to get the paper to hold up and support the weight of the book. After their attempts, take the paper and fold it like a fan. Open it partially and stand it on its edge. Carefully place the book on top of it. If there are a few students who want to try this together have them break into teams to see if they can figure it out. It is hard to stand up under pressure. How can we be strengthened? (We can be strengthened by God and His truth.) How? (Must know the truth and depend on God to empower us to live by the truth.) It is important to stand up under pressure and defend the truth.

Object Lesson

Instructions: Have everyone stand up and instruct them to walk around the room.

Incorporation Lg. Group



Introduction Lg. Group

Introduction Continued

The five students chosen at the beginning of class should walk in a circle. There should be no other instruction than "walk." If they ask for additional instruction say, "Just walk." Allow 2-3 minutes for them to walk.

Debrief: It is amazing how easily we do what others do or what we think they want us to do without even thinking about it. The students who walked in a circle influenced some of you even though no one told you that you had to walk in a circle. There's nothing wrong with following people; we just need to be sure that those we are following are following God's truth.

Transition

Let's look at a situation in the Bible where one man was influenced by what others thought of him and another man stood on God's truth even though it wasn't popular.

Lesson Lg. Group

I want to make sure you understand three words. The first two words are Jews and Gentiles. They describe groups of people you will be hearing about many times this year. The Jews were the people that Moses led out of Egypt and Joshua took into to the Promised Land called Israel. Jesus was a Jew. Gentiles were everyone else, everyone who was not a Jew. If you weren't a Jew, you were a Gentile, just like if you aren't a boy, you're a girl. So, tell me the names of the two groups of people. (They are Jews & Gentiles.)

The third word is "grace." Grace is when we receive something we don't deserve. Birthday and Christmas presents are types of grace. They are gifts people give us because they love us, not necessarily because of anything we have done for them. Another type of grace is forgiveness. When we hurt or are mean to someone and they forgive us it's called grace. God's grace is His gift of forgiveness for our bad choices. God loves each one of you just as you are and He'll accept you just as you are because Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sin. His grace is a free gift to you and there is nothing you can do to earn it.

God's laws for the Jews were for their good, so that through this nation the rest of the world would have a picture of God's love and care for His people. God has always wanted all people in every nation to know about His love. He never told the Jews not to associate with the Gentiles. He told them not to marry Gentiles because He knew the Jews would be too easily influenced to the worship of the false gods and idols of the Gentiles rather than to worship the true God who loved and cared for them.

Let's read Galatians 1:6-11. Wow, Paul seems a bit upset, doesn't he? Paul is upset because there are some people who are more concerned about what other people think than teaching the truth. Let's turn to chapter 2 and read verses 11-14 to get some idea of what this false teaching was about.

Lesson Continued

Peter had been eating and hanging out with his Gentile friends. Some powerful Jewish Christian leaders dropped by and he separated himself from his non-Jewish friends. Why do you think he did that? Look in verse 12. Peter was afraid of what the powerful leaders would think of him and that they wouldn't approve of him. Verse 12 indicates Peter knew what was right, because he used to eat with the Gentiles. Remember Acts 10:9-16, where God gave Peter the vision of the clean and unclean animals to show him that he was to take the gospel to the Gentiles. So, why did he cave in and choose not to defend the truth? (He cared more about what others thought than standing up for and defending the truth.)

In front of everyone Paul stood up to Peter because the Lord had taught him that the gospel of grace is true and must be defended. Our key verse is, "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Galatians 2:5). Look at verse 16 to find out what the gospel is. We can't be good enough on our own to have a relationship with God because we can't perfectly keep His law. Our sin separates us from God. The Good News is that Jesus died on the cross as punishment for our sin. If we trust Him and have faith that His work on the cross makes us right with God, we will have a relationship with God and live with Him forever.

Transition

Let's get into small groups to discuss God's grace.

Learning Activity#1 Sm. Groups

Instructions: The idea in the following discussion is to help the students learn how to defend the gospel of grace. The bottom line is that the only thing that makes one a Christian is that he or she has received the free gift of grace through faith, i.e., verse 16 justified by faith in Christ alone and NOT by observing the law. As Christians, our acceptance continues to be based on Christ's work on the cross, NOT on anything we do or don't do. As we learn to live by grace, our choice to "do" will be in response to grace and in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

- Sometimes things seem to go well and sometimes they seem to go really bad when we make a choice to do what we believe is right. Do you ever decide not to do what is right because of what your friends might think? Is it always wrong to care what others think? When is it okay? When is it wrong?
- Peter and Paul were both Christians and they both knew that God loved the Gentiles. Why do you think they acted differently when the Jewish leaders showed up? (Peter cared more about what people thought than about what God thought. Paul knew the importance of standing on the truth of grace.)
- Why do you think it was so important to Paul that the Jews tell the Gentiles about grace? (If they didn't share with the Gentiles it would indicate that they believed they were somehow special to God or better than the Gentiles. If they never told the Gentiles, God's grace would not be known by everyone.)

Learning Activity #1 Continued

- What would you say to a Christian who told you that you have to be baptized or speak in tongues to be a Christian? (Look up John 1:12, John 3:16, Acts 16:31 if the students don't seem to know; whoever believes in Jesus death for their sins and receives forgiveness is a child of God—a Christian.)
- What if a Christian friend tells you that you shouldn't be friends with someone who says swear words or is mean? Or what if that person says that you can't possibly be a Christian if you do those things? (Allow time for discussion.) What do we have to do to be accepted by God? (Accept what He has done for us). Look at Ephesians 2:8, 9. This is grace. It's a free gift from God and is available to everyone who will receive it.
- If God accepts us completely based on what He has done, does that mean it's okay to disobey God and live a selfish, sinful life? Is it okay to be mean to our friends, parents, brothers and sisters? Why should we want to obey God? (The more we understand God's unconditional love and acceptance the more we want to please Him. God wants us to obey Him and live a life that will glorify Him to others. Because others are influenced by our actions it is very important for us to stand on grace.)
- Peter knew the truth but was afraid of what the powerful leaders would think of him. He went back to Jewish customs; and, as a result he wrongly influenced other people. Look at verse 13. Who was influenced by Peter's actions? (Other Jews and Barnabas were influenced.) If we want others to know Jesus and His grace, it is important to defend the gospel of grace and live by it rather than worry about the accusations of those who think that their acceptance by God is based on what they do or how they act.)
- What is the key verse? "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Galatians 2:5). This was so important to Paul that he was willing to stand up in public and confront Peter. Paul knew that if the free gift of grace was mixed with any law or rule that we can keep, the whole gospel would be lost and the truth of the Bible would not continue. Because Paul took this stand to defend grace in the early church, we can know grace today. Again, what is grace?

Missions Prayer: Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving Campaign.

Let's pray. Let's ask God to help us understand what it means to be accepted by Him because of what Jesus did on the cross for us rather than because of what we do. Ask Him to show us more and more clearly that He loves us no matter what we do or don't do. Let's ask Him to help us tell others about His grace.

Paul stood up and spoke the truth to Peter. Some people might have thought he looked ridiculous. Let's play a game to have fun looking ridiculous.

Transition

Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

Game---You Look Ridiculous!

Instructions: Have students form a circle. Place the garbage bag in the center of the circle. Pass an object around the circle while a teacher repeats the key verse, "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Galatians 2:5). When the verse is finished the student who has the object must, without looking, grab a piece of clothing out of the garbage bag, put it on and return to the circle. Continue until the garbage bag is empty. Depending on the amount of time you have, repeat the entire game. This should be a fun, hilarious activity. Ham it up and enjoy it with the kids.

Debrief: We just had fun looking ridiculous. Sometimes when we stand up for the truth we will look ridiculous to those who are watching. Paul stood up and publicly spoke the truth to Peter. He may have looked ridiculous to those who were watching, but he didn't care. He was willing to stand up and speak the truth because he knew that the truth of the gospel is the only way that people can be friends with God. He said, "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Galatians 2:5).