



## Scotts Hill Baptist Church

LIVING IN FREEDOM • GALATIANS 2:11-14 •

### MAIN POINT

Life isn't found in keeping the law but in walking by faith. We are no longer bound to keep the Law to maintain our standing with Jesus.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**In which sport(s) do you think it is most difficult to score? Why? In which sport is it easiest to score? Why?**

**In what ways might we as human beings try to "score points" with God?**

**Why do people want to "score points" with God? What's tempting about this approach? What's wrong with this approach?**

For those of us with a competitive spirit, games in which we can score more points than our opponents are exciting. We often consider games to be worthless unless a winner is declared. We also tend to think this way about God. Many people believe they can score points with God through seemingly righteous acts, but today we will see in Galatians 2 the futility of that hope. Only Jesus is able to satisfy the requirements of the law and we receive Him only through faith.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:11-14.

**How had Peter compromised his freedom in Christ? To who or what was he enslaving himself?**

**How is living under the law related to living in fear of people? How are both opposed to living in freedom?**

Peter lived with freedom when he was with Gentiles, but when Jews came to town, he gave up his freedom to be seen in their eyes as a good Jew who followed the law. Legalism and the fear of people seek to control our behavior and force us to fit what into what is deemed "right." The gospel says that we are free to live a life fully devoted to Christ.

**How do you know whether you're standing your ground on biblical principles or personal preferences?**

**How can we support each other as a group when these questions come up?**

**What role does love play in how you stand your ground?**

**Have you ever found yourself in a conflict situation that led you to question something that had previously been a "non-negotiable" for you? Explain.**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How does the realization that Christ loved you and gave Himself for you change you? Is there an area in your life today that doesn't reflect that truth?**

**Is it easier for you to believe that someone is a Christian when he or she is culturally, ethnically, socially, or racially "like you"? Why or why not?**

**How can we act on Paul's reminder to the Jews about equality among all sinners?**

**How can you help someone in your family better "live to God" this week?**

## PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer. Pray specifically for group members to apply the reality of God's love for them to the struggles in their lives. Pray that each person would continue to change in order to look more and more like Jesus. Pray that they would reflect on and understand what it means to daily die to self.

# COMMENTARY

## | GALATIANS 2:11-21

2:11-13. Paul had set a good example of being true to the gospel in the situation involving Titus. In contrast verses 11-13 describe an occasion when Peter was untrue to the gospel and led others into hypocritical behavior. The situation occurred in Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire during New Testament times and the capital of the Roman province of Syria. It was at Antioch that believers in Christ were first called Christians.

The issue revolved around Jews and Gentiles eating at the same table. Numerous rituals and guidelines related to mealtimes had arisen within Judaism. One of these guidelines restricted Jews from having table fellowship with Gentiles who lacked the seal of God's covenant—circumcision.

When Peter arrived in Antioch, he found Jewish and Gentile Christians eating together at mealtimes. Peter freely joined them in this practice, a behavior not surprising since in the situation with Cornelius, the Lord had revealed to Peter His equal acceptance of Gentiles who responded to Him in faith (Acts 11:1-18).

"When certain men came from James," however, Peter changed his behavior and withdrew from fellowship with the Gentiles. Who were these men who came from James, the leader of the Jerusalem church? We should not assume that they were the same false brothers who earlier were demanding that Titus be circumcised (Gal. 2:3-4). Apparently, the delegation had some loyalty to James and may even have carried letters of recommendation from him. When they saw Peter fellowshiping and eating with uncircumcised Gentile Christians, they were shocked. It is not clear whether their mere presence prompted Peter's change in behavior or if they spoke directly to him. In any case, Peter "began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles." The form of the verbs translated draw back and separate suggest that Peter gradually withdrew from fellowship meals with the Gentiles.

Peter's hypocritical behavior negatively influenced those around him. Other Jewish believers also began separating themselves from the Gentiles at mealtimes. Even Barnabas, a model of Christian encouragement, was led astray!

2:14. What motivated Peter's fear that resulted in his withdrawal from fellowship at meals with the Gentiles after certain men arrived from the church in Jerusalem? Perhaps he was concerned that eating with Gentiles would put his position as pillar of the Christian community in Jerusalem in jeopardy. Maybe he was concerned that he could not effectively witness to Jews if he did not strictly observe the law? Perhaps the delegation brought news from Jerusalem that influenced Peter in some way. Regardless of Peter's reason, he stood condemned because he was "not acting in line with the truth of the gospel." Peter was not walking a straight course. The apostle had begun wavering in his beliefs and he should have known better. The verb translated acting in line ("orthopodeo") literally means "to be straightfooted." Peter was acting with "hypocrisy" (2:13), not merely making an honest mistake. We have no evidence that Peter had changed his mind about salvation being available to the Gentiles, so his actions were inconsistent with his beliefs.