

**The Point:** God calls us to stand our ground, refusing to compromise when the truth of the gospel is at stake.

## HIS STORY

### Paul Challenged Peter's Behavior

The early church was still grappling with the different ways Jewish and Gentile Christians lived out their faith and how a unified church could work through these differences (Acts 15). These differences—the more Jewish-focused Christianity coming out of Jerusalem and the newer, more Gentile-focused Christianity coming from the large number of Gentile believers in Antioch—created the environment for Peter's hypocrisy.

Imagine a small, rural First Baptist Church congregation consisting mainly of families related to one another and having an organ, a piano, and a robed choir. Now, picture an urban, young, multiethnic congregation in a major city named Grace Community Church that has contemporary dress and music. Both churches preach the Word, share the gospel, love Jesus, and support missions. These two churches are very different, with very different cultures. Now, imagine what it would be like to merge these two churches together. That might help you understand what was going on in Antioch—a clash between two ways of understanding Christianity. Still, that was no excuse for hypocrisy. Indeed, there is never an excuse for it

► **What are some ways churches today understand and practice Christianity differently? Which, if any, are reasons to divide?**

### Paul Reminded Them of Justification by Faith, Not by Works

The ground is level at the cross. Regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity, whether we are male or female or young or old, we all come to God through the same door: Jesus.

Earlier, Paul said Peter's actions were a deviation from the truth of the gospel. Then, he unpacked what he meant. When Christians act with prejudice toward others, we deny the very gospel we proclaim. We are justified by faith and nothing else (v. 16)—not our works, our ethnic origin, or any other standard. This is why Paul saw Peter's hypocrisy as being so serious—the gospel was being denied.

### Faithful Living Comes from Being United with Christ

In one of the most formative New Testament passages regarding the Christian life, Paul declared how his life of holiness flowed out of being united with Christ.

Paul added the perfect conclusion to his line of thinking with verse 21. Others may try to void the grace of God, but Paul reminded us again of the Law's inability to rescue sinners from sin. If the law could do that, Christ's death was unnecessary. The Son of God put on flesh, came to earth, and suffered and died—not because of anything He did to deserve it, but because there was no other way. And because of His death, we have received the gift of life the only way we can—through faith in Him.

### Essential Doctrines

**Justification by Faith:** Justification *refers to* the moment a person is objectively declared righteous before God based on the righteousness of Christ's atoning death (Rom. 8:33-34). *This act of declaration takes place through faith in Christ, not as a result of human works or effort (Eph. 2:8-9). Through justification, a person is made to be in right standing before God, changing what was once an estranged and hostile relationship to one of adoption into the family of God.*

**Leader Note:** Because some content from the Personal Study Guide will not be available on the One Sheet, make sure to adapt the session based on how you use the material with your group.

# YOUR STORY

- ▶ **When have you been confronted by someone else or confronted someone else because of sin? How did it feel in the moment and how did it turn out in the end?**
- ▶ **How can we determine when a sin requires confrontation and when that confrontation should include other people?**
- ▶ **What are some examples of how the church can speak and act in ways that distort the gospel?**
- ▶ **How has this session challenged you personally when it comes to thinking about the fact that our lives either reflect or deflect the gospel?**

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# YOUR MISSION

### Head

Do Paul’s statements about the Law mean that we should ignore it altogether? Simply put: No. Just because we don’t look to the Law to be justified by our works doesn’t mean we cannot look to the Law to understand God’s character and heart better, allowing it to frame how we live each day.

- ▶ **How has the Law helped you grow in your love for God and others and helped you obey God?**
- ▶ **How do you keep a gospel-centered motivation for your obedience?**

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### Heart

This account reminds us that we need to examine our own hearts and get rid of any hypocrisy. We live in a time of obvious racial tension. Do you speak of a certain ethnic group one way when among people of that group but differently when around others? Is the starting point of your attitude toward those who do not look, act, or think like you the biblical perspective of all humanity being created in the image of God, or do you begin by focusing on those differences? The redemption we have in Christ opens the way for us to experience God’s full restoration of all things in the future. On that day, believers from every tribe and tongue will worship Jesus together as one. We can start preparing for that great day by treating one another with love and honor now.

- ▶ **How does the gospel propel you toward breaking down racial and ethnic barriers?**
- ▶ **What are some ways the church can actively promote gospel reconciliation among people groups?**

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### Hands

When we reflect on Paul’s rebuke of Peter, we have to see ourselves in each person’s position. Has God placed us as a Paul to help correct and guide someone else to faithfully live out and declare the gospel faithfully? Are we willing to take a bold and firm stand for truth because of our love for God and that person? But at the same time, we need to look deeply and see if we are living like Peter. Do we ask the Holy Spirit to help us see our blind spots—any prejudices or wrong views of others and any ways we are not declaring and living the gospel faithfully?

- ▶ **How will you take a stand for the gospel this week?**
- ▶ **What are some areas where you need to repent and live out the gospel more faithfully?**

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