

PAUL OPPOSED PETER IN ANTIOCH

Galatians 2:11-14

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Peter and Paul

Key-location: Antioch

Key-repetitions:

- Before Jewish believers from Jerusalem arrived in Antioch; versus, after they arrived: before, Peter lived like a non-Jew, while afterwards he pressured non-Jews to follow Jewish customs (Gal 2:14); before, Peter ate with non-Jewish Christians, while afterwards he stopped eating with non-Jewish Christians (Gal 2:12); before, all Jewish Christians lived like non-Jews, while afterwards other Jewish Christians joined Peter in his hypocrisy (Gal 2:13); before, Peter was at ease with non-Jews, while afterwards Peter was afraid of the Judaizers (Gal 2:12).

Key-attitudes:

- Peter's adaptation to non-Jewish customs as a guest at Antioch.
- Jerusalem Jews' arrogance toward non-Jews.
- Peter's fear of the Judaizers.
- Barnabas' faintheartedness under peer pressure.
- Paul's unyielding determination when confronting error.

Initial-situation:

After Pentecost, the number of Jewish believers increased. Saul tried to destroy the church, and believers scattered from Jerusalem. Saul was converted on the road to Damascus. Saul spent a short time in Galatia and then Jerusalem. Then Saul returned to his home city of Tarsus.

Some Jewish believers, who scattered because of the persecution, arrived in Antioch and told non-Jewish Greeks the Good News about Jesus. Many people believed and turned to the Lord. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch. Barnabas saw evidence that God was at work in Antioch. Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Saul, and brought him to Antioch.

Initial-problem:

Peter traveled to Antioch.

Final-situation:

Paul saw that Peter was not obeying the truth from the gospel, and Paul publicly corrected Peter.

BIBLE STORY

For a year, Barnabas and Saul taught great numbers of people in Antioch (Ac 11:26).

Saul of Tarsus was born a Jew, and was given the Hebrew name Saul. Tarsus was a Roman city; thereby, Saul was a Roman citizen. So, Saul also had the Roman name Paul. On his first missionary journey, Saul began to use the name Paul, a name that was common with non-Jews.

Peter traveled to Antioch. Peter arrived in Antioch and sat at the table, eating with non-Jewish Christians. James sent a group of Jewish believers from Jerusalem. Peter was afraid of those Jewish followers who insisted that circumcision was necessary for non-Jews to become Christians. Peter drew back and stopped eating with non-Jewish Christians. Other Jewish Christians joined Peter in his hypocrisy. Even Barnabas was led astray and joined their hypocrisy.

Paul saw that they were not obeying the truth of the gospel. Paul publicly corrected Peter. Paul said, "Peter, you're Jewish; yet, you lived like a non-Jewish person. How can you force non-Jews to follow Jewish customs and live like Jews" (Gal 2:11-14).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul publicly oppose Peter?
2. When should a Christian be publicly reprimanded?
3. Peter stopped eating with non-Jewish Christians when believers from Jerusalem arrived in Antioch. Are there parallels today where Christians avoid other professed Christians?
4. Why did Paul accuse Peter of hypocrisy?
5. Who are some small groups whose vocal confrontation is so strong that it is easier to give in than to stand for what is right?
6. When or where do people feel peer pressure today to avoid doing what they know is right?
7. Who has great influence over you who could influence you to do either good or bad?
8. Who respects you so much that you have the ability to influence them for either good or bad?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Peter was not superior to the other apostles.** *The Roman Catholic Church in the Decrees of the First Vatican Council, July 1870, Chapter 1, 1, decreed that Christ conferred on Peter a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church of God. In other words, Christ gave Peter the privilege of ruling over the church.* Paul did not recognize Peter as having authority over him. The opposite is true. When Peter stopped eating with non-Jewish Christians, Paul called Peter a hypocrite, accused him of being wrong, and publicly opposed Peter face to face. Paul would not have opposed Peter if Christ had given Peter authority over the whole church. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that Peter was superior to the other apostles.
2. **When essential truths are in danger of being compromised, truth must be defended by Christians, whatever the cost.** Paul defended the gospel, even when it resulted in an undesirable conflict (Gal 2:11-14).
3. **The Christian who stops living according to his convictions in order to please other people is practicing hypocrisy.** Peter visited the church in Antioch and lived like a non-Jewish believer. He ate food he had never eaten before. He didn't observe the days that Jews observed as holy. He didn't practice Jewish ceremonies. He lived like the non-Jewish believers he was visiting. When militant Judaizers from Jerusalem arrived, Peter stopped following the truth given to him by God. Peter feared the Judaizers from Jerusalem and acted contrary to the truth he understood by withdrawing from eating with non-Jewish believers. Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy (Gal 2:12-13).
4. **A respected leader will have followers and his influence over others can be for the good or the bad.** Barnabas and other Jewish Christians followed Peter's bad example of refusing to eat with non-Jews (Gal 2:13).
5. **Professed Christians who practice hypocrisy by not living according to the gospel need to be called out for their wrong doing.** Paul publicly opposed Peter for Peter's wrongdoing and hypocrisy (Gal 2:13).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Monologue Drama:

Ask for volunteers to tell the story from the viewpoint of different characters in the story:

- A legalistic Jew from Jerusalem talking about how Paul told Peter off.
- A non-Jewish Christian from Antioch talking about how Paul told Peter off.