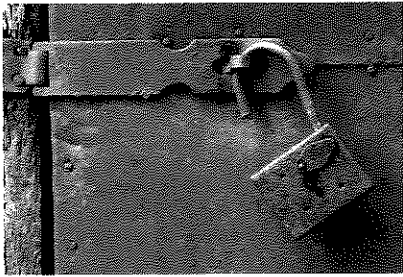


# The Same Gospel for All People

## LESSON 3



### Topic

The gospel's application

### Theme

The gospel is for everyone regardless of culture or ethnicity.

### Desired Learner Response

The learner will support and seek cross-cultural witnessing opportunities.

### Materials

- One-size-fits-all work glove
- Resources 1 and 5
- Paper and pencils

### Scripture Focus

Galatians 2:1–10

### Summary

Paul went to Jerusalem to consult the leaders of the church there. The leaders did not change the gospel Paul preached or impose any Jewish requirements on the Gentile believers. They simply requested that Paul remember to give financial assistance to the impoverished Jewish believers in Judea. Paul's gospel proved true and applicable to all humanity.

### Outline

#### I. Review of Paul's Ministry (Gal. 2:1–5)

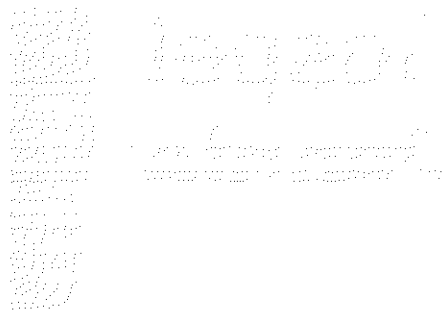
- A. Paul's purpose (2:1, 2)
- B. Paul's pressure (2:3–5)

#### II. Reaffirmation of Paul's Ministry (Gal. 2:6–10)

- A. Evaluators (2:6)
- B. Evidence (2:7, 8)
- C. Evaluation (2:9, 10)

### Memory Verse

*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).*



## GETTING STARTED

Use the following activities to help each learner think about the universal application of the gospel.

### Spanning the Globe

Invite well-traveled learners to tell the class what countries they have visited and how people in those countries manifest needs similar to those of people at home.

How people meet their basic needs changes from culture to culture. But how a person meets his need for eternal life transcends all cultures. Paul preached the same gospel everywhere he went and shared the same plan of salvation with every ethnic group he met. The gospel's universal appeal should motivate us to share it cross-culturally too.

### One Size Fits All?

Have a man with a large hand and a woman with a small hand each try on a one-size-fits-all glove. Have them describe how the gloves fit their hands.

**ASK:** What do you think about the manufacturer's claim that these gloves are one-size-fits-all?

**ASK:** What experiences have you had with one-size-fits-all products? (Q1)

**ASK:** Do you agree or disagree that one gospel fits all? Why? (Q2)

Paul taught that the gospel he received from the Lord is a one-size-fits-all gospel. So, he was faithful to take to both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel's universal appeal should motivate us to share it cross-culturally too.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Paul had been preaching for fourteen years when he went to Jerusalem. He took the opportunity to have his ministry examined by the church leaders there. When they heard what he preached, they confirmed that he was speaking the truth. Then they encouraged Paul to continue faithfully in his ministry.

### I. Review of Paul's Ministry (Gal. 2:1–5)

Paul had only minimal contact with the church leaders in Jerusalem. He had spent fifteen days there (1:18), but then he had to flee the city. For the next decade or longer, he ministered in Tarsus, and then, for a year, he taught in the church at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Although he ministered to Jews, he primarily focused on proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. He had received this assignment from God (Gal. 1:15, 16), and he faithfully performed it.

#### A. Paul's purpose (2:1, 2)



**READ:** Galatians 2:1.

The time period of “fourteen years after” may refer to fourteen years after Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus (1:21). However, it may refer to a total of fourteen years from the time of his salvation (1:15, 16). Either way, Paul mentioned this interval to show that he had not had direct contact with the believers in Jerusalem for a long time.

The purpose of his visit to Jerusalem was likely to deliver a monetary gift for famine relief for Jerusalem believers (Acts 11:27–30). As a secondary purpose, Paul used the visit to clarify that the gospel is God’s unchanging message of saving grace for all cultures and ethnicities.

**ASK:** How are some churches changing the gospel? (Q3) *Some are toning down God’s judgment on the sinner; some require the sinner to claim Jesus is his Lord in order to be saved; some allow for a mix of works and faith.*

**ASK:** Why might churches make such changes to the gospel? (Q4) *Some do it because they have a misunderstanding of Scripture while others do it on purpose to build a larger church or to appear progressive.*

**READ:** Galatians 2:2.

Paul informed the Galatians that the apostles had not summoned him to Jerusalem. Such a summons would have implied that he was inferior to the apostles. He wrote, “I went up by revelation” (Gal. 2:2). Perhaps the revelation had come through Agabus, who prophesied the impending famine (Acts 11:27, 28). Regardless, Paul had not initiated the contact with the apostles. The Lord had brought them together.

Paul met privately with the Christian leaders (James, Peter, and John) in Jerusalem to explain the gospel he had been preaching to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:2). He wanted to make sure they agreed with him lest they make a misinformed, public statement about the gospel and undermine his past and future ministry to the Gentiles. If the church in Jerusalem had caved and added circumcision or other requirements to the salvation message, it would have greatly upset Paul’s past ministry while putting difficult hurdles in the path of his future evangelistic endeavors.

**ASK:** Why do think Paul used running as a metaphor for his evangelistic and church planting efforts? (Q5) *It communicated that he had goals and milestones to reach; it revealed the tenacity and concentration with which he approached ministry; it showed that he committed his life to sharing the gospel.*

Paul recognized that any addition of Jewish regulations to the gospel would undermine his ministry to the Gentiles and put him off course. He did not want his ministry to the Gentiles to be subverted. He wanted the church to be unified around the true gospel.

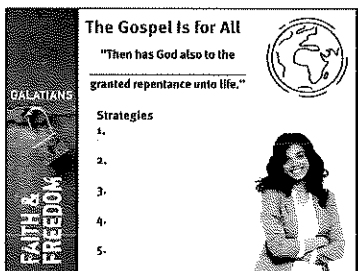
### **B. Paul’s pressure (2:3–5)**

**READ:** Galatians 2:3.



The case of Titus, a Gentile, served as a perfect test of whether Gentile believers needed to submit to Jewish law. Circumcision served as the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen. 17:9–14). It distinguished Judaism so clearly that the Jews referred to Gentiles as “the uncircumcised.” But what about Titus? Would the Jewish believers in Jerusalem require him to be circumcised? The answer was no (Gal. 2:3). They recognized that the Gentile Christians were not bound by the Jewish regulation.

Peter would have known by personal experience that God saves Gentiles without requiring them to become circumcised. God had compelled him to visit Cornelius, a Gentile, and deliver the gospel to him. When Cornelius and his household believed on Christ as Savior, Peter told him: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35). The believers in Judea criticized Peter because he had fellowshiped with Gentiles; however, when he told them about Cornelius, they glorified God, and concluded, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).



**RESOURCE:** Display resource 5. Read the following from the resource:

“Then has God also to the \_\_\_\_\_ granted repentance unto life.” Have the learners read the sentence while filling in the blank with the names of ethnic groups living in their neighborhoods.

**ASK:** God has called us to reach our neighbors for the gospel regardless of their ethnicity. What strategies might we use to reach them more effectively? (Q6) (Record or reveal answers on the resource.)

Not every church member in Jerusalem was willing to accept the Gentiles into Christ’s church as equals. Paul mentioned that some false brethren “came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (2:4). These false brethren may have appeared to be orthodox Christians, but their insistence on adding Jewish regulations to the gospel of grace alone meant that they were teaching a false gospel. They tried to retain the old bondage under the law. They considered Paul an enemy to spy on rather than a brother to encourage and support. They had substituted sentimental attachment to traditions for sincere allegiance to God and His program.

**ASK:** Why is a sentimental feeling a dangerous test for determining what to believe and who to accept into the church? (Q7) *Sentimental feelings, especially those based on past, positive experiences, powerfully affect a person’s decision making, prompting the person to adopt a doctrine or standard that has no biblical basis or that alienates people groups from joining the church.*

Although the false teachers in Galatia had not been involved in the dispute in Jerusalem, the same principle was at stake in both instances. The Judaizers in Galatia had attacked Paul’s message of grace alone and his authority as an apostle. By citing the case of Titus, Paul demonstrated that the original apostles in Jerusalem had agreed not to compel Titus to be circumcised. In doing so, they had agreed that the gospel of grace, which Paul preached, was indeed the truth.

**READ:** Galatians 2:5.

Paul had grown up with the highest respect for the Jewish traditions and laws (1:14), but he was not going to budge an inch from grace (2:5). Certainly, he had a personal concern for Titus, not wanting him to be shaken or hurt. However, he was even more concerned about the truth of the gospel. If he compromised the truth a little to make it more palatable to the Jews, the whole foundation of the Christian faith would start to crumble. Paul's goal was to maintain the pure truth of the gospel of grace.

## **II. Reaffirmation of Paul's Ministry (Gal. 2:6–10)**

Much was at stake in this controversy between grace and legalism. If the false brethren had carried the day, Christians would have split into two major factions. There would have been a Jewish church and a Gentile church, and there would have been two separate gospels—one true and one false. However, the apostles supported Paul's contention that the gospel is for Jews and Gentiles alike, without any addition of Jewish regulations. God's one message is for everyone!

### **A. Evaluators (2:6)**

**READ:** Galatians 2:6.

The Jerusalem leaders did not add to Paul's authority, because they were only his peers, fellow servants of Christ. Nor did they add any works clauses to his message, because they agreed that his gospel was God's truth.

Paul was not speaking disparagingly of James, Peter, and John. He simply stated that they didn't have any special standing over him. The Judaizers elevated the three pillars in the Jerusalem church to discredit Paul. But in the end, the pillars in Jerusalem agreed with Paul and shared the same understanding of the gospel.

### **B. Evidence (2:7, 8)**

**READ:** Galatians 2:7, 8.

Paul received a commission from God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In carrying out that commission, he communicated the good news in terms that were meaningful to the Gentiles, but he kept the unaltered message of grace in the forefront.

Peter had received God's charge to preach the gospel to the Jews (2:7). Although he referred to the Old Testament more often than Paul did, his gospel of grace through Christ was the same gospel Paul preached. God had authorized and empowered both Peter and Paul to take the gospel to two different audiences (2:8). That they were both successful gave evidence that both preached the true gospel.

**ASK:** How might cultural differences affect our witnessing? (Q8) *Culture could affect the avenues we choose for introducing the gospel, the words we use for explaining the gospel, and the objections we dispel for not accepting the gospel.*

**ASK:** When has a cultural difference made your witnessing difficult? (Q9)

Unlike Paul and Peter, the Judaizers in Galatia had no special revelation from God and no special calling. They made up their perverted gospel and anointed themselves as ministers of their twisted message.

### **C. Evaluation (2:9, 10)**

The leaders of the early church in Jerusalem were James, John, and Cephas (Peter). James was widely respected because he was a half-brother of the Lord (1:19). Peter and John had been members of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. They, along with John's brother James, had been the only disciples present at the Transfiguration; and, of all the disciples, they were the closest to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was arrested. Their affirmation of Paul's message would strongly influence the Jewish believers.

**READ:** Galatians 2:9.

Reporting about his meeting with James, Peter, and John, Paul wrote that they "perceived the grace that was given unto me" (2:9). They recognized fully that God had indeed called Paul to minister to the Gentiles. The evidence was undeniable. So, they extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, symbolizing that they preached the true gospel and shared a commitment to God's plan. For Paul, this sign demonstrated that the apostles in Jerusalem recognized the genuineness of his message and that Paul was on an equal plane with the other apostles.

**READ:** Galatians 2:10. **ASK:** How does caring for people's needs affect the unity between the giver and the receiver? (Q10) *Caring for needs creates a strong bond between believers. It becomes a tangible expression of the love of God.*

In the first century, Jerusalem and the surrounding area experienced chronic economic problems. Judea's economic base was fragile because of overuse of the land, deforestation, and frequent influxes of religious pilgrims. In the church's infancy, wealthy Christians, such as Barnabas, sold their property to acquire funds to help those in need (Acts 4:34–37). However, this was not a long-term solution to the problem. So, Paul and Barnabas had brought famine relief money from Antioch to Jerusalem for the impoverished Christians in Judea (Acts 11:29, 30).

Later, in accordance with the Jerusalem leadership, he made a point to encourage Gentile believers to contribute to the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The Gentile churches responded. In his letters to the Romans and the Corinthians, Paul referred to collections for the believers in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25–27; 2 Cor. 8; 9).

God's work went forward because the apostles affirmed that God had given them the same gospel but different fields of service. Instead of competing as rivals, they served the Lord faithfully as brothers united in God's common cause.

**ASK:** How might two neighboring churches with the same doctrinal position combat a spirit of rivalry and jealousy? (Q11) *By having the leadership in each church publicly pray for God to bless the other church; by having the*

leadership in each church publicly praise God for what He is doing in the other church; by getting together to worship the Lord.

**ASK:** How should a believer react when he or she hears gossip or disparaging remarks about another gospel-preaching church? (Q12) *He or she should call it gossip, refuse to listen to it, and gently inform the person spreading the gossip that doing so grieves Christ.*

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Cross-Cultural Strategy

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 5 again. Review the strategies for reaching the different ethnicities present in your learners' neighborhoods. **ASK:** What strategy will you personally use to reach the different ethnicities in your neighborhood? (Q13)

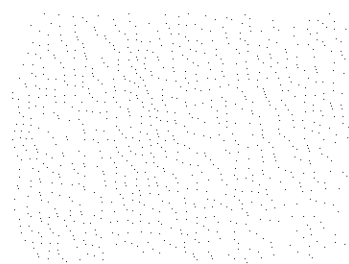
### Missionary Profiles

Prepare a brief true/false quiz in which you test learners' knowledge of the missionaries your church supports. Distribute paper and pencils to the learners. Ask brief questions about each missionary's family, place of service, kind of service. Challenge the learners to get to know your church's missionaries and to strengthen at least one missionary's ministry in the coming week. (Q14)

### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Proactively take the gospel across cultures.

Encourage your learners to memorize Mark 16:15. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.



GALATIANS  
FAITH & FREEDOM

**The Gospel Is for All**  
"Then has God also to the  
granted repentance unto life."

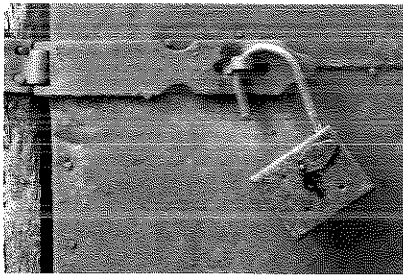
**Strategies**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
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**Living by Faith**

1.	8.
2.	9.
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5.	12.
6.	13.
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# Confronting Performance Christianity

## Scripture Focus

Galatians 2:11–21

## Summary

When a delegation of Jews arrived in Antioch, Peter withdrew from the Gentile believers. Other saved Jews, following Peter's lead, also withdrew from their Gentile brothers in Christ. Seeing Peter's action as blatant hypocrisy, Paul confronted him. He reminded Peter that justification is by faith, not by law.

### Topic

Justification

### Theme

God justifies people by grace through faith so they might then live by faith in God.

### Desired Learner Response

The learner will praise God for justification and put his faith in God for daily Christian growth.

### Materials

- Resources 1 and 6

## Outline

### I. The Example of Adding Law to Justification (Gal. 2:11–14)

- A. Peter's practice (2:11, 12)
- B. Peter's poor example (2:13)
- C. Peter's hypocrisy (2:14)

### II. The Explanation of Justification by Faith (Gal. 2:15–21)

- A. Paul declared the doctrine (2:15, 16)
- B. Paul answered objections (2:17–20)
  1. Objection: Justification makes God a sinner (2:17, 18)
  2. Objection: Justification leaves no rule for life (2:19, 20)
- C. Paul pointed to the cross (2:21)

## Memory Verse

*"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).*