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transparent believer

galatians 2:11-21



I think every one would agree that they enjoy being around genuine people because they know that what they see is what they get. Cassie Bernall felt the same way.

I need to be completely honest with myself and to God and stop thinking I can fool him—he's GOD, for crying out loud! And I can't make compromises. It's like being lukewarm—he'll spit me out if I keep it up. I can't ride the fence one day, trying to convince myself I'm just "reaching out to people" by acting "normal," and then trying to be a dedicated Christian the next. I don't want anyone to think of me as the WBCC [West Bowles Community Church] Hypocrite... (p. 100).

Warm-up

What is your definition of a hypocrite? _____

Why do you think that the profession of acting best fits the original meaning of the word hypocrite? _____

Discussion: Who is the worst hypocrite you know? (It could be a politician, movie star, athlete, etc.) Why is hypocrisy so revolting to you? What are some ways that Christians are hypocritical?

The original idea of the word *hypocrite* actually means “a reply or an answer” within the context of playacting. It speaks of someone playing a part or pretending to be someone they are not. According to this definition, the profession of acting best fits the description because actors attempt to portray themselves as someone they are not.

Cassie’s desire was to be a transparent Christian. **She was not afraid** to talk about her weaknesses to others and was **not afraid** of what others would think.

Her friend Cassandra said,

She wasn’t one to fake it and say “I’m doing just fine.” She was totally honest about what was bothering her, or what she was working through, which is so rare. And I’ve learned to value that a lot more (p. 117).

Did you know that she showed more courage on her fateful day in that library than one of the most famous pillars of the ancient church? Let’s find out more.

The Text:

Galatians was primarily written to clear up a problem that occurred in the church at Galatia. Chapter two details some of the events at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and also describes how Paul handled the hypocrisy of Peter (Cephas).

Read Galatians 2:11 and write down what Paul did when he saw Peter.

Basically, Paul got in his face and with precision any lawyer would admire, cut Peter's hypocrisy to shreds in front of everyone.

So what was the big deal? Here is the background in a nutshell. Pay close attention to the story as we will revisit it again. Let's look at the story as though it were a dramatic play.

Main Characters:

- **Paul**—a saved Jew who believes that faith in Christ alone is enough to save and as a result both Jew and Gentile are equal in Christ.
- **Peter**— the impetuous disciple of Christ that had to be convinced through a vision that the Gentiles (whom Jews saw as filthy dogs) were to be evangelized with the Gospel.
- **Judaizers**—a religious sect who held strongly to the Mosaic law, believing that salvation came through faith in Christ plus keeping the Law (circumcision).
- **Barnabas**—A traveling companion of Paul and a Jewish Christian who was influenced by Peter's hypocrisy.

Quick fact: Did you know that the Pharisees had a list of over 600 rules you had to keep in order to go to heaven?

The Setting:

Paul and Barnabas had returned from their first missionary journey and were welcomed by the city of Antioch in A.D. 48. Many Christians gathered to hear stories of the trip and to give praise to God. Peter, another strong leader of the early church, also entered town and shared in the renewed sense of unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Earlier, the Jerusalem Council had met to discuss what might seem (to an uninformed outsider) to be about dinner invitations and minor surgery. The real issue at hand was whether a person could be saved by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law. The Judaizers said no. Paul said yes. The Council ruled that a man is saved by faith alone so that both Jew and Gentile are on an equal spiritual plane as Christians. This did not sit well with the Judaizers.

The Curtain Opens:

This short story opens in Antioch, a city where Christian Gentiles (ex-pagans) live in complete equality with Christian Jews. Basically, this is a very unstable environment—especially on the heels of the verdict from the

Jerusalem Council. Antioch is a powder keg waiting for a reason to explode. Enter Peter.

We see him eating with the Gentiles, enjoying the freedom and unity that Paul had said should exist between the two Christian groups. Then in walks a group of Judaizers who wanted no part of the uncircumcised Christian Gentiles. Peter sees them, slides away from the Gentiles and separates himself from them, acting as though the Gentiles are wrong for not observing the Mosaic Law.

Other Christians in the church see this magnetic leader shy away from the Gentiles and they separate also. Barnabas was one of those Jewish Christians who quietly left the Gentile banquet table. The fuse had been lit but the real explosion was about to occur when Paul hits the scene.

Imagine eating in the school lunchroom with some friends that are not part of any popular group. Soon you see the athletes walk in, but they haven't seen you yet. You have been trying to get in their group, and you don't want them to see you sitting there with these "geeks" so you quietly get up and move.

This is similar to what Peter did. He was eating with the Gentiles when the Judaizers walked in. Because the Judaizers disliked and disagreed with the Gentiles, he left the Gentiles. Peter was hypocritical in pretending to be someone he was not.

Have you ever wondered what makes a **hypocrite**, a hypocrite? Let's take a quick peek into Peter's background and perhaps find some clues as to why this debacle in Galatia occurred.

Flashback to denial

- Mark 14:29,31—What did Peter promise Jesus? _____

- Mark 14:66-72—How many times did Peter deny Christ? _____

- Why do you think he denied Christ? _____

Keep this answer in the back of your mind.

Food for thought

In Acts 11, Peter defends taking the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10 with Cornelius).

Interestingly enough, Peter stands courageously against the Pharisaical believers of the church (10:45) who felt that it was necessary to include circumcision with faith for salvation.

Why did Peter show courage here and lack it in Galatia? The same issue and identical mindset was involved. Hmm...

The Confrontation:

Let's dig into the text and see how Paul dealt with hypocrisy.

We already saw how Paul confronted Peter in front of the entire assembled congregation. Of course, this was not the first time Paul opposed somebody to his face. In Acts 13:8-9 Paul confronts a magician named Elymas because he opposed the teaching of Paul during his first missionary journey.

What does this tell you about the kind of man Paul was? _____

Paul was not hypocritical because he treated Peter the same way he did anyone who opposed the truth—head on.

His Candor:

Paul realized that Peter was not being straightforward with the truth about the Gospel when he separated from the Gentile believers. In Galatians 2:14 Paul makes a clear association between Peter's actions and those of the Pharisees whom Jesus condemned. Paul was able to be candid with Peter because he knew the truth of the gospel and openly shared it.

Jamie was one of Cassie's Christian friends who saw her candor,

With some friends, you have to hide things or else you'd be scared of ruining your reputation. Cassie was so real, so honest about her struggles. We could talk about stuff that bothered us, and we didn't have to look good for each other (p. 98).

His Courage:

Put yourself in Paul's shoes. You are in the same room with one of the greatest disciples of Jesus. Peter walked, talked, and laughed with Jesus. He saw Him perform many great miracles, even assisted him during the great feeding of the five thousand. Everyone looks to this great and talented leader for direction.

Paul, on the other hand, never walked with Jesus, never was His friend, never prayed with Him nor assisted Him in any way. What Paul was known for was causing havoc in the churches that Christ died to establish. He was

known for killing anyone bearing the name of Christ. Not exactly a good position to be in when you need to publicly confront Peter.

How about you? Do you have the courage to do what is right? All the time?

Test yourself in these situations:

- You are asked by another Christian friend to attend a Bible study during lunch hour at public school. Would you go?
- You have an opportunity to share the Gospel to the person who has a locker next to yours. Would you witness?
- A teacher challenges a biblical principle in class. Do you defend the Bible?

We have a hard time saying, “Yes, I am a Christian” when there is nothing more at stake than a few hard looks and cold shoulders. Cassie remained strong and said yes while staring at the barrel of a gun. Be real; say yes to opportunities to stand for God.

Commitment Box:

Are you willing to...

- Confront those who are living hypocritical lives?
- Candidly speak the truth in love?
- Courageously stand for truth?

When you have extra time, check this out.

A Case Study in Courage

Can you handle an ironic twist? Check out Acts 5:17–32 and answer these questions.

- Why were the apostles put in prison? (verse 16) _____
- What do you think is the worst thing that could have happened to these men for preaching the Gospel? _____
- What did the apostles say when they were reprimanded for teaching against the Council’s orders? (verse 29) _____
- Whose name was mentioned specifically? _____

Peter boldly proclaimed that we should not fear man but God. Obeying this wise advice would have helped him avoid the three denials and Paul’s scolding. Do you fear others more than God? Cassie didn’t.