

One truth shared: The Church is willing to say hard things in order to save a soul.

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

Galatians 2:11-16

Pulling from the Wreckage

The Jaws of Life seems like an odd name for a portable, hydraulic tool meant to save someone. "Jaws" make you think of the fangs of a lion or a great white shark making its way close. But "jaws" can save people too, like in a car accident. If someone is in a rollover accident and pinned inside a crushed vehicle, the Jaws of Life are a handheld tool firefighters use to extricate a victim by cutting the metal of the car or separating it. These tools have ten to twenty thousand pounds of cutting/pulling force! When they come your way, you know you are going to be safe.

If you have ever driven by the scene of a car accident, you know how scary it can be. What if firefighters lacked the rescue tools or had no clue how to use them? Worse, what if they were scared to even come and help? What if they didn't have the stomach for it and fainted every time they saw blood? Would that be loving? Helpful?

Nope.

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul witnessed a spiritual wreck. Not collision of cars, but a horrifying pile-up of souls being led to believe that God loved some souls (Jews) more and other souls (Gentiles) less, based on who they were at birth. They started separating themselves from people who had a different background than them. And the worst part was that another leader in the church, the apostle Peter, was leading the way in this accident.

Paul could have found excuses to stay away from the conflict, but he went in with the Jaws of Life—the rescue tool of God's Word. He confronted Peter in front of the group so that the damage would stop and the healing would begin. Peter would realize his error. The Galatian group was extricated from a messy situation back to safety. Now they knew that it was Jesus, and only Jesus, that saves us. Our background and works have nothing to do with it. We are saved by grace alone!

What's the takeaway for us? Paul was willing to get his hands dirty if it meant pulling a soul from the world's wreckage and saving them with the love of Jesus. So can you! Sometimes people in our lives make a mess with their own sinful decisions. Jesus wants us to love them enough to point out their sin, but in a way that shows how every sin is forgiven by Jesus too. Freed by grace new life begins! There is no better job to have!

Prayer: Lord, help me to run towards the people who need my help most. Give me the courage to confront sin in order to help others. Give me humility when someone confronts my own sin. Use those conversations to grow us in our faith in you. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Proper 18

The Church God Wants

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Pulling from the Wreckage

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Self-analysis: Identify if you are a person who enjoys confrontation. Why or why not?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- Rate the following on a scale of 1-5 (1 being LEAST urgent and 5 being the MOST urgent) the following situations you would address with a friend:
 - They have decided to never brush their teeth again.
 - They have decided to take a two-week break from doing any of their schoolwork.
 - They have told you they believe they'll go to heaven by being a really good person.
 - They have given up on listening to any modern music and only listen to artists from the 1950s.
 - They accidentally put their shirt on backward this morning.
- Discuss which of the situations you have no problem talking about and the ones you would likely shy away from (and give a reason why).

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- In Galatians chapter 2, Paul was concerned about the life of Peter (Cephas) and the other believers in Antioch. Peter was promoting a way of life that said a person is saved by their own good works and not through faith in Jesus. Explain how Paul's actions towards Peter were not hurtful but loving.
- Read Matthew 18:15-20.
 - In verse 15, Jesus tells us to go to the person *one on one* if they've sinned against us. Why do you think it would be better to do this privately instead of publicly?
 - In verse 16, what does Jesus tell us to do if they don't listen to us one on one? And then if they don't listen to them?

- In verse 15, Jesus says the goal is to “win them over.” The goal is not to “humiliate them.” Explain why the goal of Jesus is better than humiliating the other person.

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Identify a messy situation you feel trapped in.

- Share it so together you can pray for one another.
- Then discuss how God’s Word can help you speak “hard-to-say-but-gotta-be-said” words in a direct but gentle, loving way with the goals of freeing you from fear of confrontation or feeling bad emotions and restoring a peaceful relationship.