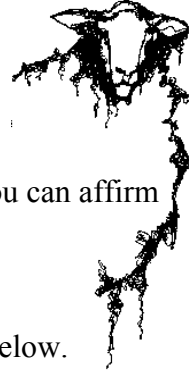


## Affirm One Another Galatians 2:1-2,7-9



### Background for the Leader

May God affirm you as the unique person God made and loves so that you can affirm others.

### A Note to the Leader

The numbered planning steps correspond to the numbered activity suggestions below.

1. Be prepared to share the information and lead the discussion.
2. Become familiar with the background material so you can share it comfortably. Print the questions in the second activity on a large sheet of paper, chalkboard, or dry-erase board leaving space between the questions to record answers. You may want to provide members with Bibles or copies of Galatians 2:1-2,7-9.
3. Sketch one of each of these body parts on a separate piece of construction paper or poster board: foot, ear, eye, head. Print on the back of the foot, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body." On the back of the ear print, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body." On the back of the eye print, "Hand, I have no need of you." On the back of the head print: "Feet, I have no need of you." Enlist four members to hold the body parts and to read the Scripture on the back dramatically when you name that body part in the reading from 1 Corinthians 12:12,14-21,24b-27. It would be helpful to rehearse this reading before the meeting. On a two-page sheet of newspaper want-ads or another large sheet of paper draw a simple shape of a person. Make obvious the head, body, arms, and legs. Draw a simple face of ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. Cut around the outline shape. If you have a large group make enough person shapes for each eight persons. Provide several pairs of scissors.
4. Provide enough sheets of lined or unlined paper and pens or pencils for each member. If you have a large group of members you may want to form groups of six to eight persons for the fourth activity.
5. Prepare to share the closing remarks in a warm encouraging way.

### Leading the Program

#### Activity One: Recall and Thank God for Those Who Have Encouraged Us

Suggest: "Barak had Deborah. King Josiah had Huldah the prophetess. Timothy had Paul. John Mark had Barnabas. Apollos had Priscilla and Aquilla. Deborah, Paul, Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquilla were all encouragers who helped their friends to recognize how God was working in their lives and to use their gifts for God."

Form groups of three or four members. Invite members to recall persons who have helped them recognize their God-given gifts and encouraged them to use these gifts. Suggest that each member tell others in her group about her encourager. When members have had adequate time to share in their groups, invite members to pray silently thanking God for their encouragers.

#### Activity Two: Read and Interpret Galatians 2:1-2,7-9

Use the following background to aid an understanding of the Scripture. “We know from the New Testament that there were conflicts in the early Church just as there are often conflicts in churches today. One conflict that arose in the early Church was about what was necessary to become a follower of Jesus. One group believed that it was necessary to first become a Jew and obey all of the Jewish laws to become a Christian. However, as Paul preached to the Gentiles, he became convinced that these non-Jews did not need to become proselytes to Judaism to become followers of Jesus. Paul believed that God’s grace was sufficient to save those who confessed their sin and believed in Jesus. We need to be reminded of this background to understand the passage that is the basis of our Bible study found in Galatians 2.

Call attention to the questions below and ask members to watch or listen for answers. If you made copies of the verses, distribute them now. Read Galatians 2:1-2,7-9 slowly, but with expression.

Guide discussion of the questions. Possible answers are in parentheses, but there are other appropriate responses. Record responses as they are discussed.

- Who were some people who accepted and encouraged Paul? (*Barnabas, Titus, James, Peter, and John*)
- What were the difficulties in this situation? (*Some were preaching that the Gentiles must first become Jews before becoming followers of Jesus and that Gentile males must be circumcised according to the law of Moses. Paul believed that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised but were saved by God’s grace. Paul felt led by God to go up to Jerusalem to resolve this conflict and to make sure that his ministry was not in vain.*)
- How were the difficulties resolved? How was that possible? (*The leaders recognized that God had given both Paul and Peter the same gospel—good news. The same God was working in both Peter and Paul. God had graced both Paul and Peter with gifts to be used in spreading the gospel and building up the church. The missions of both Peter and Paul were recognized and accepted. The mission of Peter, James, and John would be primarily to the Jews while Paul’s mission would be primarily to the Gentiles with no requirement for circumcision or adherence to the whole Jewish law. Peter, James, and John gave Paul and Barnabas handshakes, a symbol of fellowship. This solution was possible only through the grace and work of God and the willingness of those involved to recognize God at work in one another and in the lives of those to whom they preached.*)
- What were the results of the solution to the difficulties? (*Fellowship was restored or strengthened. The personalities, strengths, and gifts of each person were affirmed. Mutual support was pledged. All involved were encouraged in their God-given ministry. The mission of the church was expanded and more people were saved.*)
- What can we learn from this passage for our lives and ministries today? (*God’s power at work is greater than the differences between human individuals. However, God has chosen to work through human instruments. It is only by God’s power and God’s Spirit that we are energized to do God’s work. See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 3:20-21. There is only one gospel—that God loved us and gave God’s Son for us and we are saved by grace when we repent and trust our lives to Christ. God gives each one of us different personalities, abilities, gifts, and opportunities to minister. Each one of us is needed in God’s work. We all need the support of others as we seek to find our place in God’s work. The church and its mission are strongest and more people become followers of*

*Jesus when Christians cooperate and support one another.)*

**Activity Three:** All Parts of the Body are Important

Tell the group: “Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12 about the importance of every person in the church using his or her gifts. He used the analogy of the parts of the human body to emphasize this truth.”

Ask the members with the foot, ear, eye, and head you prepared to stand in front of the group. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12,14-21,24b-27, pausing for the foot, ear, eye, and head to read their parts.

Guide a discussion using the following ideas: “How do you think Paul’s analogy of the body relates to Paul’s having his mission to the Gentiles supported by Peter, James and John? *(Each person’s ministry is important; each ministry is given and graced by God; no one can feel that her ministry is not important nor can she boast that her ministry is most significant.)* Paul spoke about the importance of each of us using our spiritual gifts. How would you define spiritual gifts? *(Spiritual gifts are abilities given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church to do Christ’s work in the world.)* What spiritual gifts come to your mind? *(Lists of various gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11,27-31; Ephesians 4:11-13.)* God not only gives us a variety of spiritual gifts, but also unique personalities, interests, abilities, talents, and skills. Each of these is important in the body and work of the church.”

Give each group of eight a person shape. Ask someone in the group to cut the shape into eight puzzle pieces (or the number of persons in their group) and give each person in the group a piece. As group members cooperate to work their puzzle, ask them to talk about how they can encourage one another to find and use their unique gifts, personalities, interests, abilities, and talents to serve God and others.

When the puzzles are completed, invite groups to share their reflections. (You may want to mention the following if group members don’t include them: pray and seek God’s guidance, read Bible passages about persons who used their gifts and abilities to serve God, take a spiritual gifts inventory, be on the lookout for needs and opportunities to serve in your church and community, talk with people about ways to use your gifts, join with others who have similar interests.) Encourage members to share also about how working the puzzle helped them to see the need for every person and her unique contributions.

**Activity Four:** Affirm One Another

Give each member a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen and ask her to write her name at the bottom of the sheet of paper. Say: “We have learned that Peter, James, and John affirmed Paul and his mission. Now we have the opportunity to affirm one another. Pass the paper with your name at the bottom to the person on your right. At the top of the paper you receive, write a statement of affirmation about that person. Your affirmation could be a particular gift or ability you see in this person, gratitude for a ministry or service she provides, or other words of encouragement and support. When you have finished, fold down the top of the paper so what you have written is covered and pass it on to the person on your right. Continue writing statements of affirmation, folding, and passing the papers until your paper comes back to you.” You may give time for members to read silently the affirmations others have written or ask members to take them home and read them later.

### **Activity Five: The Challenge to Affirm Others**

Close with something like the following: “Be assured that there is no one else just like you. God loves you. *The Lamb*, a poem by William Blake, asks: ‘Little Lamb, who made thee? Doest thou know who made thee?’

God made you, and God loves you. God has graced you with special gifts, talents, abilities, and opportunities for service that make you the wonderful person you are. ‘It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for His good pleasure’ (Philippians 2:13). Our body would not be complete without you and what you contribute to our group. Through our care of one another and our mutual support of one another’s personalities, gifts, and areas of service, God is able to do more with and through us than we could ever do by ourselves. The body of Christ is strengthened and more people can hear about and experience the love of Christ through our lives. Accept the challenge to be shepherds of God’s flock and glorify the Lamb! As we go, let’s extend to one another the hand of Christian fellowship and encouragement and affirm one another.”

#### **About the Writer**

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## **Rejoice in Your Salvation**

### **Galatians 2:7-9**

*...when they recognized the grace given to me...Gal 3:7b*

The letter of Paul to the Galatians tells us in a very understandable way the real meaning of the New Testament: through the Spirit, by faith, we're sanctified by the grace given to us by God, and then living in obedience to Him.

Paul mentioned several times that he was what he was by the grace of God. He was aware that he was an instrument chosen by God to bring God's name before the Gentiles, and that God's grace was given to him, to bring them the news of the boundless riches of Christ.

We, as daughters of God, feeling the blessing of His grace in our lives, may experience today, what Paul did among the Gentiles a long time ago.

By the grace given to us by God, we can teach our children and youth the right path to a healthy Christian life. By the grace given to us by God, we can proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ wherever we are. By the grace given to us by God, we (as someone said once) may be the change we want to see in the world, and by this, we are helping the world to be a better place to live.

#### **PRAYER:**

*O God, our father, give us grace to share your word with others. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

Rosy Aja  
Florida Region