



# Reach Texas OFFERING



## Galatians 2:11-14 | **Keep an Open Table**

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### Scripture

<sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup>For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. <sup>13</sup>And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

### Overview

When Jesus came to earth he established a kingdom value for all believers: keep an open table. Jesus descended to earth and opened the gates for salvation for all people. He illustrated this by performing one of the most intimate acts in a Jewish culture with people of non-Jewish heritage: eating. Jesus made it a common practice to keep an open table by eating with all people, even those who were not well thought of. By this he was displaying to the world that he came for all people, that all people would be able to have community with him. The Pharisees accused him of sin, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk. 15:2). In Jewish law it was considered sinful to eat with someone outside of the Jewish faith. Jesus responds by telling the Pharisees a story of the lost sheep.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Lk. 15:4-7).

This was quite a shock to the Pharisees and any Jew, honestly. In Jewish culture, God’s blessings had been limited to the Jewish people and the thought that it might go out to others seems foreign and even sinful. But, Jesus destroys this way of thinking by pursuing others who were different from him. Jesus was changing things.



After Jesus' resurrection, he left 12 disciples to continue this grass-roots movement of Christianity. They began to understand slowly that God's love and his table are open for all people. However, it did come with some drama. In Galatians 2 there is a harsh rebuke given by Paul to Peter and it's over the issue of keeping an open table. Paul had been called out by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul, though a Jew, believed to his core that the gospel was for all people and he had given his life to it. Peter knew this as well (Acts 10:14). However, in this story Peter faces social pressure.

Peter is in Antioch, the capital of Christianity at the time. It was a melting pot of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. This was a unique space with those two people groups dwelling together. One day Peter was eating with his new Gentile brothers and sisters and James and some of his Jewish crew walks in. I imagine Peter began to feel the pressure of "It is okay to eat and fellowship with non-Jews" and on the other hand "My Jewish brothers and sisters are going to look down on me for this". He gives in. In some ways, he forgets the gospel. Peter starts to back himself away from the Gentiles because he feared what the Jews would think of him. Paul rebukes him.

Paul knew that Peter's withdraw from keeping an open table was a direct violation to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (Gal. 2:14). Basically, Paul calls Peter a hypocrite for not living out the gospel, keeping an open table, as he proclaimed to be doing.

Keeping an open table is a tangible proclamation that the gospel is for all people. It is communicating to others that you are welcome here. Your community is desired in my life. Jesus displayed this in his life. He taught this to his disciples. Jesus passes this on to you and me.

## Questions

1. The fear of man kept Peter from keeping an open table. What kind of fears do you face when it comes to keeping an open table with people who don't look like you?
2. How does the gospel speak to the fears you have about keeping an open table?
3. Who is one person you can invite to your table that is not like you? If you don't have anyone, make it a priority to pray and find someone you can invite to your table.
4. How could keeping an open table affect the ministry of your church?