

## STUDY 1: INTRO AND GALATIANS 1:1-1:9

You are about to look at a letter that one of the apostles, Paul wrote to a group of churches in the area of Galatia. This guide is for you as a leader. Share as much of it with the group as you find helpful. There are activities you can do with your group to help them understand the passage more fully while getting to know one another. Also, there are questions for you to ask your group and to guide them in their understanding of this letter. After most questions are my own musings and answers. Use as you find helpful.

Along with this guide is a copy of the same questions you can give to your group members. They do not include my own musings. For those in your group that like to prepare before hand or take notes while you discuss, these will be very beneficial.

- **Context**

In any Bible study, the most important element is to keep the context in front of the group at all times. It's easy to look at the passages through our own context and that will change the meaning of the passage all together. Also, a rule of thumb I always keep in front of groups is: "Turn to what you DO know to answer what you DON'T know."

So, let's get to know the context of this letter.

The first context is to know who Paul was. To learn his story will help you to more fully understand this letter. Encourage your group to read Paul's story before the first week, or in between week 1 and 2. It can be found in Acts 9-28.

The second context to keep in mind is the context of the Galatians. Galatia was in the southern part of the Roman province (modern day Turkey). Here is an activity to do with your group to help paint the context. This is an activity that will allow your group to get to know a little more about one another while at the same time helping them to understand the context of this letter.

- **Activity:**

- ❖ Have each member of your group share in 2 minutes how they would define the culture in which they grew up. White collar or Blue collar? Racially diverse or not? Music they listened to? Type of clothing worn? Hair styles? Types of foods eaten? Religious atmosphere?
- ❖ Now, as a group, discuss all the ways your current culture is different from the culture in which you grew up? How do you think those two cultures would exist together? Could they?

In Galatia, two groups of people were becoming Christians: the first group was the Jews, the first Christians. The second group was the Gentiles, or basically, anyone not a Jew. For a while, the number of Jews becoming Christians out numbered the number of non-Jews. But at this particular time, more Gentiles were becoming Christians than Jews and so the ways of the Jews were being challenged.

Although both parties were becoming Christians, both parties brought into Christianity their cultural understandings and lifestyles. In the same way, each of us brings to Christianity our own cultural and understandings.

Think about it this way:

In your neighborhood, all your neighbors' do similar things, eat similar foods, wear similar clothing, listen to similar types of music, and work in similar types of jobs. You might not think they are similar, but imagine next week, half your neighbors moved out and all their homes were sold to a large group of families that just moved here from India.

You notice that they really don't wear clothing like you or your other neighbors, their foods are entirely different, their music is extremely unfamiliar, the way they communicate with you and one another is not the same, and the way they spend their free time is foreign to you. They take care of their yards in a different way and even put things in their yard that are not your taste. You begin to notice that your neighborhood is now completely different.

It makes you feel uncomfortable. It might even begin to make you feel angry and wonder what is happening to your neighborhood. You begin to notice a few months later that even more have moved in the neighborhood. You are now in the minority. No one around you seems to be similar to you. The neighborhood is no longer comfortable to you and doesn't even feel like home. And as you think about it, the Indians that moved in are not mean people; they are just not like you.

So, you gather with the neighbors that have been there as long as you have. At your gatherings, you find yourself always talking about "those Indians". Nothing they do is right. Everything they do is keeping you from the things you enjoy. It's time to put an end to it. So, because you have been in the neighborhood longer, you and your friends begin to enforce the Home Owners Association rules on the Indians.

They are enforced strongly, though you and your friends make exceptions for one another. It is the way you use the HOA rules that will make the Indians more like you and hold onto what is familiar to you. But it's also the way you use the HOA rules that will keep you from being neighbors and force you to be enemies. It will be the way you use the HOA rules that keep you from being in a healthy neighborhood. But remember, it's not the HOA rules that are bad, it's the way you are using them that are wrong.

Welcome to the Church of Galatia. Welcome to the tension between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians.

The Jewish Christians were using the Law (HOA rules) to force the Gentile Christians to be more like them. Though they were all Christians, they didn't come from the same culture. But the Jews had been in the neighborhood longer and so they began to enforce the Law.

Paul, a Jewish Christian, called to minister to the Gentiles, wrote this letter to the Gentiles in Galatia. Paul had lived in the neighborhood before. It was Paul that had led many of these Gentiles to Christ. But he moved out of this neighborhood and has now found out what is going on. So, he writes this letter exposing what the Jewish Christians were doing. But he writes it more so to the Gentiles because he can't believe they are letting them do it. He challenges them to hold onto the good news of Christ-what they and the Jewish Christians know is right.

#### • READ GALATIANS 1:1-5

- ❖ What is an apostle?
  - Walked personally with Jesus; saw the resurrected Christ; called by God for a specific purpose--the original Apostles' call was to begin the Church.
- ❖ With this knowledge, why is verse one so important for Paul?
  - Wanted it to be known that what he is called to do is not from man but from Jesus. This becomes clearer later.
- ❖ Define the following words: Grace and Peace
  - Grace: God's Riches at Christ Expense, Given something you don't deserve.
  - Peace: All is right--not that all is good, but all is right with God.
- ❖ According to the first 5 verses, how would you define the "gospel"?
  - Jesus gave himself for our sins
  - It was a rescue from this present evil age.
  - It happened because God willed it.
  - God is glorified by it.
- ❖ Looking just at what we have read, it seems like the "gospel" is very simple. Where could the confusion be?
  - Jesus' giving didn't cover our sin fully.
  - We still have to do something to rescue ourselves.
  - God is waiting for us to do something.

- We are searching for our part of the glory.

#### • READ GALATIANS 1:6-9

- ❖ What phrases or words tell us the tone of Paul for this letter and what is that tone?
  - I am astonished
  - Evidently
  - Throwing you into confusion
  - Pervert the gospel
  - Eternally condemned (2 times)
- ❖ At this point in the letter, we don't know what is being told to those in Galatia but we do know the effect. What is it?
  - They are quickly turning from what they accepted.
- ❖ Who was the one that called them by the grace of Christ (vs 6)? How does that strike you?
  - God himself-verse 4 tells us it was his will.
  - God is pursuing me even before I pursue him.
- ❖ Paul makes a statement in 8-9 twice. What is that statement and what is he trying to say in this statement?
  - There is only one gospel. You can try to pervert it but all you will pervert is the people's thinking. The gospel will never be perverted. Even if I, angels or anyone else preaches something different, it doesn't pervert the gospel. What it does do is lead to eternal damnation.
  - He is also saying that they didn't accept him, but they accepted the gospel-which he preached.
- ❖ When people walk into churches and see pastors, elders, church members fall off the wagon, what is the challenge they face? What is important to distinguish in this challenge?
  - Do I give up on God or on the Church?
  - Is the gospel true or not?
  - Who have I been serving all this time-God or man?
  - Is what they have been preaching still true?

#### • Teaching Opportunity:

It is really important that you are grounded in the gospel and not in people. People will disappoint you. Institutions will disappoint you. If you place your foundation in people or institutions, you will be tempted to walk away from Christ because of them.

God uses people and it reveals how amazing He is that He can actually use someone as sinful as us. When we see people around us fail, it shouldn't surprise us, it should make us amazed at how powerful God is and that He might actually use this person again. It should also amaze you that He can actually use you.

- ❖ How do these first verses give you hope? What does it make you look forward to investigating in the rest of this letter?
  - God is so amazing he can and will use me and it brings Him glory to do so! This is the good news of Jesus Christ.

## STUDY 2: GALATIANS 1:10-24

Last week we discussed whether we are following the gospel or following someone that has preached it to us. Many times we decide if something is true because of the vehicle it came through instead of if it is true because in and of itself. We also base a lot of our actions on those around us—even to the point of believing certain things because of those around us.

### • Activity

- ❖ Have each member tell the group about their week. Especially have them focus on the people they encountered and the affect those people had on the things they did? Examples: those at work, family members, children, church, etc...
- ❖ Ask the group, "What things did you do this week, good or bad, that were based off of what others wanted from you?"
  - Take a shower so I don't stink, shave so I look ok, dress for respect
  - Clean up for my family, stay organized to meet all the needs
  - Work long hours to keep boss happy, etc...
- ❖ As you can see, a lot of our lives are centered on keeping others in good standing with us. They may be subtle things or extravagant things. Big question would be if you would do those same things if those people were not around you?
- ❖ **Read Galatians 1:10-12**
- ❖ What word is repeated more than any other in these verses?
  - Man (5 times)
- ❖ Paul is faced with the accusation that he is now only doing things to please men. Having read the story of Paul in Acts 9-28, where do you think these accusations come from?
  - Saul, before becoming Paul, was trying to move up the ladder to be the greatest Pharisee-driven by man's applause and man's accomplishments.
  - The Jewish Christians would say that Paul left the Jewish traditions because they were too hard for him to keep. So, he changed his theology to make it easier for him but now trying to be great in another way.
  - Others are saying that Paul is a people pleaser and he's just trying to make everyone happy and so he will say what they want to hear. They would say he is still just seeking the applause of man.

- ❖ Looking at his responses in these verses, how is he responding to these accusations?
  - He's not happy. He is saying the hard things and knows he is ticking people off.
  - He says that being a servant of Christ is a much harder obedience than the ways of man. He knows you can't serve Christ and please man at the same time. (vs 10)
- ❖ Verse 10 says, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." How can this verse be interpreted? Which one do you think Paul is saying?
  - Some take this verse and use it to analyze every single action. So, they will take it and say that absolutely nothing we do should be done to please people. Example: if we take a shower so someone won't think we stink, we are serving man and therefore should not take a shower.
  - Paul is talking saying this though in talking about his direction in life. He was living a life to please men and seeking the applause of man when he was persecuting the church. He was trying to move up the corporate ladder. He is now building the church. He wouldn't be doing that if he were pleasing men. If he were pleasing men, he'd still be persecuting the church. He is saying this on a bigger scale.
- ❖ Last week we began our definition of the gospel from verses 1-5. What else do we learn about the gospel in these verses?
  - Not something man made up.
  - Can't be taught by man but can only be preached by man.
  - Difference: teaching is giving someone information and enough information that they understand it. The gospel is not understood just by giving information. Preaching is proclaiming what is already true and its truth is revealed when God decides to reveal it. We are at God's mercy with the gospel—we pray he reveals it. The good news can be proclaimed but to know it, God must reveal it.
- ❖ What does this knowledge of the gospel tell you about God?
  - He must be deeply involved in my life for me to understand anything.
  - It is up to Him to reveal Himself to another—not up to me to reveal Him. I must simply proclaim what is true and trust him to reveal what is true.
- ❖ **Read Galatians 1:13-20**
- ❖ What do we learn about Paul's previous way of life?
  - Persecuted the Church of Christ

- ❖ How old was Paul during that time?
    - Young- was well on his way in Judaism wisdom--wise but young.
  - ❖ Verse 15 is loaded with foundational theology (right thinking about God). What all do you learn here about God? What of this do you wonder about?
    - God sets apart people for His purposes
    - God calls us by grace and is pleased to reveal his Son in us
    - God is Sovereign--over all things and all time
    - Leader: this is an opportunity for those in your group to simply voice any concerns and wonder. Don't try to get the right answer here but just allow them to voice any wonders-teach them it is ok to have questions. It's part of seeking God. Give great room here for people to have a safe place to voice.
  - ❖ Review what Paul has been accused of up to this point and what new accusations are revealed in these verses?
    - Not an apostle
    - Winning approval from men
    - The gospel he preaches is from man and not God
    - He's just doing what the church leaders told him to do
    - He tricked the Church leaders into making him an apostle
  - ❖ Let's focus on the person of Paul for a moment. Just from what you have read here, trying to forget everything else you know about Paul, would Paul be received in the church you attend today? Why or why not?
    - He'd be received but not fully trusted. Leadership would be a hard thing to give him because of his past. Seen as persecutor tricking people. It would be hard to forget that he murdered people as well.
  - ❖ Many times it's easy to put biblical characters on a pedestal. How do these verses reveal Paul as a real person?
    - under attack
    - gets angry
    - his calling in life is in question
    - Accused by people that won't believe him-unlike ourselves, anything Paul says, we grab.
  - ❖ Day in and day out we are challenged to serve Christ and not man. In this first chapter so far, we've seen a lot of theology (right thinking) about God. What truths have stood out to you that help you to "serve God and not man"?
    - God's pursuing me and calling me
    - The good news of Jesus is the truth even if all fall away from it
  - Following a life of pleasing men keeps us from serving God
  - Man didn't make up the gospel, it is from God.
  - The gospel is revealed by God and not something we obtain from just getting enough information.
  - The gospel has the power to redeem us, turn us completely around
- **Read Galatians 1:15-24**
    - ❖ In Paul's previous journey in Judaism, how do you think he "moved up the ladder"? What things do you imagine he did?
      - Submitting to teachings and authority in that church.
      - Doing what they told him to do.
      - Being an excellent student, learner.
    - ❖ From these verses, what has been Paul's journey since becoming a Christian?
      - Conversion, Arabia then back to Damascus where he was converted.
      - After 3 years he went to Jerusalem
      - Stayed there 15 days and then off to Syria/Cilicia
      - After 14 years, went back to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.
      - It is here that Apostles send Barnabas and Paul on their first journey.
      - Not much contact with authorities at all.
    - ❖ Why does Paul emphasize that he was not in Jerusalem very long and not for 3 years after his conversion?
      - Some are saying that he went to Jerusalem and sat under the leaders there and is now running up the ladder in Christianity.
      - For him to have been under the teaching of the apostles meant that Jesus had not been his teacher. Calls into question his claim to revelation. Again, being taught the gospel vs. it being revealed.
      - This journey he is on is very different from the last.
      - It could also mean that some were saying he has changed his mind on matters now that he has sat under the teachings of the apostles.
    - ❖ What do we learn in verse 23 and 24 about the power and goal of the gospel?
      - It has the power to redeem anyone. Its goal is to bring glory to God.
      - Leader: note that verses 23-24 are great verses to encourage your group to pray for themselves about their friends that don't know Jesus.
    - ❖ Notice that Paul's words in 24 were not, "And they praised me because of God." Many times we want God to do things that would bring the praise of man to us rather than us doing things to bring the praise of man to God.

- ❖ This week, I want you to think about the below question and be ready to answer at the beginning of next time.
  - What events led to your conversion and in what ways has your conversion brought glory to God?

## STUDY 3: GALATIANS 2:1-10

A very popular show that was on TV for a couple of years was centered around a man that would go to an unknown town, thumb through a phone book, call the person and ask if they would be willing he and his film crew to spend a day with them just hearing their story. The goal behind the show was to show the world that everyone has a story that affects the lives of others.

### • Activity

When we ended last week, we ended with the following question to think about and be ready to answer now:

- ❖ What events led to your conversion and in what ways has your conversion brought glory to God?
  - Leader: if your group's been together a while, use this time to let members tell each other ways they have seen each others conversion bring glory to God.
- **Read Galatians 2:1**
  - ❖ What do you know about Barnabas?
    - He was a Levite from the island of Cyprus, and cousin of the evangelist Mark
    - Mentor of the church sent out by the apostles to further the work with Gentiles.
    - Hooked up with Paul and came back with him to tell Apostles his work is good. This is where we are in the timeline of the story Paul is about to tell.
  - ❖ What do you know about Titus?
    - Young and proven pastor left by Paul to finish the beginnings of a new church plant in Crete.
- **Read 2:2-10**
  - ❖ We learn a little more about Titus' journey and faith. What stands out here that shows why Paul was able to leave Titus in Crete?
    - Paul trusted his strength to stand strong. He proved himself as a young man he mentored and his ability to stand up even against strong leaders.
  - ❖ What do you think was the revelation to Paul he talks about in 2:2?
    - To tell the apostles what he is doing. To check his work. He trusted them and wanted to make sure he was on the right path.
    - So, Paul did have relationship with them but it wasn't until much later. God revealed Jesus to him and God gave him a revelation to go and partner with the apostles-don't be a lone ranger.

- ❖ What more do we learn about a life that follows the gospel in these verses?
  - Brings about revelation
  - Sorts through confusion
  - Brings freedom in Christ
  - It is displayed by our actions as much as our words (vs 5)
  - Not about external appearance
  - God's work tool to enable ministry
  - Reconciles (apostles and Paul)
  - Cares for the poor
- ❖ What men is Paul talking about in verse 6? What is his opinion of them?
  - The original 11 apostles. Looks from this verse that he dislikes them.
  - It's not that he doesn't like them; it's that he puts no weight on their title.
  - He is emphasizing that they added nothing to his message.
  - He respects them but is not ruled by them but rather by Christ.
- ❖ What did these men recognize about Paul? What did they add to him?
  - They recognized the grace from Christ and the work Christ was doing in him.
  - They didn't add to his message but added to his ministry. They empowered him even more.
  - They gave him Barnabas as a partner in ministry to show their partnership.
- ❖ What words from Jesus to the apostles does verse 9 remind you?
  - The Great Commission. (Matt 28:18-20)
  - Note: one of the main reasons the gospel finally got out of Jerusalem was because of God's calling of Paul. He told the apostles to go into all the nations but they never left Jerusalem. So, God appointed a rep and began the work.
- ❖ This chapter has a lot of focus on Paul's journey as a Christian. It also focus on others recognizing that journey and appreciating it. Each of us has a journey as well. What are important things you have seen in Paul's journey that encourage you in your journey?
  - It begins before the conversion: God's setting us apart.
  - It requires revelation from God and not just education from man.
  - Mentors and others are very beneficial (Barnabas and Paul, Peter and Paul)
  - It's important for us to teach others (Titus and Paul)
  - It involves ministry of some sort that each of us have been uniquely called to.
  - We need to respond to God's revelation

- We must partner together
- It will bring attacks from within and from outside.
- The main attack is not on you but on the freedom you have in Christ. Satan wants you to not be free.
- Time is essential. It is a lifetime journey. You won't get it all right overnight.
- Grace is the tool God uses to walk us in this journey.

## STUDY 4: GALATIANS 2:11-21

Hypocrisy is a word that is used a lot when people are angry at Christians and the church. For good reasons many people want nothing to do with the church because of the hypocrisy they see. Many have left the church from hypocrisy in one person preaching against one thing and then going out and doing it themselves. Others have left because of the hypocrisy they see in how those in the church treat each other.

### • Activity:

Today we look at an event that could have caused many people to leave the church.

Before we look at it though:

- ❖ As a group, what would we say is a good definition of hypocrisy?
    - Playacting, acting like who you aren't.
    - Leader: Greeks used it to describe a person in the theatre that carried out roles that did not come from inner convictions-they weren't really acting but playacting. A true actor in theatre was one that carried the convictions of the role they were playing.
  - ❖ What are ways that you have seen hypocrisy in the church or have been accused of hypocrisy yourself or seen it in yourself?
- **Read Galatians 2:11-14**
    - ❖ Why would Paul address this interaction with Peter at this point in the letter?
      - It was to show that they had ministries to different people but the gospel message was the same.
      - They had both been commissioned to different people but never shown how to work it out when both hit up against one another. Peter missed it.
      - It was a prime example of how two leaders handled what the Galatian church is up against now.
    - ❖ What did Peter do wrong?
      - He didn't live consistent with the theology he preached and believed.
      - This was not a theological disagreement, it was an action disagreement.
      - He had not sorted out how his theology would apply in 2 different cultures.
      - He had not separated out his culture thinking from theology thinking.
    - ❖ Share about a time you have been in a situation where you believed one thing but acted another way? What was the wrestling point?
      - Stand on my beliefs or please men.
      - How do I keep from being un-liked by everyone? Want people happy with me.

- ❖ How did Peter's actions affect others?
  - It lead many astray and even Barnabas
- ❖ How did Paul handle the situation? How could he have handled it?
  - He challenged Peter's actions and compared them to what they both knew of the gospel. He did this in front of the ones he was leading astray.
  - He could have said nothing in fear of Peter not liking him or in fear of not being able to run up the Christian ladder.
- ❖ Look at verse 2:2 and compare it to 2:14. What is the difference in Paul's actions and Peters?
  - Paul in 2:2 sought the wisdom of the leaders to make sure his thinking and actions were in line.
  - Peter in 2:14 was not asking this. He was confused on how to put them in line and did not seek wisdom. Paul confronted him to his face not just for Peter's sake but for the sake of all that had gone astray.
  - It's much easier to ask for direction than going on our own and then being confronted.

### • Read Galatians 2:15-16

- ❖ What do we learn about the gospel this week in these verses?
  - Jews and Gentiles are both sinners
  - Jews and Gentiles are not justified by the law
  - Jews and Gentiles must both put their faith in Jesus
  - No one is justified by observing the law.
  - Leader: Even those Christians that are Jews by birth know this. Paul is not mad at the Jewish Christians telling the Gentiles about the Laws. He's mad at the Gentiles for falling into this wrong thinking.

### • Read Galatians 2:17-21

- ❖ What's the dilemma he talks about in verse 17?
  - When we follow Jesus, we will discover our sin. Many will question if we are really following Christ because we begin to see our sin so much more. Some were saying that Jesus promotes sin.
- ❖ Paul tells us in verse 19 the way the law is used. What is it?
  - We try to follow the law and it shows us how sinful we really are. Paul followed the law and it led to persecuting Christians which then led to him meeting Jesus. The purpose of the law is to show us the death that the law brings, that we might die, and that we might live for God. We must die to live.

- ❖ Verse 20-21 are very famous verses. There are 2 lives mentioned in these verses. One of those lives is our own. What happened to it?
  - It was crucified, it died, it no longer lives.
- ❖ What is the second life and what has happened to it?
  - Christ life, it lives in me and the life I live is Christ life, it is lived by faith.
- ❖ In looking at these 2 verses, why do you think most Christians struggle with hypocrisy?
  - They are still trying to live their own lives and have not recognized the only life alive in them is Christ.
  - We are dead and the journey with Christ is learning to let his life be lived in us.
  - We need to live the Christ life and live it to the fullest.
  - We fall into hypocrisy at times as we are learning that we are dead and Christ is alive.
- ❖ If we live a life of hypocrisy, what does Paul say we have done to the grace of Jesus?
  - Put it away. Made it so He died for nothing.
  - If we won't live his life, he gave his life for nothing.
  - Leader: The question that the rest of the book of Galatians works through is "What is the Christ life and what does it look like to live it?"

## STUDY 5: GALATIANS 3:1-18

All around us we see people trying different things to change themselves. Some of these things work, some of them don't.

### • Activity

- ❖ What are some of the ways that people want to change and what attempts do they make to bring about those changes?
  - Changes in weight, disciplines, language, depression, living situations, relationships, parenting, etc...
- ❖ What are things in your own life you would love to see changed and what attempts are you making to bring about that change?
  - Leader: Ask everyone that drove to the group meeting to give you the keys to their car. In return, give them a paperclip. Let them know that you are going to keep their keys and that they can use the paperclip to start their cars. There are great benefits to the paperclip because it is much lighter, and if you lose it, you can just find another one. So, good luck!
- ❖ Leader: Ask, "how are you guys feeling about replacing your keys with a paperclip?"
  - Goal here is to help the members in your group to recognize that the paperclip was never made to work like the key. Play devils advocate a while though and try to convince them they can figure out a way to make it work. It might take them a while to figure it out, but if they stay at it, you are sure they can figure it out.
  - End this time with saying to them, "The point of this example is to help us have an illustration that will remind us that we use many things in our Christian life to try and make it work. We have to recognize that these things were not made for that purpose. No matter how hard we try to make them work, they were not given to us for that purpose. In our study of Galatians tonight, we will see how the Galatians were trying to use the law to make the life of Christ work."

### • Read Galatians 3:1-5

- ❖ When you first became a Christian, what were some of the truths people told you that made you decide to trust Christ?
  - Statement we are looking for here is that, "there is nothing you can do to make things right with God. Jesus is the only one that can do that and there is no way for you to clean yourself up to make it right."

- ❖ What tempts us to not believe this is true now? Is this still true even now?
  - We want things in our lives to be different. We hate the sin we see and question if Jesus is alive in us at all because we see that sin. This tempts us to take matters into our own hands and try to clean ourselves up even more. We move away from faith and depend on our own acts-control.

- ❖ According to Paul, when is it that God brings about change in our lives?
  - When we believe that what he says is true and trust that. When we trust his Spirit and that it does miracles. We look for him to work and not ourselves.

### • Read Galatians 3:6-9

- ❖ Paul turns the Galatians to what they would have seen as the Scriptures—The Old Testament. What do we learn about the Scriptures in these verses? How does this shape your view of God?
  - The Scriptures foresaw that the Gentiles would live by faith. God does see the future and has made plans accordingly. The gospel was known before the gospel came to pass. The gospel has been in place since the beginning.
- ❖ Why does Paul bring out Abraham here and how would this verse come across to a Jew?
  - Even Abraham, the Jew above all Jews, lived by faith and not the law. You can read this story of Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17.
  - Abraham and Sarah believed God would give them a son, even in their old age. Nothing they did but believe.
  - The children of Abraham are not the Jews but anyone who believes. It has been this way all along.
  - Abraham's children are those that believe.
- ❖ Does this mean that we don't need to do anything but believe?
  - For salvation, yes. But our belief system controls our actions. Every action we take comes from a belief system. So, if we believe the words of God, we will live out that belief. Paul is calling the Galatians to remember why they do anything-because they believe the words of God.
- ❖ If it's true that our actions come out of our beliefs, then how should 2:20-21 enable us to live?
  - I am dead-Christ life is the life that is now lived in me. He is alive in me!
  - If I believe that I am at war with myself, I will live in constant tension.
  - If I believe that I am just a poor, old, wretched sinner, then I will live in this manner.
  - If I believe that my life is Christ life, I will live that way.

- ❖ What are the places you see yourself living by law and need to live by faith?

- **Read Galatians 3:10-14**

- ❖ What do we learn about the law in these verses?
  - If you rely on observing it then you will be cursed by it
  - No one justified by it
  - Not based on faith but on "living by it"
- ❖ What do we learn about faith?
  - It is what the righteous live by
  - Can receive the promise of the Spirit through it
- ❖ What does the word "redeemed" mean and what are we "redeemed" from?
  - Rescue; rescued from the curse, penalty of the law: "through the law, I died to the law" (vs 2:19)
- ❖ Why were we redeemed and how?
  - Vs 14 is the why and vs 13 is the how
- ❖ Why was it that Christ died on a tree? Why not some other way of dying?
  - Vs 13: also refer to Deuteronomy 21:23 and the Mosaic Law

- **Read Galatians 3:15-18**

- ❖ What is Paul trying to distinguish between here?
  - That the law didn't take the place of the promise that came 430 years later.
  - He said it was given to Abraham and his "seed" and not seeds. This will make more sense in the next verses.
  - Leader: Right now it's mainly important that the group see what the law was "not" supposed to do. Later we will see what it's purpose was. For you to understand though, what is going on here is God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. His promise was to bless Abraham and his seed. We find out later that the "seed" is Jesus. So, God is making a promise to Abraham and to Jesus to bless them and to bless others through them.
  - The next 430 years, there was no law the Israelites had to live by to please God. Sin was around but they did not know it was sin. They were not pleasing God but did not know they were not pleasing him because there was no "rule" to measure it by. So, God gave the law to Moses 430 years later to show the Israelites their sin. But the law did not replace the promise that God made to Abraham and Jesus. Its purpose (which Paul

is about to get to) was to help bring the promise to fruition by letting man see his sin. After seeing his sin, he man will see his need for a Savior. Therefore, man will see his need for Jesus (the Seed) and will be blessed through Jesus. Main point for the group to see now though, is that the law's purpose was not to bring righteousness.

- ❖ Why is this important?
  - Many thought that the law took the place of the promise.
  - Many think now that the gospel replaces the law.
  - It leaves you with questioning, "What was the purpose of the law?"
- ❖ What happens if the inheritance of life depends on the law?
  - Christ died for nothing, the promise is gone and God didn't keep his promise. Therefore the trustworthiness of God is in question and God is in question.
- ❖ Why did God give Abraham this promise?
  - Because of his grace. Absolutely nothing to do with what Abraham did or didn't do. Completely given out of who God is. The same reason he gives it today.
- ❖ If this section was used by Paul to tell you what the purpose of the law "isn't", what question are you left with?
  - What is the purpose of the law?
  - We will get to that next week. But today the main thing we learn is that it's purpose was not to give righteousness.
- Leader: Give the keys back to the group members. Then let them know you want to also keep the paper clip. Encourage them to put it somewhere that would remind that today they are called to live not by the law but by grace. It is grace that is the key to life not the law.

## STUDY 6: GALATIANS 3:19-4:7

Today we learn about the purpose of the law. Before we dig into that though, take some time to just remember what the purpose of the law was "not".

### • Activity

When we are little, there are things that we were told about that we were also told we would understand better when we were older. For some, our parents even had things that they gave us when we were older because we were then ready to be responsible with them. Examples: a pocket knife for a boy, a valuable doll to a girl, etc...

- ❖ What were things that were passed down to you like this or things you are passing down to your children? Or, what are things your parents told you about that know you are older it does make more sense?
- **Read Galatians 3:19-20**
  - ❖ Last week we were left with the question Paul answers here: What is the purpose of the law? How does he answer it?
    - It was added because of sin until the time the Savior was revealed.
    - People were just sitting around sinning and doing whatever with no direction. The law came when Moses came off the mountain with God and he saw that the people had gone crazy in sin: worshipping a golden calf even.
    - Analogy: A new puppy loves to get rowdy and bite and snap sometimes. They don't have a clue that what they are doing can be harmful and hurt others. They are just being a puppy but their actions are hurting others. What they are doing is not right. To do nothing to teach that it is not right will just encourage them to continue. There has to be some "rule" in place to teach them it is not right or good to keep doing. The people of God were doing all kinds of things that they did not know were wrong but it caused them to hurt each other and themselves. The law was added to show the things that were wrong.
  - ❖ How did the law come? How did the promise to Abraham come? Why is this important?
    - The law came through angels and put into play through a mediator (Moses). Moses represented 2 sides: the people and God. But the promise only represented one side: God-he is one. The promise only had to depend on who God was. The law depended on man's obedience and God's blessing them if they were obedient.

### • Read Galatians 3:21-25

- ❖ Paul reveals that he is tracking with the thinking of the Galatians. He ask the next question he realizes they should be asking: "Are the law and promise opposed to one another since the law didn't take the promises place?" How does Paul answer this?
  - Absolutely not. They play 2 different roles: like your keys and paper clip.
  - If the law was to do the same thing the promise does (to impart life), then they would oppose one another. But they are to play 2 different roles.
- ❖ Verse 22 tells us about the condition in which the law put mankind. What was this condition and what does it tell you about the laws purpose?
  - The law revealed mankind's sin and because man could now see the sin, he was put under its bondage. Before the law came, man was sinning but didn't know it as sinning and was not under its bondage. So, the law put us in bondage. That was its job!
- ❖ Why would God put the world in bondage to sin? Why not just keep us oblivious?
  - So that faith could be known and Jesus would be known. So that those who have faith could be saved. If you don't see you are in bondage, you will never want to get out. It is still true today.
- ❖ In what ways do you see people sinning and hurting others and they don't even realize it?
  - This could be a person that is an alcoholic and not knowing it; verbal abuse; etc...
- ❖ If we follow the law to use it to find freedom we will begin to realize how much more in bondage we really are. It locks us up! But what does verse 23-25 tell us that faith in Jesus gives us?
  - Freedom from being prisoners of the law. We were purposefully locked up by the law until the faith came.
  - We are freed from being prisoners to our sin.
- **Read Galatians 26-29**
  - ❖ Here is the heart of the gospel! Not only has the good news of Christ freed us from the bondage of the law, but what more has it done?
    - It has also made us sons/daughters of God. We live the life of Christ-remember. Therefore, like Christ, we too are sons of God!
    - Also, like Christ, we are Abraham's seed. What is true of Christ is true of us!
  - ❖ Let's stop and put this all back in context. What was it that the Jewish Christians were trying to tell the Gentiles? What was wrong with what they taught?

- They told them the way to get rid of their sin and to become children of God, Abraham's seed, was to do the things they did-follow the law given to the Jews.
  - ❖ If you are a Gentile in Galatia reading this letter, how does this letter start to put everything back in proper order for you?
  - I once believed the gospel but then started to see my sin. When I saw my sin, I was caught off guard because I thought that following Jesus was to take sin away. So, I now listen to the Jewish Christians who are telling me that I see my sin because I'm not obeying the law. So, I then turn to the law to deal with my sin. But what I really have done is put myself back in bondage to sin.
  - Paul reminds me now that following Christ does not mean that sin disappears. I should not be surprised when I see sin. He reminds me that I am not in bondage to it-locked up by it. So, when I do see sin, the bigger question will become, does it have power over me? I have to answer NO! I am no longer in bondage to sin or the law.
  - I stop giving into sins power because it has no power. It wants me to think it does. I don't stop sinning because I'm under bondage. I stop sinning because I am free to be me-a son of God, baptized into Christ, living his life through faith, clothed with Christ, one in Christ.
- **Read Galatians 4:1-7**
    - ❖ What is an heir and what do we learn about this heir?
      - Someone that will inherit what belongs to their father.
      - This one is a child, no different from a slave when they are little in that they get nothing more than a slave, even though they own it all.
      - They are under the supervision of guardians and trustees.
      - Not ready for full authority. This was set up by their father.
    - ❖ How is this analogy used by Paul to describe the function of law and faith?
      - Humanity was not ready for a savior. It was young, foolish and could not control itself.
      - It had authority placed over it, the law, until the right time.
      - At the right time, Jesus came in order to free the world from the law.
      - The reason was so we would receive full inheritance.
    - ❖ In verse 6, what is it that Paul wants the Gentiles to know?
      - They are sons, full sons, we call him daddy. We are no longer slaves under the law but sons and heirs.
    - ❖ What does "Abba, Father" mean? What does this meaning draw out in you?
      - The Spirit of a Son is in us and we cry this out: it means "Daddy"
      - Our Father has given us His inheritance!

## STUDY 7: GALATIANS 4:8-20

In the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, one character has been in jail for over 40 years and is now in his 70's when he is released from prison. The movie tracks his life out of prison and his life of freedom. He finds it very difficult to live this life out of prison because he had become so used to being in prison. He had actually found security in his bondage. So much so, that all he wanted to do was to go back. As the movie progresses, the older gentleman ends up hanging himself because he felt so lost in his freedom. He had been in prison for so long; it was the only way he knew how to make sense of his life.

### • Activity

- ❖ Look back at the parts of Galatians we have studied so far. What are all the words and phrases Paul has used so far to describe those who belong to Jesus?
  - Brothers: 1:2                      Called 1:6                      Servant of Christ 1:10
  - Justified by faith 2:16      Crucified with Christ 2:20
  - Blessed 3:9                      Redeemed 3:13                      Free from the law 3:25
  - Sons of God 3:26              Baptized in Christ 3:27              Clothed with Christ 3:27
  - One in Christ 3:28              Abraham's seed 3:29              Heir to the promise 3:29
  - Not a slave 4:7
- ❖ One of the most difficult parts of living as a Christian is learning to live as a person that is no longer in prison. Which phrases stick out to you the most that help you to remember that you are free? When are the hardest times to remember this?

### • Read Galatians 4:8-10

- ❖ Paul refers back to the time when the Gentiles in Galatia did not know Jesus. He doesn't tell us exactly who "those by nature are not gods" but who do you think he is talking about?
  - They were under the slavery of anything that told them not to do this or to do that to get right with God. Anything that we follow to make our relationship with God right, we are slaves to that. Anything besides Jesus is "by nature not gods" but rather just created things.
- ❖ What types of slavery are you tempted to fall under again? What about in the "church universal"?

- Not knowing forgiveness unless I go do certain laws.
- Catholicism lives under this. Fundamentalist as well.
- Anything that keeps me earning my sonship and remaining in good standing with God.
- We can even be in slavery to grace and justice and mercy rather than being in slavery to a God that is gracious, just and merciful. We can be tempted to serve the characteristics of God and not God.

- ❖ What was the slavery that the Gentiles were falling under?
  - Thinking they had to keep all the festivals again (vs 10). Observing these things because "atonement" was promised by doing it. Just like Catholicism-observe these things to receive forgiveness.

### • Read Galatians 4:11-16

- ❖ What words does Paul use to tell us his thoughts about the Galatians and why?
  - Fear, Plead- he is scared for their lives and deeply longs for them to change.
- ❖ What event does Paul bring back to the Galatians mind and why?
  - When they first met and how much they loved him and the joy he saw in them. Evidently this has changed.
- ❖ Why would the Galatians start treating Paul differently?
  - Someone has turned them against him. They are listening to someone else and those people are telling them that Paul is serving man and not God.
- ❖ What signs are the Galatians showing that proves to Paul they are no longer following the gospel?
  - Lost their joy. Attacking Paul. Paul seen as an enemy. No longer welcoming. Don't trust him.
  - Willing to deal with him and his illness with no problem though it was a trial, but now want nothing to do with him.

### • Read 4:17-20

- ❖ Zealousness could be a sign of "truly living". When does Paul say that zealousness is good and when it is bad?
  - Good when the cause is right
  - Be zealous all the time not just when someone is watching.
- ❖ Who are people you know that are zealous but for the wrong things?
- ❖ What sign does Paul give for recognizing false teaching?

- Does it alienate you from people? Any teaching that alienates you from people is a false teaching or you have a false understanding of that teaching.
- ❖ In 19 and 20, Paul seems to be having a sentimental moment. Why does he put this line in the letter?
  - It shows how deeply concerned he is but recognizes at the same time that he has been hard on them. He doesn't say he's sorry for that but that he wishes he could be there so they could see his deep concern. But since he can't he has to express himself in some hard ways to show his concern for what they are doing. At the same time, he wants them to know this comes from a heart that longs for them to have life. He has their best in mind.
- ❖ In summarizing this section, Paul has noticed that they are not the same and that shows they have left the truths of Christ. What are all the ways he has said they are not the same?
  - Not only have their beliefs and practices changed, but their joy is gone, they are alienating themselves and treating him in an ungodly way.
  - He sees all the signs of people living in bondage again.
- ❖ Who are the people you are around now that you see this kind of change happening? What about in your own life?
  - Leader: In the last minutes of your time together, do something a little different. Have your group be quiet and give some time for them to pray for those people or places in their own life. After a few minutes, simply pray for your entire group that they would be people of joy, living in freedom.

## STUDY 8: GALATIANS 4:21-5:12

One day as he was strolling through the woods, a wild animal was captured in a cage someone had set. It was in the cage for 3 days until someone else finally found him. The person that found him carefully opened the cage door to set the animal free. Though the animal was free, he stayed in the cage for a very long time out of fear of something happening if he stepped out. The animal was free again but he had to first choose to step out of the cage. He had to leave the cage. Though he was free, he stayed trapped.

### • Activity

- ❖ Growing up, how many of you played any kind of sport or were a part of any activity that required training? --Piano, Band, sports, etc... Tell the group about the training you went through and how you watched yourself develop.
  - Leader: an option here is to buy one or two paddle-ball games (you know the paddle that has a ball attached by string that you hit up and down). Hand them out to a couple of people in the group and have them try it a few times and everyone watch how much better they get even in a short time.
  - The point is to show people that it takes "training" to grow. Part of that training comes through a new mindset, a new thinking. In the same way the wild animal had to take on a new thinking. He had to relearn that he was free.

### • Read Galatians 4:21-27

- ❖ How many of you have grown up in the church and/or have the thinking that "we are poor, wretched sinners, saved by grace?" Is this true of us? Why or why not?
  - Leader: this is not true of us and the point of the lesson today is to show that. Yes it is true that before we met Christ we were poor, wretched sinners. But after coming to Christ, that definition of us is gone. We have to learn to put it away. But in this question, just let folks voice their opinion and let them know we are going to answer this today.
- ❖ What do you learn about Paul just by reading this explanation?
  - Paul was a scholar. God is now using his previous drive to be a high Pharisee for His glory. Paul is taking scholarly Jewish thinking and explaining it.
- ❖ Going back into Genesis and Exodus, try to answer these questions about things that Paul is referring:

- Who were Abraham's two sons and which one was born by a slave and which born by the free woman? Genesis 16 and 21
  - Genesis 16: Ishmael was the son born to the slave Hagar.
  - Genesis 21: Isaac was the son born to the free woman Sarah.
- There were two primary covenants in the OT. One was based on a promise by God and the other based on the actions of the people. What are these two covenants and which was based on the actions of the people? (Genesis 17 and Exodus 19-20)
  - Genesis 17: Abrahamic Covenant given in a promise from God. The mark of circumcision was there just to remind Abraham and his people that God has made a promise to them.
  - Exodus 19-20: Mosaic Covenant given on Mt. Sinai with rules and regulations for the people to keep in order to receive God's blessing. It did not take the place of the Abrahamic Covenant. It was a new covenant all together given to show man his sin.
- ❖ Paul is taking these two illustrations as a figurative explanation of the life we as Christians are now called into. How does he connect these two illustrations?
  - Abrahamic Covenant ties in with Sarah and the birth of Isaac: both given by a promise from God and both acts based on the grace of God.
  - Mosaic Covenant ties in with Hagar and Ishmael: both based on the acts of man and both are images of the slavery man finds himself.

### Read Galatians 4:28-5:1

- ❖ Paul has finished his explanation and now turns to the Gentiles in Galatia and tells them who they are like. They are the children of promise. What does he say is true of those in the promise? What are they to do?
  - They will be persecuted by the ways of slavery. We will always be persecuted by the ways of slavery.
  - But our call is to put it away. Send it away! Don't be in bondage to it. It has no power over us.
  - We are free and we are not to let ourselves be under slavery.
- ❖ From this example, do you think that we are poor, wretched sinners saved by grace? How would this thinking keep you in bondage?
  - No, we are not! We are free! We are now righteous saints saved by grace! To keep thinking that we are just sinners saved by grace is to keep the definition of slavery on us. Jesus is not a "sinner saved by grace". So remember, we are living the Christ life!
- ❖ It's pretty evident that Paul wants the Gentiles to know they are free. What does this kind of freedom look like? How would you explain it?

- We are no longer under its power. We are free from fulfilling the law and free from the sin that the law shows us in our lives.
  - This does not mean that we are free to do whatever we want to do. We are now free to be who we were created to be. Nothing keeps us from being free.
  - Leader: next week we will get into the question, “does freedom mean we can go and do whatever we want to do?” So, if this comes up, let the group know we will dig into this more next week.
- ❖ What have been the most encouraging truths from this section that help you to stay out of the cage (like the wild animal) and instead go and be free?
    - Leader: have each group member pray what the person to their right shared here and have them ask Jesus to remind them they are free.
- **Read Galatians 5:2-6**
    - ❖ We discover here part of what is going on in the church in Galatia. The Jewish Christians are saying to the Gentile Christians they must be circumcised to truly be God's children. They are telling the Gentile Christians that if they do that then they won't struggle with sin any longer. But what is Paul's warning to them if they do get circumcised and why does he give this warning?
      - They are dismissing everything that Christ did on the cross and going back to trusting the law for their salvation. If they are going to do that, then they are putting their hope in the law instead of Christ and now they are bound to it.
      - They are now no longer under grace but under law. They are now no longer children of a promise but children of the law.
      - Circumcision was given to the Israelites to remind them physically that God has made a promise to them—it was never given to them to earn God's promise. Jesus is now given to us as that physical reminder!
  - **Read Galatians 5:7-12**
    - ❖ There is someone(s) that is persuading the believers here to go back to the law. Paul is obviously ticked at them. In verse 11, Paul brings up the point that he is being persecuted for what he is preaching. How does this tie into what he just said in 29?
      - The free will always be persecuted by the ones in slavery.
    - ❖ Think back to Paul's life when he was Saul—before meeting Christ. How is this statement true of the Christians he persecuted?
      - Paul has been on both sides of the coin—slave and now free.
  - ❖ Who are people that tempt you to go back into a life of slavery and how do they do it? What encourages you and gives you hope in these verses?

## STUDY 9: GALATIANS 5:13-6:18

We are in a country that is known as the Land of Freedom. Freedom means a lot of different things to different people in our country.

### • Activity

- ❖ How would you define freedom and how do most people in our country define it? What has been the result of this freedom thinking?
  - Most people think that freedom is being able to do whatever the heck we want to do. But that kind of “freedom thinking” puts us back into bondage. That type of thinking about freedom calls us to keep sinning and to live under its rule.
  - Because our country lives under the thinking that freedom is being able to do whatever I want, our country lives as individuals, all after their “rights”. Because of this type of thinking, we actually have thousands of more “laws” to protect everyone’s “rights”. It shows that this is not correct freedom thinking because we are bound now by more and more laws. It drives us to be individuals only after what we each want.
  - But true freedom is a “freedom to be”. It is a freedom to be exactly who God created us to be—worshippers and followers of Him. Nothing, not even the law or sin, keeps us from this now. In this type of freedom thinking, we are not free to go do whatever, but we are free to go and be one thing: what we were created to be.
- ❖ This may be hard to express but I encourage you to be honest. If you had the freedom to go out and do whatever you wanted, knowing you would not be caught, not be in trouble, not hurt anyone, what would you go and do?
  - Leader: point of this is not to get folks to share necessarily but to help them wrestle with the tension in their hearts. Some folks actually may be thinking here—go out and get as drunk as possible; have an affair; have sex with anyone they wanted; leave their spouse and kids; etc... Not interested in these things being shared. Main thing is they recognize the tension and the “ugliness” behind these things. That shows that this is not true freedom. True freedom doesn’t leave us with this ugliness. Share this explanation after the group discusses the question or after everyone sits in silence, afraid to share what is in their hearts.
- **Read Galatians 5:13-26**
- ❖ In the last section, Paul has attacked those that want to put the law back on the believer. After sitting in that section, the natural question should be, “then can we

just go do whatever we want to do? Can we just go off and sin, knowing we are free?” How does Paul answer this?

- Our freedom is not to indulge the sinful nature but there to free us to love each other.
- ❖ What are the differences Paul list between indulging in the sinful nature and living by the Spirit?
  - They are contrary to each other. They are in conflict with each other.
  - Sinful nature is out for my own needs and shown in the list Paul gives in 19-21. I’m serving me, not others.
  - Living by the Spirit leads us to love one another and are shown in the list Paul gives in 22-23. There is no law to govern these things.
  - Leader: this section should show why it was hard for some to share in the activity above. When there is conflict in their hearts and tension, it reveals the differences between the things they want to do that are sinful and the things that they want to do that are of the Spirit. If it’s embarrassing to share, it is most likely from the sinfulness of it.
- ❖ After reading this section, what is the best way for the Christian to evaluate their lives?
  - Asking yourself if your life can be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. This is different from always asking yourself if you are keeping the law and did I do this right or that right.
  - It’s a freedom life if you are simply able to ask, “Would I characterize the way I lived today as one who lived in love, joy, peace, etc....” If not, what are the things that are keeping me from being this?
- ❖ Looking at our country as a whole, would you really say we are a country that is living in freedom? What things listed in this section would say we are not?
- **Read Galatians 6:1-10**
- ❖ What fruits of the Spirit are displayed each verse: 6:1; 6:2; 6:3-5; 6:6?
  - Verse 6:1> love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control
  - Verse 6:2> love, faithfulness, kindness
  - Verse 6:3-5> love, self-control, goodness
  - Verse 6:6> love, kindness, goodness
- ❖ Why would Paul state in verse 2, “carry each other’s burdens”, and in verse 4, “carry [your own] own load”?
  - Burden’s are the hurts and pains that don’t come from sin and hardship and keep us in the attitude of loving others.

- Load is being used here as a person is to take responsibility for his own actions and can't put blame on another.
  - So, they work together: each of us should be responsible for our own actions but when someone falls, we too should help build them back up. We are to be responsible for ourselves and others.
- ❖ In 7-10 Paul tells us we can't hide from God. We are not fooling anyone but ourselves if we seek a life of sin. What is it that he says we should be worn out in doing? Would you say this is true of your life now?
- We should be "weary" (or worn-out) from doing good to everyone. We should be worn out especially from doing good to other believers.
- **Read Galatians 6:11-18**
- ❖ Paul uses verse 11 to say to the Gentiles that what he is about to say is HUGE! He is finalizing his point to them. What is the reason Paul says these men are speaking the things they are speaking and how does it tie into how he started the letter?
- To build up themselves by getting the applause of man.
- ❖ Why would the believer not need to build themselves up?
- They are already built up. Their value and worth are in who they are- God's children.
- ❖ In knowing this, how does verse 14 speak to you?
- I no longer need to find my value and worth in the world. I have been crucified to it and it to me. We are no longer in relationship to one another.
- ❖ What does Paul tell us is the most important thing in verse 15?
- A new creation. God is not interested in just patching up our lives. He wants to kill it, do away with it and give us a brand new creation. He wants to give us his life. We are called to live his life. To live his life, we live by the Spirit through faith in Jesus.
- ❖ Why would Paul close this letter with the line he does?
- He longs for them to cling to grace. He prays that their spirit would cling to grace and live by His Spirit.
- ❖ From this entire study, what would you pray that God would allow you to embrace more fully?