

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 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.

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?
- ❖ With this knowledge, why is verse one so important for Paul?
- ❖ Define the following words: Grace and Peace
- ❖ According to the first 5 verses, how would you define the "gospel"?
- ❖ Looking just at what we have read, it seems like the "gospel" is very simple. Where could the confusion be?

- **READ GALATIANS 1:6-9**

- ❖ What phrases or words tell us the tone of Paul for this letter and what is that tone?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ Who was the one that called them by the grace of Christ (vs 6)? How does that strike you?
- ❖ Paul makes a statement in 8-9 twice. What is that statement and what is he trying to say in this statement?

- ❖ 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?
- ❖ How do these first verses give you hope? What does it make you look forward to investigating in the rest of this letter?

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.

- ❖ “What things did you do this week, good or bad, that were based off of what others wanted from you?”
- **Read Galatians 1:10-12**
 - ❖ What word is repeated more than any other in these verses?
 - ❖ 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?
 - ❖ Looking at his responses in these verses, how is he responding to these accusations?
 - ❖ 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?
 - ❖ Last week we began our definition of the gospel from verses 1-5. What else do we learn about the gospel in these verses?
 - ❖ What does this knowledge of the gospel tell you about God?
- **Read Galatians 1:13-20**
 - ❖ What do we learn about Paul's previous way of life?
 - ❖ How old was Paul during that time?

- ❖ 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?
- ❖ Review what Paul has been accused of up to this point and what new accusations are revealed in these verses?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ Many times it's easy to put biblical characters on a pedestal. How do these verses reveal Paul as a real person?
- ❖ 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”?

- **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?
- ❖ From these verses, what has been Paul's journey since becoming a Christian?
- ❖ Why does Paul emphasize that he was not in Jerusalem very long and not for 3 years after his conversion?
- ❖ What do we learn in verse 23 and 24 about the power and goal of the gospel?
- ❖ 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, 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?

journey as well. What are important things you have seen in Paul's journey that encourage you in your journey?

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 it was to show the world that everyone has a story that affects the lives of others.

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?

- **Read Galatians 2:1**

- ❖ What do you know about Barnabas?
- ❖ What do you know about Titus?

- **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?
- ❖ What do you think was the revelation to Paul he talks about in 2:2?
- ❖ What more do we learn about a life that follows the gospel in these verses?
- ❖ What men is Paul talking about in verse 6? What is his opinion of them?
- ❖ What did these men recognize about Paul? What did they add to him?
- ❖ What words from Jesus to the apostles does verse 9 remind you?
- ❖ 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

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.

- ❖ 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?
 - ❖ What did Peter do wrong?
 - ❖ Share about a time you have been in a situation where you believed one thing but acted another way? What was the wrestling point?
 - ❖ How did Peter's actions affect others?
 - ❖ How did Paul handle the situation? How could he have handled it?
 - ❖ Look at verse 2:2 and compare it to 2:14. What is the difference in Paul's actions and Peter's?
- **Read Galatians 2:15-16**
 - ❖ What do we learn about the gospel this week in these verses?
- **Read Galatians 2:17-21**
 - ❖ What's the dilemma he talks about in verse 17?
 - ❖ Paul tells us in verse 19 the way the law is used. What is it?
 - ❖ Verses 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?
 - ❖ What is the second life and what has happened to it?
 - ❖ In looking at these 2 verses, why do you think most Christians struggle with hypocrisy?
 - ❖ If we live a life of hypocrisy, what does Paul say we have done to the grace of Jesus?

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.

- ❖ What are some of the ways that people want to change and what attempts do they make to bring about those changes?
- ❖ What are things in your own life you would love to see changed and what attempts are you making to bring about that change?
- **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?
 - ❖ What tempts us to not believe this is true now? Is this still true even now?
 - ❖ According to Paul, when is it that God brings about change in our lives?
- **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?
 - ❖ Why does Paul bring out Abraham here and how would this verse come across to a Jew?
 - ❖ Does this mean that we don't need to do anything but believe?
 - ❖ If it's true that our actions come out of our beliefs, then how should 2:20-21 enable us to live?
 - ❖ 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?
 - ❖ What do we learn about faith?
 - ❖ What does the word "redeemed" mean and what are we "redeemed" from?
 - ❖ Why were we redeemed and how?
 - ❖ Why was it that Christ died on a tree? Why not some other way of dying?
- **Read Galatians 3:15-18**
 - ❖ What is Paul trying to distinguish between here?
 - ❖ Why is this important?
 - ❖ What happens if the inheritance of life depends on the law?
 - ❖ Why did God give Abraham this promise?
 - ❖ If this section was used by Paul to tell you what the purpose of the law "isn't", what question are you left with?

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".

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?
 - ❖ How did the law come? How did the promise to Abraham come? Why is this important?
- **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?
 - ❖ 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?
 - ❖ Why would God put the world in bondage to sin? Why not just keep us oblivious?
 - ❖ In what ways do you see people sinning and hurting others and they don't even realize it?

- ❖ 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?

- **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?

- ❖ 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?

- ❖ If you are a Gentile in Galatia reading this letter, how does this letter start to put everything back in proper order for you?

- **Read Galatians 4:1-7**

- ❖ What is an heir and what do we learn about this heir?

- ❖ How is this analogy used by Paul to describe the function of law and faith?

- ❖ In verse 6, what is it that Paul wants the Gentiles to know?

- ❖ What does "Abba, Father" mean? What does this meaning draw out in you?

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?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ What types of slavery are you tempted to fall under again? What about in the "church universal"?
- ❖ What was the slavery that the Gentiles were falling under?

• Read Galatians 4:11-16

- ❖ What words does Paul use to tell us his thoughts about the Galatians and why?

- ❖ What event does Paul bring back to the Galatians mind and why?
- ❖ Why would the Galatians start treating Paul differently?

- ❖ What signs are the Galatians showing that proves to Paul they are no longer following the gospel?

• 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?
- ❖ Who are people you know that are zealous but for the wrong things?
- ❖ What sign does Paul give for recognizing false teaching?
- ❖ In 19 and 20, Paul seems to be having a sentimental moment. Why does he put this line in the letter?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ Who are the people you are around now that you see this kind of change happening? What about in your own life?

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.

• 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?
- ❖ What do you learn about Paul just by reading this explanation?
- ❖ 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
 - 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)
- ❖ 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?

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?

- ❖ From this example, do you think that we are poor, wretched sinners saved by grace? How would this thinking keep you in bondage?
- ❖ 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?

• 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?

• 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?
- ❖ Think back to Paul's life when he was Saul—before meeting Christ. How is this statement true of the Christians he persecuted?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ 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?

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.

- ❖ How would you define freedom and how do most people in our country define it? What has been the result of this freedom thinking?
 - ❖ 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?
- **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?
 - ❖ What are the differences Paul list between indulging in the sinful nature and living by the Spirit?
 - ❖ After reading this section, what is the best way for the Christian to evaluate their lives?
 - ❖ 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?

- ❖ Why would Paul state in verse 2, “carry each other’s burdens”, and in verse 4, “carry [your own] own load”?
- ❖ 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?

- **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?
- ❖ Why would the believer not need to build themselves up?
- ❖ In knowing this, how does verse 14 speak to you?
- ❖ What does Paul tell us is the most important thing in verse 15?
- ❖ Why would Paul close this letter with the line he does?

From this entire study, what would you pray that God would allow you to embrace more fully