



Galatians
MEDWAY GROUPS

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GALATIANS // Week One

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

The gospel grants believers confidence by rooting their identity, authority, and ambition in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What is “ambition?” What have been your life’s greatest ambitions? Why?**
- **Think of a group of people with unusually high ambitions. How would you describe their lifestyle?**

Ambition is the desire for personal achievement. It is a self-focused pursuit. It drives people to do great things but can also drive people to do horrible things. People with high ambitions are often self-indulgent. They want what is best for themselves and do not care about how it may affect others. But once our identity is rooted in Christ, our ambitions and our authority are all about Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

[HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:1-5.](#)

- **Why was Paul writing to “churches” and not a “church”? What does that tell you about his message?**
- **What does Paul’s introduction say about his identity? With what authority was he writing?**

Paul identified himself as an apostle, an authoritative position and calling of God. He identified himself as an apostle because of his understanding that it was only through God’s power and authority that he could accomplish the purposes of God. No other aspect of Paul’s life was as significant as who he was because of Jesus.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:6-9.

- How do you think the Galatian believers felt when they read this section? How would you respond if someone was “astonished” that you had drifted in your faith?
- Why did Paul hate false gospels? What makes them so dangerous?

Paul was shocked that these Christians were so quickly and easily turning away from the One who called them in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel, a gospel of an all-together different sort. Judging by the false teachings that Paul refuted, we can surmise that they were Judaizers, strict Jews who professed to be Christians. These false teachers had infiltrated the Galatian churches soon after Paul and Barnabas had left the area. Paul brought two charges against them. First, they were throwing the Galatians into confusion. In other words, they were agitators stirring up trouble. The cause of this agitation involved Paul’s second charge. The false teachers’ intent (they were trying) was to pervert the gospel of Christ.

HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:10.

- Is personal ambition bad? Why or why not? How should your identity in Christ affect your ambition? Do you have any ambitions in your life that do not fit with your identity in Christ?
- How would you describe Paul’s ambition? How is his ambition different from the ambition of the world?
- How did Paul’s identity affect his ambition?
- What does it mean for you to be a slave of Christ? Why is slavery to Christ an identity that sets you free?

Paul’s ambition was not for personal gain but for God’s gain. He had an audience of one, God. Too often ambition seeks to impress a large audience. Paul shifted ambition to pleasing God alone. Paul’s identity as a slave, a servant of God, clarified his ambition. It wasn’t an ambition for himself but for God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **How does understanding your ambition and identity give you confidence? What is something you need to approach with confidence this week?**
 - **How can our church be prepared to guard against false gospels?**
 - **How have you seen selfish ambition harm the church? What steps should be taken when selfish ambition comes to light?**
 - **How can you use ambition to serve others? How can you use ambition to serve the church?**
-

PRAYER

Finish your time in prayer asking that God would be a constant source of confidence. Pray that our identity in Christ would drive us to live for Him. Pray that God would give us a holy ambition for His name and His cause. Pray that the church would continually serve and focus on God and stay far from false gospels.

GALATIANS // Week Two

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

God has the power to radically change us and the course of our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **How do you typically react to change? Do you thrive on change, or does it make you nervous? What does this say about your personality?**
- **What is the biggest life change you've experienced recently? What do you remember most about that experience? How did you handle the change?**

Change is inevitable. In our jobs, families, relationships, church, and country, change swirls all around us. For many people change is far from welcome. The way that we respond to changes shapes our lives going forward. Today we will see that Paul experienced dramatic life changes as his story went from being one of the most feared enemies of Christianity, to one of its most prolific voices. In Galatians 1 and Acts 9 we can see the catalyst and result of the change in Paul's life.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

[HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:11-17.](#)

- **Why did Paul make a distinction between the gospel he preached and man's gospel? Describe these two gospels and their differences.**
- **What happened to Paul when he received Christ? How did his life change?**

Paul made the distinction between the two gospels because there were teachers in Galatia accusing him of trying to please men. Paul was making it clear he only preached the gospel that he received directly from Jesus Christ. Paul transformed from a persecutor

of the church to a missionary to the Gentiles. We see Jesus as the source of Paul's transformation in Acts 9.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 9:1-9

- What was Saul's overall attitude toward Christianity before his conversion? Read Acts 8:1-3 for additional insight.
- Saul, a Pharisee, persecuted Christians because he thought they were a threat to Judaism. How have you seen sin distort and twist people's identities, including your own?
- How do you think Saul felt when confronted by Jesus? Given his previous activities, what might he have been thinking about during those three days of blindness and fasting (v. 9)?

Saul's desire to go to Damascus reveals the extent of his hatred of Christians. His earlier activity against believers had been directed primarily against those in and around Jerusalem. As Saul approached Damascus, the risen Christ encountered and commanded him to enter Damascus and await instructions. Saul was blinded, so his companions led him into Damascus, where he fasted for three days (vv. 3-9). For Saul, this encounter with Jesus resulted in a dramatic transformation in the life of this proud, Christian-hating Pharisee.

- Why do you think Jesus chose one of Christianity's worst enemies of the time to be a follower? Why is this good news for us? What does it tell us about God?

HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 1:18-24.

- What did Paul consider his new purpose to be? Could he have discovered this purpose through any other means? Why or why not?
- What influence did Paul's life before Christ have on the way he lived as a changed man?

Paul changed from a persecutor of the gospel to a preacher of the gospel, however people still remembered his treacherous past. Paul did not let this stop him, instead he used it to show the power of the gospel and the change that Christ brings.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **What in your past makes it hard for you to feel worthy of serving God? How does the gospel impact those feelings?**
 - **How has your past prepared you to minister to people today?**
 - **How can you use your story to serve in the church? How can your past successes and failures help you glorify and serve God?**
 - **Who in our community can you connect with because of your story? What are some ways you can be intentional with people this week?**
-

PRAYER

Close in prayer asking that God would use your history and experience to bring Him glory and to expand His kingdom. Pray that He would reveal ways for your group to serve the church and the community. Pray that God would use your stories of life change to impact people in similar situations.

GALATIANS // Week Three

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

The gospel unites diverse believers around the glory of God and the advance of His kingdom.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- What are some groups or places in which you have a strong sense of community? (Ex: alma mater, favorite team, town, family, clubs or civic organizations, etc.) What is it about those groups that makes it so easy for people to connect?
- Do you think it's easier or more difficult for people to connect in a church than it is to connect in other groups? Why?
- If a non-Christian asked you what the point of the church is, how would you respond?

Many social groups seem to be more cohesive than the church at times. For example, it seems like sports fans often have closer bonds and more shared interests related to their teams than Christians have related to their shared mission. Today we are going to look at the need for unity in the church and discuss what we can do about it.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:1-10.

- What issues had caused a lack of unity for the people in Galatia? How did Paul and Titus experience this division?
- Who had Paul consulted regarding his ministry to Gentiles? Why do you think Paul included the apostles when dealing with the unity of the church?
- How would you explain Paul's goal in this situation?

- How would you summarize Paul's approach? How is this different from how you might react in a similar situation?

Paul spoke to the division over Jews and Gentiles by talking about his experiences. He knew that tension existed, but he was not worried about the issue because he had spoken with the apostles, the leaders of the church in order to reach a wise conclusion. Paul knew his purpose was to spread the gospel, not to worry about circumcision. He dealt with divisions about circumcision again in Ephesians 2, once again focusing on the unity of the gospel.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:11-22.

- Before Jesus came, what problems did the Gentiles face (vv. 11-12)? How do those images compare to your personal history?

Paul reminded his Gentile readers that they had been hopeless and godless before their salvation. Or, as he put it in this verse, Gentiles had been far away from God, which characterizes all of our lives before salvation. When we remind ourselves of this truth, it makes God's gift of salvation all the more incredible.

- How do you think the practicing Jews felt when these Gentiles started coming to their church, but didn't want to adopt the Jewish customs? What customs might draw that reaction from us today?
- According to verses 14-18, what are the positive results of this wall coming down? Which one is the most significant to you and why?

The subject of Paul's message in verses 11-18 is that through His death Jesus "tore down the dividing wall of hostility" (v. 14) between believing Jews and Gentiles, causing them to be at peace with one another as one new people of God. This happened because when Christ came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to those who were far away and peace to those who were near. As a result, unity (v. 14) and peace (v. 16) are possible in our relationships with others, and we all have access to the Holy Spirit's power (v. 18).

- In what ways can you see God's earthly church being fitted together and growing in the Lord? How is this evident specifically at our church?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **Why is it important to remember what we were before God's power changed us? How can you do this in a healthy way?**
 - **Where does division and tension show up in your life? How can the gospel bring freedom and unity in that area?**
 - **What divisions have you seen among Christians in our community or even at our church? Why are divisions dangerous for the health of the church?**
 - **What are some of the unique challenges we face as we practice biblical unity? How can we tangibly combat those challenges?**
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PRAYER

Close in prayer asking that God would bring unity to our church and the churches around us. Pray that the church would focus on the gospel and not preferences or backgrounds that may bring division. Pray that your group would continue to grow closer and more united in purpose. Thank God for sending Christ who broke down the dividing walls that can form in the church.

GALATIANS // Week Four

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

Life isn't found in keeping the law but in walking by faith. We are no longer bound to keep the Law to maintain our standing with Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **In which sport(s) do you think it is most difficult to score? Why? In which sport is it easiest to score? Why?**
- **In what ways might we as human beings try to “score points” with God?**
- **Why do people want to “score points” with God? What’s tempting about this approach? What’s wrong with this approach?**

For those of us with a competitive spirit, games in which we can score more points than our opponents are exciting. We often consider games to be worthless unless a winner is declared. We also tend to think this way about God. Many people believe they can score points with God through seemingly righteous acts, but today we will see in Galatians 2 the futility of that hope. Only Jesus is able to satisfy the requirements of the law and we receive Him only through faith.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:11-14.

- **How had Peter compromised his freedom in Christ? To who or what was he enslaving himself?**
- **How is living under the law related to living in fear of people? How are both opposed to living in freedom?**

Peter lived with freedom when he was with Gentiles, but when Jews came to town, he gave up his freedom to be seen in their eyes as a good Jew who followed the law. Legalism and the fear of people seek to control our behavior and force us to fit what into what is deemed “right.” The gospel says that we are free to live a life fully devoted to Christ.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:15-21.

- What is the common need of both groups named in these verses? Who is the only person who can meet that need?
- Why is it important to see ourselves on equal ground as those in need of salvation?
- How are the words “justified” and “faith” used in the passage?

The word “justify” refers to God’s creative act of grace by which He gives people who place faith in Christ a new, right standing with Him and a new way of life. In their new standing with God, they seek to reflect His character and to do His will.

- According to these verses, what is the message of the gospel?
- What kind of behavior would be considered consistent with this understanding of the gospel?
- What does Paul say about the role of faith and works (or the law)? How are they different?

The gospel is the good news that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law. Our behavior is consistent with this gospel when it does not express prejudice toward others or insist that works lead to salvation. Paul contrasted faith and works. The apostle pointed out that observing any ritual or law is incapable of producing justification or right standing before God.

- What kind of change did Paul experience according to verses 17-21?
- What was the law’s purpose? How did it set the stage for the Messiah? How then should we view the law?

When Paul stated that he died to the law, he was acknowledging God’s grace and asserting that humans can do nothing to merit salvation. It was through the law that Paul had come to this position. The law revealed the inadequacy of humanity’s religious efforts and exposed the depth of human sinfulness.

- What does it look like to “live for God?”

- What was Paul's point in verse 21? How might our lives imply that Christ died for nothing?
-

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- How does the realization that Christ loved you and gave Himself for you change you? Is there an area in your life today that doesn't reflect that truth?
 - Is it easier for you to believe that someone is a Christian when he or she is culturally, ethnically, socially, or racially "like you"? Why or why not?
 - How can we act on Paul's reminder to the Jews about equality among all sinners?
 - How can you help someone in your family better "live for God" this week?
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PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer. Pray specifically for group members to apply the reality of God's love for them to the struggles in their lives. Pray that each person would continue to change in order to look more and more like Jesus. Pray that they would reflect on and understand what it means to daily die to self.

GALATIANS // Week Five

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

Our redemption in Christ comes by grace through faith, and that same faith sustains us every day.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **Think back over all of your accomplishments or successes for the last 5-10 years. Which would you say is your greatest? Why that one?**
- **Over that same time period, which has been your greatest disappointment? Why?**

There is something very satisfying with taking pride in our work, just as there is something very deflating when our efforts disappoint others and even us. It is no wonder we have such a hard time accepting that our relationship with God isn't performance-based. The gospel is this: we are saved solely by grace through faith, and we can't do anything to earn that salvation. It's because of Christ's accomplishments, not our own, that we can be right with God, something Paul makes abundantly clear in our study today.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:1-5.

- **Why is Paul's question in verse 2 so crucial? How would you state his question in your own words?**
- **What influences lead you to believe that God only accepts you by your actions? What are some of the self-improvement tasks you attempt in your day-to-day relationship with God?**
- **What does a balance between observing the law and resting in faith look like?**

- How do you feel about yourself and your spirituality when you try to impress God with your works? How does that compare to how you feel when you rest in faith?
- Paul wasn't taking issue with the religious works the people were performing but with the motives behind their works. What was wrong with the Galatian believers' motives?

The believers in the Galatian church desired to follow Jesus well. But we learn from Paul's letter that many had fallen into a trap that tempts us all—legalism. Legalism is the belief that we must fulfill certain requirements in order to gain God's favor. Even though we know we're saved by grace through faith, we still try to make ourselves better in an effort to earn God's love.

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:6-9.

In verses 6-9, Paul supported his argument against works-based salvation by reminding the Galatian church that Abraham was saved by his faith (see Genesis 15:6).

- Who are the true children of Abraham? Who is eligible to be one? Why is this good news for us?
- Why is it so easy for us to forget the role of faith in our relationship with God?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:10-14.

As Paul continued his warning, he illustrated the dire circumstances of people living as slaves to works and the law. Quoting the Old Testament, Paul reminded us we're cursed. Because of sin, we deserve eternal death. Our cursed nature is evident in the brokenness of this world and our inability to fulfill God's entire law.

- What punishment from God do you deserve as a result of your sinful nature? Why can't works set you free from sin's curse?
- What effect does Jesus' work on the cross have on your life? Do you think it's possible for it to have a greater effect? Why or why not?

We are tempted to live by works because focusing on specific rules and lists can give us a sense of identity. It also provides a tangible way to measure how "spiritual" we are. But ultimately, this mind-set leads to a false sense of strength that makes us think we can earn our way into God's good graces, when really He alone determines that. We receive life, identity, and strength through God's Spirit. The new life comes through Christ's payment on the cross and is transferred to us because we believe in Him. Instead of

sinners needing redemption, we become ambassadors for God's kingdom, empowered by the Spirit's strength.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **Describe your experience of becoming a believer in Christ. How is your story a reminder of the importance of faith and grace?**
 - **Based on what we've studied this week, are spiritual works important? Why or why not? In what act of obedience and faithfulness do you need to improve?**
 - **Does serving in the church ever become a "work"? Why? How can our small group faithfully serve one another without it becoming a work?**
 - **What are appropriate motives for obeying God's laws and practicing spiritual disciplines?**
-

PRAYER

Thank God for sending Christ on our behalf, freeing us from bondage to the law. Thank God for giving us the law, which shows us what righteousness and holy living look like and gives us a goal to strive for. Thank God for the Holy Spirit's daily presence in our lives to guide, convict, and comfort us as we seek to live by faith. And thank God for the opportunity to share the gospel with others who may be trying to earn their salvation.

GALATIANS // Week Six

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the promises of God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What is the most significant promise you have ever made and then kept? What is the most significant promise you have ever made and then broken?**
- **How do you feel when someone makes a promise to you? What do you expect from him or her?**

A promise is a vow to follow through on something. Promises are meant to be kept and breaking them has consequences. We expect others to keep their promises and if they fail then our view of them changes. God made many promises in the Bible, and the way that He kept His promises not only revealed His character but also secured glorious consequences for His children.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:15-18.

- **How did Paul understand the idea of a promise? What did it entail? What didn't it entail?**
- **What were some of the promises that God made to Abraham? How is Christ the fulfillment of the promise of offspring?**
- **What is the difference between the law and the promise? How do the law and the promise work together?**

Paul understood that a promise could not be changed or altered, once it was made it was final. In this text, he focused on the promise of offspring to Abraham. God's promise was

not focused on many descendants, but now, Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the Galatians to know that nothing would change the promises of God, including the law. The law came 430 years after the promise to Abraham, but the law, just like the promise, was meant to point God's people to Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:19-26.

- For what reason did Paul say the law exists?
- Look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. How do we break these most basic “rules” of life every day?
- What is revealed about our lives when we look at the standard set by the law? How does that make you feel about yourself? How does God intend for you to feel?

The purpose of the law was to show our desperate need for God. The law sets the standard for righteousness and highlights our sinfulness and need of a Savior.

- What does God's intervention through Christ reveal about God's plan? What does it reveal about God's feelings towards us?

A quick review of the Ten Commandments shows us how easily we fall short of God's standard. Our inability to fulfill the law proves we need a mediator between us and God. That's precisely what Jesus' death on the cross was all about. By embracing faith as the basis for our relationship with God, we move from attempting to please Him and earn His love to being adopted children blanketed in Christ's righteousness. Paul wrote that we are “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 26). By faith, we become Christians saved by God's grace, and by faith we live as Christians, furthering His kingdom and spreading the gospel. As believers in God, our works become acts of obedience and faithfulness that mirror His love to the world.

- What happens if the church focuses on the law more than on Christ, who fulfilled the law?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Now that Christ has come to fulfill the law and the promise, what role does the law play in our lives?

- **Are there ways that you still try to live by the law? What happens if you try to live by the law? How can you guard against that tendency?**
 - **What promises has God made to us in Christ? How can we focus on God's promises instead of a set of rules?**
 - **Is there someone in your life who might need to be reminded of the promises of God? If so, how can you help them this week?**
-

PRAYER

Close your time in prayer. Ask God to remind you of His promises continuously. Pray that as a group, you would focus on Christ as the fulfillment of the promise and the law. Pray that Christ would be glorified at our church as you proclaim who He is and what He has done.

GALATIANS // Week Seven

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

We are no longer slaves to the world. We are sons of God through our redemption in Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What words or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word “adoption”?**
- **How is the process of having a child biologically different from the process of adopting a child? How is it similar?**
- **How might adoption serve as a picture of the gospel?**

When someone is adopted, they become a member of the family. Adopted children become full children, receiving all the same privileges and honors given to a biological child. As believers in Christ, though our sin has separated us from God, Paul tells us that we have been adopted as God’s children.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:1-7.

- **Compare and contrast Paul’s idea of a son and a slave.**
- **What were the Galatians enslaved to? What principles of the world threaten to enslave you?**

Paul considered sons and slaves to be the same, while the son was a child. Once a son reached the time set by the father, he became the full heir and owner of everything. Both were under the supervision of the father but the son would one day receive his right. The Galatians had become enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

- What do you think “fullness of time” means? What does it mean for the work of Christ?
- Based on verse 5, what do we receive as a result of our redemption?

The fullness of time refers to an appointed time. It is a time purposefully set to accomplish a prepared task. In this instance, the appointed time refers to the coming of Christ and His redeeming death. By His death, believers were adopted into God’s family.

- How does Paul describe our relationship with God after salvation?
- What do we inherit with Christ as a result of our adoption as sons and daughters? What part of your inheritance excites you the most? Why?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:8-11.

- What could have pulled the Galatians back into slavery to the world?
- How does knowing and being known by God combat the pull back to slavery?

Paul did not want the Galatians enslaved again to worldly things. He was afraid that the old life, especially paganism, could draw the Galatians away from God. When we truly know God the things of the world lose their attractiveness. The world does not compare to the God that knows us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- When was a time that you turned back to the things of the world? What drew you back into slavery?
 - When are you most tempted to neglect your relationship as a son/daughter and become a slave again to the world? How do you think our discussion today can help you combat that temptation?
 - How would you explain to a new believer the struggle of returning to slavery to the world?
 - How did Paul lead the Galatians towards being sons/daughters and not slaves? How can our church do the same thing for people who are tempted by the world?
-

PRAYER

Invite group members to praise God for the specific ways the Spirit changes us from the inside out and makes us aware of our status as adopted children. Pray that group members would focus on being children of God and flee from slavery to the world. Pray for anyone who expressed a current struggle with worldly things.

GALATIANS // Week Eight

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

Through Christ, we live under the gospel, not the law.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What is the best compliment you have ever received?**
- **Have you ever heard a back-handed compliment?**
- **What is the proper way to give a compliment? What is the wrong way to give a compliment?**

Compliments can be given for good reasons and bad reasons. Some people use compliments to further their own purposes and for personal gain. Paul said this about the Judaizers in Galatians 4 who were trying to use complimentary language to entrench false teaching and keep people in bondage to the law.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:12-20.

- **How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Galatians?**
- **In verses 17-20, who are "they"? What did Paul mean when he said they "make much of you"? What were these false teachers saying to the Galatians?**

The people Paul addresses here were the Judaizers, a group of false teachers who claimed that keeping parts of the law were necessary for salvation. Paul had an established relationship with the Galatian church. They had taken care of him during an ailment. Paul did not want the Galatians to be fooled into believing a false gospel by Judaizers who were complimenting them.

- Why was Paul upset with the Judaizers complimenting the Galatians? What was their motive?
- What was the end goal of the Judaizers?

The Judaizers were making much of the Galatians to get them to follow their teachings. Paul felt a deep pain seeing his friends get mixed up in false teachings. Paul would not let this happen.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:21-31.

- What Old Testament story did Paul use to make his point?
- Who are the “sons of the slave”? Who are the “sons of the free woman”? Why did Paul make his point by talking about the mothers and not the father?
- What was the result of being a child of the free woman? What was the inheritance that Paul was talking about?

Paul referenced the story of Hagar and Sarah, pointing out that while the sons had the same father, they had different mothers. Judaizers, just like Christians, came from the Jewish faith. However the Judaizers, the children of the bond woman, lived under the oppression of the law. Paul wanted the Galatians to realize they were the children of the promise and the children of the Spirit. They were free from the persecution of their brothers and able to inherit the blessings of God.

- What false teachings today compliment us? What false teachings today make false promises?
- What goals are the lies we are frequently subjected to trying to accomplish? How does understanding the gospel protect us?

Things today haven't changed all that much from Paul's time, the most prevalent lie that is alive and well in the false teaching around us today is the idea that you can save yourself. The gospel, however, teaches us that we ourselves are the problem. Our only hope, therefore, is to look to Christ and the salvation He provides.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What are ways that Christians are tempted to still live under the law?

- **How can our church teach grace in a way that seeks out the good of others? What might happen if we taught the gospel for our own gain?**
 - **How might we as a group help each other to stay focused on the gospel? How might we help each other live according to the grace we have received in Christ?**
-

PRAYER

Close your time in prayer, thanking God for making us children of the free woman, children of the promise. Pray that your group would encourage one another for their good. Pray that the gospel would permeate everything that you do.

GALATIANS // Week Nine

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

The gospel brings true freedom—freedom from sin and freedom to serve others in love.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What did freedom mean to you when you were 18 years old? When you had young children? What does it mean to you today?**
- **Recall a time when you felt “imprisoned” by an unfulfilling job, a bad habit, illness, or financial debt. How did you become free from that situation? How would you describe the sense of freedom you experienced at that time?**

Some people mistakenly believe Christians are free to do whatever they want to do—and only what they want to do. They need to understand Christian freedom is the freedom to obey Christ and reflect His character. Others assume they must perform good works to solidify their relationship with God. In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul emphasized that God had called them to freedom, not to legalism. Yet they were not free to be selfish. Rather, they were free to follow the Holy Spirit’s leadership.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 5:1-6

- **What contrast did Paul draw in this verse? How did he describe slavery? What do you think “the yoke of bondage” symbolized?**
- **What did Paul instruct his readers to do? What danger did he warn them about?**

Paul commanded the Galatian Christians to stand firm in their freedom in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul admonished his readers to keep standing firm in the face of

pressure from those who would lead them to live as if they no longer were free. Christ had set them free from the spiritual slavery of paganism. Would they choose to exchange the freedom they had in Christ for slavery to religious legalism (yoke of slavery)?

- What false teaching were the Galatian believers being exposed to? How did that false teaching undermine the message of grace?
- Why would those who accepted circumcision be submitting to a yoke of slavery?

Paul argued that by submitting to circumcision, the Gentile believers would endorse the false teaching that salvation requires faith plus keeping some law, thus denying that salvation is by grace through faith alone.

- In what ways might believers today be persuaded to abandon grace as the basis of our relationship with God? What legalistic rules do some say we must keep if we wish to get to heaven?
- What dire consequences to this legalism did Paul outline in verses 2-4?
- What is our hope of righteousness (v. 5)? On what does this hope rest?
- Paul said circumcision really didn't matter one way or the other. What did he say was the only thing that mattered as we "eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" (vv. 5-6)?

When a person lives by faith in Christ and His grace, then whether someone is circumcised doesn't matter. If someone is circumcised, that is fine. If someone is not circumcised, that is fine. In other words, the matter of justification before God is not impacted in any way. Rather, what is important is faith or trust in Christ, the One who has made salvation available.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 5:7-15.

- What two images did Paul use to warn against false teachings? (Runners in a race, yeast in a batch of dough.) What does each symbolize?

Here and elsewhere (Phil. 2:16) Paul depicted the Christian life as a race. Like runners on a racetrack, the Galatian believers were running well. But someone (the Judaizers) had cut in on them. These false teachers had appeared on the track, trying to cause the Galatians to trip or turn back.

- How does abusing freedom lead to less freedom?
- How does neglecting Christian freedom lead us into a form of slavery through false beliefs?

Bottom line—the Judaizers were willing to accept the cross with circumcision but not the cross without circumcision. Thus, the offense of the cross to these Judaizers was its message: “The law is not a means of being justified before God.”

- **What dangerous opportunities does freedom provide (vv. 13-15)? What was Paul afraid that freedom would give the Galatians an opportunity to do?**
- **What does the abuse of freedom commonly look like in our community?**
- **Why do you think Paul emphasized service to one another through love? How does service protect from the dangers of freedom?**

Up to this point in his Letter to the Galatians, Paul had referred to the Mosaic law in negative terms. In this verse, however, he referred to it positively. Even the Mosaic law encouraged the Galatians to serve others rather than to serve themselves. Its true spirit was summarized in the single command that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **What are the false teachings about freedom that you run into the most in everyday life?**
- **What rules and laws do you unnecessarily enforce on yourself in an attempt to earn God’s approval? What rules are you most likely to ignore in an abuse of your freedom? How can the Holy Spirit lead you away from these tendencies this week?**
- **How might considering the freedom you have in Christ motivate you to serve others in love? What are some practical ways you could do so this week?**

PRAYER

Praise God for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that brings you freedom. Pray for our church, that believers would grow into the freedom provided by Jesus.

GALATIANS // Week Ten

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

We glorify God when we demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in compassion for others rather than indulging our selfish desires.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **When you were young, who had the most power over your behavior? Why were they so influential, either positively or negatively? Who or what influences you the most today?**
- **Describe a time when you believed confidently that the Holy Spirit directed you to take a specific action. What does that mean? How does the Holy Spirit direct a person?**

Kids don't understand many things. They learn some things just by watching and observing the world. But there are other things (like world history, science, math, etc.) that need to be described for them. In a similar way, we need the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth to us. As believers, we need God to work in us to shape us into the people He has called us to be.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

[HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 5:16-21.](#)

- **How would you define the term “sinful nature” in your own words (v. 16)? In contrast, what does walking (or living) by the Spirit mean?**
- **What characterizes a life guided by the sinful nature? By the Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit leads us to do what God wants, not what our sinful natures want. The imperative “walk” is a Hebrew expression for “live,” with the idea of conduct or lifestyle.

Its tense conveys continuous action. The phrase “by the Spirit” can be rendered “in the Spirit”—in the sphere the Spirit governs. To keep on living in the Spirit is to continually live by His power—to go where He is going.

- If we are made alive by the Spirit, why do we still struggle with sin?

At the moment when we place our trust in Christ, our sinful nature no longer has control over us. Control now belongs to God and His Spirit. However, we live in a fallen world and remain in a battle against sin even after we become Christians. As long as we live, we will continue in this battle. Yet because we are in Christ, sin no longer dominates us. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul presented a catalog of “the works of the flesh” (v. 19) so these believers could be forewarned. The sins listed in these verses are the result of twisting God’s gifts into ungodly behaviors and not following the Spirit.

- Why do you think Paul chose these specific sins to mention? Do you see any commonalities among the sins in these verses?
- What makes these sins “obvious” (v. 19)? How are they “contrary to the Spirit” (v. 17)?
- How would our world be different if Christians let the Spirit lead in all their actions?
- What is the significance of Paul’s warning in verse 21?

People with lifestyles characterized by the works of the flesh will not inherit God’s kingdom. Inherit means “to share in.” The kingdom of God is His rule, the sphere of His grace. People who consistently perform the works of the flesh are not following the Spirit and indeed are not Christians. Conversely, the Spirit’s activity in Christians produces a cluster of virtues that gives evidence believers belong to Christ (see vv. 22-26).

HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 5:22-26.

- How does the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-26 compare to the works of the flesh mentioned in verses 19-21?
- What do each of the fruits of the Spirit have in common with each other? Where do you see the Holy Spirit bringing out these characteristics in your life?
- If verse 26 describes the attitude of someone not in tune with the Spirit, what’s the attitude of someone who is?

Paul called for the Galatian believers to follow the Spirit’s leadership and avoid destructive attitudes and behavior (see 5:25-26). The Spirit’s presence in our lives gives us the power

we need to live out our faith. He replaces those sinful works with His fruit, and as a result we're able to love and serve others rather than ourselves.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- **Is there an area in your life where you are following the flesh instead of the Spirit? What step can you take today to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit?**
 - **In what ways have you recently been reminded of the Spirit's presence and power in your life? How can you be more aware of and sensitive to the Spirit's presence and power?**
 - **When have you experienced a fellow believer encouraging you to live by the Spirit and not the flesh? How did that change your approach toward sin? Is there someone you can encourage this week?**
-

PRAYER

Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit so that we can have a guide and an advocate to help us live lives that glorify God. Pray that God would encourage people in your group and at our church to listen and heed the instruction of the Spirit in their lives.

GALATIANS // Week Eleven

Small Group Discussion Guide

MAIN POINT

As believers, we are called to help bear each other's burdens, to do good, and to evaluate our motives for being obedient.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- **What is one unrealistic expectation you often put on yourself or on your spouse? What expectations of others do you have difficulty meeting?**
- **If you were asked to list some of the expectations God has for how His children are to live, what is one thing that would be on that list?**

The book of Galatians helps us see what it really means to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Galatians 6:1-18, Paul addresses our responsibility to follow the Spirit's guidance in how we live. There are certain biblical expectations of being responsible Christians that we are to meet, and Paul helps to explain steps we are to take to meet those expectations.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

[HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:1-10.](#)

- **As brothers and sisters in Christ, what responsibilities do we have for each other? How does the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) help us fulfill these?**
- **How do verses 1-2 illustrate ways of helping someone "keep in step with the Spirit" (5:25)?**
- **What do you think Paul meant by the "law of Christ"? Read Galatians 5:14 to help you answer.**

Helping shoulder others' heavy loads would fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ could refer to Jesus' moral teachings. Paul more likely had in mind Jesus' citing Leviticus

19:18 (“love your neighbor as yourself”) and His command that His followers love one another (John 13:34). God wants to reach out to straying believers through Christians who, though imperfect, are living under the Spirit’s leadership. The idea is to help the fallen or stumbling believer experience renewed fellowship with the Lord.

- Why do you think Paul put a special emphasis on honoring those who teach the message of Christ (v. 6)?
- What are some examples of ways people might mock God (v. 7)?

Paul tells the Galatians that sowing in the flesh—acting apart from the gospel—leads to reaping death from the flesh, but sowing in the Spirit grants eternal life. What we plant into our lives is what grows out of our lives. Even believers, however, can be deceived at this point. We may think we can somehow get away with sin and not face consequences. Paul warned the Galatians, however, that God cannot be mocked. No one can treat God in this manner without suffering the consequences.

- Every day contributes to tomorrow. What did you sow in your day-to-day life this past week at work and at home?
- How does Paul’s picture of sowing and reaping challenge or inspire you to continue serving God?

The second part of Paul’s promise features certainty. “We will reap” (v. 9) leaves no doubt as to whether we will be rewarded for living by the Spirit: the law of the harvest will apply to Christian behavior. Such a time may come in this life or in the next one, or perhaps even in both.

- How do you keep from losing heart in doing good to others in your life?
- Has there been an instance in your life when it was really difficult to be good to someone? How did you handle that person?
- How does the gospel fuel the good that we can do unto others?
- Why do believers have a special obligation to be good to one another?

We get weary of doing good to others. But the good news of the gospel is that when we were thankless and cold, God extended grace to us, even when we didn’t deserve it. Our motivation in doing good to others is that good has already been done to us in Christ, when we weren’t worthy of it. Doing good only to those who will be thankful or good back to you is coming out of the wrong heart. For the first time Paul added a specific target of Christian service. This new detail appears in verse 10: “Those who belong to the household of faith.” We are to serve our fellow Christians through love. We are to be

generous to all, but we are to give special attention to other Christians and their welfare because in so doing we will show ourselves to be Christ's disciples (John 13:35).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:11-18.

- In verses 12-15, what were the false teachers' selfish motives for promoting circumcision among believers?
- How did Paul's motives contrast with the false teachers' motives? How can we test our motives when we do good?

These false teachers were insisting that Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. A primary motivation behind their insistence was a desire to brag about the number of Gentile Christians they had converted into Jewish proselytes. In contrast, Paul wanted his only boast to be in the cross of Christ. After receiving Christ, Paul's earlier religious attainments and efforts meant nothing. From then on, he had nothing in which to boast except the cross.

- What does it mean to "boast" in the cross of Jesus? What does it mean to have the cross as your model in your daily life?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What will you do to better carry people's burdens, sow the Spirit, and boast in the cross this week?
- Who can hold you accountable to the sowing and reaping you do in your life?
- How can we do good as a group? What seeds do we need to plant in order to make a difference in our lives and community?

PRAYER

Close by praying over your group. Pray that group members will be bold to sow and reap for the good of the gospel in their everyday lives. Ask God to reveal areas where we should be doing more and for the courage to work for the good of the gospel.