

Galatians – Freedom in Jesus

Study 1 – Galatians 1:1-10

1. If you had to tell someone what the good news about Jesus is in less than 2 minutes what would you say? Could you tweet the gospel? (If you get stuck try reading 1 Corinthians 15:1-5)
2. Can you think of ways to ruin this good news about Jesus by:
 - a. Adding extra bits to it
 - b. Taking essential parts out of it

Read Galatians 1:1-10

3. How does Paul describe himself in his opening to the Galatians? Why might this be important to say upfront?
4. What do we learn about Jesus in these verses?
5. How would you describe Paul's emotional tone in these verses?
6. Why is changing the gospel such a big deal for Paul? Are we as passionate as this when we hear alternative gospels?

The main issue going on in Galatia seems to be that people (called Judaizers) are insisting that faith in Jesus is not enough and that people also need to be circumcised and follow the ritual rules of Judaism. Paul will strongly resist this throughout this letter because he thinks it is adding to the gospel and therefore ruining the good news of salvation through faith alone in Jesus.

7. We are unlikely to insist on circumcision as necessary for salvation! What things might we be tempted to add to the gospel in 2021 which would undermine the good news?
8. In what areas of your life are you tempted to be a people pleaser rather than a God pleaser?

Spend some time praying together:

- Give thanks to God for the good news about Jesus
- Ask God to help you stick to and speak truthfully this good news
- Confess to God areas in your life where you are tempted to add to the gospel or where you are focused on pleasing people rather than God.

Study 2 – Galatians 1:11-2:10

1. How would you respond if a friend said to you that Christianity is just a story made up by humans?
2. How often do you have doubts about whether the message of Christianity has genuinely come from God?

Read Galatians 1:11-2:10

3. What does Paul say about the divine origins of the gospel? Why is this important?
4. How does Paul weave his own testimony into his argument that the gospel he preaches comes from God and not humans?
5. Can you construct a timeline of the events that Paul is speaking about here? Can you match them with the outline of events in Acts (you can look at Acts 9:1-31; 11:19-30; 15:1-21)
6. If Paul got his gospel from Jesus Christ directly how can we be confident that it is the same gospel as that preached by the other Apostles?
7. Why was Paul worried that he might be 'running my race in vain'?
8. Why might insisting on circumcision impact 'the freedom we have in Christ' and the 'truth of the gospel'?
9. What are the things today that threaten 'the freedom we have in Christ' and the 'truth of the gospel'?
10. What should we do as individuals, as a Life Group, and as a church to ensure that we maintain the truth of the gospel and do not run our race in vain?

Spend some time praying together:

- Give thanks to God for the divinely given good news about Jesus
- Give thanks for the personal impact of the gospel in your own lives
- Ask God to help you to maintain the truth of the gospel and your freedom in Christ

Study 3 – Galatians 2:11-21

1. Have you ever had to challenge a fellow Christian about how they were behaving? How hard did you find this to do?
2. How seriously do you take accountability in your Life Group? (Life Groups are guided by DNA – Discipleship, Nurture, Accountability)

Read Galatians 2:11-21

3. What was Peter (Cephas) doing that Paul needed to confront?
4. Why is this described as hypocrisy?
5. What does the word 'justified' mean? What does it mean to be 'justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law'?
6. In what ways, other than in Christ, might we seek to be justified?
7. What does it mean to have been crucified with Christ? Do you think of yourself this way?
8. What does it look like in practice to say 'I no longer live but Christ lives in me'?
 - a. In your household relationships?
 - b. In your study and work?
 - c. In your use of your time and money?

Spend some time praying together:

- Give thanks to God that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by works
- Ask God to help you love your Life Group enough to be willing to challenge each other and keep each other accountable when appropriate
- Ask for God's help to live out the reality of being crucified with Christ and have him living in you day by day

Study 4 – Galatians 3:1-14

1. What do you find hardest about being a Christian? Where do you feel you most often fail or fall short?

Read Galatians 3:1-14

2. Why are the Galatians being foolish and acting like they've been bewitched?
3. What does Paul teach in this passage about how we receive the Holy Spirit?
4. What benefits are listed in this passage that come from believing God?
5. How is Abraham a model for the Galatians and for us? [You might like to read Genesis 12:1-4 and Genesis 15:1-6 to understand the story that Paul is referring to]
6. What is the result of relying on good works for salvation? Why does one failure bring us under a curse?
7. How does Jesus rescue us from our failure to keep the law?
8. What does it mean for us as individuals and as a Life Group to live by faith?
9. Are there any areas in your lives where you are being foolish or bewitched in relying on your own good works?
10. Thinking back to the things you named in Question 1 that you find hard, how do you live by faith in in regard to these things?

Spend some time praying together:

- Give thanks to God that Jesus became a curse for us in order to redeem us
- Give thanks to God that by faith in Jesus we are declared righteous
- Give thanks that God gives his Holy Spirit to all who believe in Jesus
- Confess any areas where you are living foolishly by trusting your own good works rather than turning in faith to God
- Ask God to help you by his Holy Spirit to live by faith and not by works and especially in the areas that you find most difficult to live out

Study 5 – Galatians 3:15-22

1. Have you ever received an inheritance? What was the experience like?
2. Have you ever thought about the inheritance you have as a believer in Jesus? What the similarities/differences you notice between the two?

Read Galatians 3:15-22

3. Why are the Jewish Christians in Galatia looking back to the law as a way of living?
4. In response to this looking back to the law, why does Paul go further back in history to look at and explain the promise God gave to Abraham? (See Genesis 12:1-3)
5. “The law points to and is fulfilled in Jesus” Discuss
“The promise God gave to Abraham points to Jesus” Discuss
6. We are inheritors of the promises of God and all of God’s blessings are available to us through Jesus. Every promise is a yes in Christ. What are some of the promises God gives to us? Do you have any favourite ones for this current season in life?
7. How can we be people who ‘simply believe’ the promises of God for us? What allowed Abraham to be fully persuaded that God had the power to do what God had promised God would do (Romans 4).

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Give thanks to God that by Jesus all His promises are now available to us.
- Share with each other what has been happening in life this week and which promise of God has been particularly helpful.
- What promise might you memorise for the week ahead?

Study 6 – Galatians 3:23-4:6

1. What was life like before you came to know Jesus compared to after you came to know Jesus? [If you have always followed Jesus then how have you noticed him change your life over time?]

Read Galatians 3:23-4:6

2. Go through the passage and write lists in each of the following columns (one example is given for each):

<i>What things were like?</i>	<i>What happened</i>	<i>What things are like now</i>
Held in custody under the law (v.23)	“this faith” came (v.23)	Justified by faith (v.24)

3. Do any of the things in the first column ring true in your own experience of life before Jesus? Why or why not?
4. Why was it important that God’s Son be ‘born of a woman’ and ‘born under the law’? Could God have saved us some other way?
5. Look through the list in the third column. Which of these blessings resonates most with you at the moment?
6. What does it look like to live out the blessings of this third column in your day-to-day life:
 - a. at work/study?
 - b. With you family/household?
 - c. At church/Life Group?

Spend some time praying together:

- Go around the group and pray giving thanks for the blessings that we have in Jesus
- Pray that these truths would transform our lives as we live them out in specific areas

Study 7 – Galatians 4:8-20

1. Can you think of a time when someone has confronted you about your behaviour? How did your pre-existing relationship with the person affect how you responded to their rebuke?

Read Galatians 4:8-20

2. What were the Galatians enslaved to and in danger of being enslaved by again? Is this a risk for us?
3. What is the difference between knowing God and being known by God?
4. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Galatians in the past? What impact would that have on his challenge to them in this letter?
5. How does Paul assess the motives of those people who are trying to move the Galatians back to the works of the law? Is this a fair criticism?
6. What does Paul mean when he says that he is 'in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you'? Have you ever felt like this with other people?
7. How would you describe the depth of relationships in your Life Group? Do you feel loved by each other? Does your love and concern work itself out in challenging ungodly or unhelpful behaviour?
8. What would it look like to be in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in other members of your Life Group?

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Praise God that you both know him and are known by him
- Thank God for the love and concern that your Life Group has for each other and pray asking that this continue to deepen and grow
- Pray for each other that Christ would be formed in each of you

Study 8 – Galatians 4:21-31

1. Do you think of the church as 'family'? If so, how important is the church family in relation to our biological (or adopted) family?

Read Galatians 4:21-31

2. Let's be honest this passage is pretty confusing! It might help to read over the story that Paul is referencing in Genesis 21:1-21 and then ask in Paul's analogy who are the children of:
 - a. Hagar the slave woman
 - b. Sarah the wife of Abraham
3. Remembering that Ishmael (Hagar's Son) was not Jewish, a Gentile, why might Paul use this analogy in his argument to the Galatians?
4. What does Paul mean by his distinction between the present city of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem that is above?
5. How are the Galatians, and us, 'children of promise'?
6. How does Paul's argument here radically redefine what it means to be the people of God and part of God's family? Does the argument here challenge our answers to question 1 above?
7. What practical things should we do as a Life Group and church to express the reality of being 'children of promise' and a church family together?

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Praise God that he brings us into relationship with each other as his church family
- Pray for help as you seek to live out this reality in practice

Study 9 – Galatians 5:1-12

1. What does it mean to be free? Do Christians have a different view of freedom to that held in general society?

Read Galatians 5:1-12

2. Paul starts by asserting *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free*. What does it look like for you to live as a free Christian person?
3. How might the Galatians have allowed themselves to be *burdened again by a yoke of slavery*? How might we allow this to happen to us?
4. How would giving in and getting circumcised have meant that Christ had no value to a person at all?
5. What does *faith expressing itself through love* (v.6) look like in practice? Why is this *the only thing that counts*?
6. How is the Christian life like running a race? How might we be stop obeying the truth and get off track?
7. What does Paul mean by *the offense of the cross* (v.11)? Is the cross still offensive today?

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Praise God for the freedom that we have in Jesus
- Pray for one another as you live out your freedom in Jesus
 - That you stand firm and don't submit to burdens of slavery
 - That your faith is expressed through love
 - That you keep running the race and obeying the truth

Study 10 – Galatians 5:13-26

1. 'I'm free to do whatever I like'? Should there be any limitations on freedom generally? Should there be any limitations on freedom for a Christian?

Read Galatians 5:13-26

2. What limitations does Paul place on Christian freedom in this passage?
3. Is it a contradiction to say 'you were called to be free' and 'serve one another' in the same verse?
4. Pushing this further, what do you think about these words from the Anglican Prayer Book:
*O God, the author and lover of peace,
in knowledge of whom stands our eternal life,
whose service is perfect freedom...*
5. How is the entire law fulfilled by loving your neighbour as yourself? Should we then keep the law or not?
6. What does it look like to walk by the Spirit / to be led by the Spirit / live by the Spirit / keep in step with the Spirit? How do we put this into practice each day?
7. The 'acts of the flesh' are contrasted with life in the Spirit. Why would persistently living in this way exclude you from inheriting the Kingdom of God? Does this undermine God's grace?
8. Fruit develops and grows. Read through the listed fruit of the Spirit and choose one that you would like to grow more in.

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Ask God to help you live out your freedom by serving him and other people
- Pray for God's help to
 - Keep crucifying the flesh and keep in step with the Spirit
 - Keep growing in the fruit of the Spirit – naming your one area of most desired growth

Study 11 – Galatians 6:1-18

1. What responsibility do Christians have to each other when someone is doing the wrong thing? Should we just mind our own business or are we required to act?

Read Galatians 6:1-18

2. What does it look like for Christians to ‘carry each other’s burdens’? Have you experienced this in practice?
3. Is it a contradiction for Paul to also add that ‘each one should carry their own load’? How do these two things fit together?
4. One key example of bearing each other’s burdens is helping someone caught in sin. Unpack the instruction of verse 1 by answering the following questions:
 - a. What needs to happen to a person caught in sin?
 - b. Who needs to act?
 - c. How should they do it?
 - d. What do they need to beware of?
5. What is the point of the reaping and sowing illustration in verses 7-10? How do you make sure that you are sowing to please the Spirit rather than the flesh?
6. There are warnings in this passage about comparing ourselves to others. Why is comparison dangerous? How might only boasting in the cross of Jesus help us with this danger?

Spend some time praying and talking together:

- Praise God for Christian community to help us bear our burdens together
- Pray for God’s help as you care for each other including in areas of struggle and sin
- Pray that you would sow to please the Spirit and name some areas where you most need to Spirit’s power to do this?
- Pray some ‘boastful’ prayers to close – boasting, that is, in the cross of Jesus!