



# Galatians Core Group Study

A Journey through Galatians

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## Introduction

The book of Galatians was written by the apostle Paul to churches in the province of Galatia, or what we know as central Turkey. Paul had traveled to the region (documented in Acts 13-14) on early missionary journeys, sharing the gospel in the region to Gentiles, or those who were not hereditarily Jewish. Most of the Galatian churches were comprised of Gentiles who were saved through faith in Jesus. As the churches grew and progressed, Jewish believers in Jesus began to come to the churches and insist that they followed Mosaic Law, or law that was established through Moses for the Jewish community. Specifically, Jews were insisting that male Gentile followers of Jesus should also be circumcised in order to have right relationship with God. Paul, hearing the news of this, became incredibly angry at the Jews, for he knew that this was not the message of the gospel of Jesus. Paul writes this letter to the Galatians to restore their understanding of the gospel and what it means to be in right relationship with God.

As we consider with our Core Groups how to follow Christ (or perhaps understand who He is for the first time!) in our context, studying the book of Galatians will help us figure out what is essential to understanding our righteousness before God, and our tendencies to add laws or actions on top of faith in Jesus to be justified. This study will walk through the book of Galatians in order to discuss topics such as what the gospel of Jesus really is, what it means to be justified, and what it looks like to live transformed.

## Galatians Overview

### Author

After his conversion on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus (renamed Paul) became a missionary to the Gentiles to spread the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul traveled to preach and church plant through much of Asia Minor, establishing churches in places around modern-day Turkey, Syria, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy.

### Dates

Paul met Jesus on his way to Damascus in 34 AD, around four years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Around 47 AD, Paul begins to travel, preaching and teaching about Jesus throughout many



regions of Asia Minor, or what we know as Turkey and Italy. Between 48 - 49 AD, Paul traveled with varying companions through the Galatian region, preaching and planting churches as he went. Scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter to Galatia in 50 AD to address and correct the situation of the Galatian churches.

### Galatian Context

As the gospel began to spread out from being centralized in Jerusalem, more and more Gentiles were being added to the number of those who were practicing the way of Jesus. In Galatia, there was tension between Gentile believers and Jewish believers, who still insisted on practicing ceremonial Mosaic Law for right relationship with God in addition to believing in Jesus. Because of this, the Galatian church experienced much social and racial division, confusion, and overall disunity. In this letter, Paul hopes to correct the Jewish Christians' understanding of righteousness, while restoring the Galatian church to order and unity. The intended audience is all Christians as we seek to follow Jesus and adhere to an accurate understanding of the gospel and how that translates into everyday life.

### Outline of Galatians

- I. Introduction: Gal 1:1-10.
  - A. Paul greets the Galatians in Gal 1:1-5.
- II. Paul's explains his apostleship: Gal 1:11-2:21.
  - A. Paul outlines the gospel he received from Jesus in Gal 1:11-12.
  - B. Paul describes the problems between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Gal 1:18-2:21.
- III. Paul describes the nature of justification: Gal 3:1-4:31.
  - A. Paul discusses the purpose of the law in Gal 3:19-25.
  - B. Paul discusses the old and new covenants in Gal 4:24-31.
- IV. Paul exhorts the church to stand firm: Gal 5:1-6:10.
  - A. The fruit of the Spirit fleshed out in Gal 5:19-23.
  - B. Paul discusses walking in step with the Spirit in Gal 5:24-26.
  - C. Paul talks about real community in Gal 6:1-5.
- V. Conclusion: Gal 6:11-6:18.
  - A. Paul expresses confidence in the work of the cross of Jesus in Gal 6:14-17.

### **Suggested Resources for Leaders**

Acts 13-14

*Galatians for You* by Timothy Keller

The Bible Project: Galatians <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmx4UjRFp0M>

**Note:** We recommend preceding this study with a gospel study, such as "[Is Being Religious Enough?](#)" or "[He Bore our Sin and Shame](#)," found at [xaatuva.com](http://xaatuva.com).





# Week 1: Galatians 1 - The Good News

## Objective

This week will focus on the context of the Galatian letter: Paul poses that the gospel of Jesus is that faith in Him is what leads to salvation. The goal is to establish an understanding of the gospel in our Core Groups to understand how we relate to God and what that means for how we live today.

## Opening Questions

These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. Which laws do you think are worth following and why? Have you ever broken a law you didn't think was important?
2. Have you ever been in a situation you couldn't fix and were forced to ask for help? What happened?
3. If you were to summarize the gospel briefly, what would you say to someone?

## Important to Know

Share opening context about Paul's letter to the Galatians found in the study overview, sharing why he wrote the letter. Ask the group if they already know who wrote it and why. If a Core Group member wants to explain, let them share!

**Read Galatians 1:1-12.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. What do we learn about Paul in verses 1 and 2? (Hint: Who sent him?)
2. What do we learn about his backstory in this passage? Was he religious before becoming a Christian?
3. What do we learn about the Galatians in verses 6 and 7? (Hint: They are rebelling against the gospel of Jesus.)
4. What does "gospel" mean? (Hint: Good news.)
5. Who does Paul say to believe when it comes to the gospel?
6. Where did this gospel come from? What is God's purpose in it?
7. How did the people in Syria and Cilicia respond when they heard about Paul?



## **Interpretation Questions**

1. Like the Galatians, we can believe in false gospels. What are alternative gospels we believe because of the culture around us? Name false gospels, false ideas of hope.
2. How do we learn about the gospel of Jesus?
3. What can we learn from Paul's backstory? (Hint: Talk about his background with Judaism, law, and zealousness versus his life with Jesus.)

## **Application**

Who is someone in your life who needs to hear the gospel of Jesus? What is a way you can share the gospel with them this week?

Pray for yourselves, the names that came to mind, and your classmates, hallmates, and friends to have a true understanding of salvation through faith in Jesus.





# Week 2: Galatians 2 - Justification

## Objective

This week will be focused on the nature of justification. When we are justified, the way we act with people and God changes.

## Opening Questions

Ask someone in the group to recap what was discussed last week. Have someone else summarize the verses you read. These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. Have you ever seen anyone act in a way that did not reflect what they professed or believed? What was that like?

## Important to Know

In this text, Paul is addressing an issue between himself and Peter (Cephas) that is also documented in Acts 15 when Peter gets influenced by Jewish Christians who wanted Gentiles to be circumcised for the sake of ceremonial Mosaic Law (the law that God set for the Israelites as presented through Moses in the first few books of the Old Testament). Paul is responding to that issue, specifically addressing Peter's mistake. His main point is to get the Galatian church to understand that justification before God, or the atonement of our sins before God, can only happen through Jesus' work on the cross, not the Mosaic Law.

**Read Galatians 2:11-21.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. Why does Paul go back to Jerusalem? What does he hope to accomplish? (Hint: Meeting with leaders of the church due to what He's learned in his ministry about the gospel.)
2. Describe what is wrong with Peter's actions and why Paul is upset about them. (Hint: Paul's view on circumcision, and how Peter was refusing to associate with Gentiles.)
3. Why was Peter afraid of associating with Gentiles? (Hint: He was afraid of his fellow Jews.)
4. What is justification before God according to this text? (Hint: How were Jewish Christians misunderstanding the gospel?)
5. According to Paul, what is God's view of favoritism? (Hint: Verse 6.)
6. Why will no one be justified by works of the law? Is it possible?
7. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?



## Interpretation Questions

1. What is the problem with legalism? What makes it different from the gospel?
2. What can we learn from Paul's motivation to "be sure [he] was not running [his] race in vain"? (Hint: Verse 2, using wise counsel for accountability.)
3. How do you relate to God differently when you stand in a place of justification before Him? Does this change the way you act (even if action does not lead to salvation)?

## Application

Where do you need to live a crucified life this week?

Is there someone in your life who needs to hear this message? How will you share it with them this week? Make a plan and share it with the person next to you.

Peter caused disunity. This week, pray for the unity of the church. Pray for there to be unity among believers through the power and protection of the Holy Spirit. Pray for this same unity in Chi Alpha, in your city, home, and throughout the world.





# Week 3: Galatians 3 - Freedom

## Objective

This week's objective is to understand the freedom that justification in Christ affords us as Christ-followers. We will look at the relationship between law and faith, and what it means to be an obedient and free people of God.

## Opening Questions

As you start this week, ask someone in the group to recap what was discussed last week. Have someone else summarize the verses you read. These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word "freedom"?
2. When do you most value or want freedom?

## Important to Know

In this section, Paul discusses the giving of the promise to Abraham, a story found in Genesis 12 and 15. It would be helpful to summarize this story before reading as a group, as it reminds us that God's purpose and plan for covenant with Jesus was the bring about freedom and peace for all nations.

**Read Galatians 3:1-14.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. Why is Paul mad at the Galatians? (Hint: Similar to Peter, they were relying on works, not the Spirit.)
2. How is the Spirit received according to Paul? (Hint: Believing, not by works of law.)
3. Discuss verses 7, 8, and 10. What does this show us about the purpose of Mosaic Law and what our relationship to it was supposed to be?
4. What is the outcome for relying on the works of the law? (Hint: Cursing instead of blessing.)
5. What does it mean that Jesus became a curse for us? What was the result of this? (Hint: Blessing, taking away the curse so that we can receive the Spirit.)

## Interpretation Questions

1. Why is it important for the Galatians to rely on the Spirit and not the law? What are the implications for the Galatian church? (Hint: Freedom to be in relationship with God and each other out of the blessing of the Spirit, not the curse of the law.)



2. Do you rely on the law or faith? Have you ever tried to rely on both? (Hint: You can't rely on both. When you do one, you can't simultaneously do the other.)
3. How would relying on works of law impact your freedom? What about relying on faith? (Hint: Discuss the impact of relationship with God versus trying in your own strength.)

### **Application**

How can we rely on the Spirit and the promises of God more than ourselves this week?

Is there someone in your life who needs to hear about the promise of God?

Pray over what you discussed as a group. Pray over individuals as they share their own challenges, either in pairs or as a whole group. Challenge your Core Group to invite a guy or gal next week who might need to hear about the promises of God.







# Week 4: Galatians 3 and 4 - Adoption

## Objective

The focus of this week's study is to read about God's adoption of us through the justification and freedom found in relationship with Christ. We will look at a few different aspects of adoption and talk about what those mean for the community of God's people.

## Opening Questions

As you start this week, ask someone in the group to recap what was discussed last week. Have someone else summarize the verses you read. These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. Have you ever felt like an outsider? How did that experience feel?
2. Have you ever been exclusive? (Think social clubs/groups, friendships, etc.)

## Important to Know

In Paul's audience, there would have been many people who either *experienced* racism and sexism, or who *were* racist and sexist. Many Jewish religious communities in Paul's time excluded women and Gentiles, as well as anyone from lower social classes, like slaves. These attitudes would have likely been present or lingering in early churches, and Paul intended to address those divisions by illustrating communal sonship/daughtership to Jesus.

**Read Galatians 3:23-4:7.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. What does it mean that Christ is our guardian? (See verse 24.)
2. Discuss verses 26 through 29. How do these new standards that Paul laid out impact and shape the church? What does it mean for these different groups to be one?
3. According to Paul, what is the nature of adoption? (Hint: Sonship and daughtership.)
4. How does adoption happen? (Hint: Through faith.)
5. What marks us as God's children? What does "Abba" imply? (Hint: Relational intimacy.)
6. What is our inheritance?

## Interpretation Questions

1. How does adoption change the way we act, knowing that we are children of God?
2. What image do you best relate to God using?



3. What are characteristics of a good father? How are these characteristics seen in God?

### **Application**

What would it look like for our Core Group to be an inclusive family of God? What are ways we are already doing this? What are ways we could improve this week?

Is there someone you know who has been excluded who needs to hear this adoption message this week? How could you communicate that?

Pray for God to continue His work of adoption, specifically for those without physical or spiritual families. Pray as a group over the ways you want to grow in inclusiveness, thanking God for what He's already done in and through your Core Group.





# Week 5: Galatians 5 - Transformation

## Objective

This week will focus on specific aspects of walking in step with the Holy Spirit, focusing on the kind of fruit we can expect when we allow Him to fill us, lead us, and impact our thoughts and actions.

## Opening Questions

As you start this week, ask someone in the group to recap what was discussed last week. Have someone else summarize the verses you read. These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. When have you seen growth in yourself? How about growth in someone else?

## Important to Know

Paul is outlining more of what it means to live as free sons and daughters in Christ, who are confident that God is their inheritance. These actions and characteristics cannot take the place of our justification by faith in Jesus, but they are the overflow we can expect to see when we choose to walk in freedom.

**Read Galatians 5:13-26.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. What does Paul say we should do with our freedom?
2. How does Paul define "flesh"? How does he define "spirit"? (Hint: They are contrary to each other. The acts of flesh are sin, and the fruit of the Spirit have no law against them.)
3. How do the flesh and spirit interact according to verses 16 through 18?
4. How does this text outline the significance of our actions without replacing or redefining justification?
5. What is the key to the law? (Love others.) How?

## Interpretation Questions

1. Which fruit of the Spirit would you like to see more of in your life? What have you seen grow already?
2. Why are we not under the law if we are led by the Spirit? (Hint: We are no longer in slavery to our sin or what we do or fail to do, but rather we are led by our relationship with God.)



3. What does it mean to walk in step with and be led by the Spirit? (Hint: What might this have looked like for the Galatian church? Give specific examples from your life of what this could look like day to day.)

### **Application**

How can you walk in step with the Holy Spirit this week? Is there anything of the flesh that God is asking you to confess or lay down?

Is there someone who needs to hear about the reality of transformation this week?

Pray for the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in your lives and that God would reveal acts of flesh this week. Remember, no action changes your righteousness before God when He justifies you!





# Week 6: Galatians 6 - New Creation

## Objective

The closing week of the study will focus on the reality of the new creation.

## Opening Questions

As you start this week, ask someone in the group to recap what was discussed last week. Have someone else summarize the verses you read. These are questions you can ask your Core Group at the start of your study. As you get to know your group, feel free to adjust questions as needed.

1. What does Christian community mean to you?
2. Have you ever found yourself in over your head? Did you seek help or do it on your own?

## Important to Know

This is Paul's final appeal to the Galatian churches to encourage them to be a community established in their proper understanding of the gospel, letting that change, transform, and structure the way the Galatians relate to God, each other, and the larger Galatian community.

**Read Galatians 6:1-18.** The following questions are meant to guide discussion about the text, ranging from its content to application. Use them as a starting point, and add your own questions to meet your group's needs.

## Questions from the Text

1. How does Paul say we should walk alongside our communities? What characteristics should mark our relationships? (Hint: Carry each other's burdens, restore others when they sin.)
2. According to the text, how should we deal with a brother or sister in sin? (Hint: Carefronting.)
3. What does "restore gently" mean? (Hint: Talk about what distinguishes carefrontation from confrontation.)
4. What does Paul mean by "a man reaps what he sows"? (Hint: What we put trust in has consequences.)
5. What is the result of sowing from the flesh? What about the Spirit?
6. What does Paul encourage the Galatians to do regarding their actions? (Hint: To not grow weary, but to endure with hope.)
7. How can we "boast in the cross of Christ" as a community, according to Paul?



## Interpretation Questions

1. How do we handle the apparent contradictions in verses 2 and 5? What could Paul be trying to say? (Hint: Talk about the distinction between carrying the burden of restoring your brother or sister in sin versus comparing yourself to everyone else.)
2. What does Paul mean by verse 15? What matters to Paul? (Hint: New creation, the church relying on being led by the Spirit and not the works of law.)
3. As we walk together in Core Group, how could we hold each other accountable in our struggles and sins? How can we carry each other's burdens this year?
4. What makes it difficult to share our burdens with others?

## Application

What does it look like for us to have confidence in Jesus on Grounds?

Is there someone you want to invite into this community?

Break up and pray over each other. Pray over what you have learned through studying Galatians. Pray over each other to walk out justification, freedom, adoption, transformation, and unity this year. Pray over any new friends who have come to Core Group over the course of the study!

