

# AUTHENTIC GOSPEL

TRUTH • FAITH • FREEDOM

**CURRICULUM**



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## WEEK 1: NOVEMBER 12, 2017

### “INTRODUCTION”

### GALATIANS 1:1-5

#### BACKGROUND

Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia (that he founded on his first missionary journey) was to affirm to these new believers the freedom that comes from the one true gospel. There was controversy that hurt the early church. Judaizers – Christian Jewish extremists – were teaching the Gentile Christians that they had to obey Jewish laws and traditions in *addition* to believing in Christ in order to receive salvation. They followed behind Paul to Galatian cities accusing him of diluting the gospel, discrediting that he was even an apostle, and told the Gentiles they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul writes this letter to explain the authenticity, superiority, and freedom of the gospel. He starts this letter under the authority that God has given him, addressing those who were accepting the Judaizers' perverted gospel, and purposely leaving out any commendation to the readers.

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#### MORE BACKGROUND

- *Who wrote it?* Paul the apostle (1:1).
- *Where was it written?* From Antioch, Paul and Barnabas's “home church” in Syria (Acts 14:26-28).
- *To whom was it written?* To newly established churches in the southern part of Galatia (1:2).
- *When was it written?* About A.D. 48, shortly after Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1 – 14:28) and just before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35).
- *Why was it written?* Judaizers were trying to convince new Gentile converts that they had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved. Paul rejects this message as a false gospel (Galatians 6:11-18).
- *What is the basic theme?* Grace – not law – is both the way to life and the way of life.

#### A HARSH INTRODUCTION

Read Galatians 1:1-5 as a group. As Paul begins this letter, what does his mood seem to be? What reasons do these verses give for his frame of mind?

Why would Paul need to state he was an apostle (v. 1)?

## DICTIONARY

**Apostle:** The early Christian use of the Greek word *apostolos* (apostle) carries a clear authority. It refers to a person who has a right to speak for God as his representative. Commentator John Stott says this: "It was not a general word which could be applied to every Christian like the words 'believer,' or 'saint' or 'brother.' It was a special term reserved for the Twelve and for one or two others whom the risen Christ had personally appointed."

This "greeting" by Paul is different than many others. Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-7; Ephesians 1:15-17; Philippians 1:3-8 and Colossians 1:3-6 for comparison. What common thread do all these passages have that the greeting in Galatians is lacking? How does this change how we read this letter?

## EXPERIENCE GRACE = EXPERIENCE PEACE

Galatians 1:3 states, "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Grace is the root and peace is the fruit. Grace is the source of our salvation and peace is the result. Define both:

Grace

Peace

What first-hand revelation of grace and peace have you experienced in your life? How could you use these real-life examples to explain the gospel on a more personal and effective level? Share in your group.

## FREED

Being rescued from this "evil age" (v. 4) doesn't mean that we are taken out of it, but we are no longer slaves to it. In what areas does your life reflect your gratitude for being rescued from the bondage of "this evil age"? Read Galatians 3:22-26 to further see how we are set free from being slaves to this world.

## LET IT GO

Many Christians want to be obedient but continue to stumble in sin because they try to hang on to parts of the old self *they* think they are able to control. This is a self-defeating rationale that relies on the idea that man saves himself by his own works (read Ephesians 2:8-9). What part(s) of your old-self are you still clinging to? What steps can you take to completely relinquish control of these areas to Christ?

## AN EXAMPLE

Galatians 1:4b states "*according to the will of our God and Father.*" Salvation is removed from the will of man and is buried deep in the sovereign will of God. With this in mind, why do you think Jesus' prayer examples in Matthew 6:9-13 & Luke 22:42 are so important to follow? Read and discuss both passages and how they should mold our prayer life today.

## PASSAGE SUMMARY

Since this is the only epistle that Paul does not give his readers praise, the serious tone of this letter is set immediately. Being well aware the false teachers who were undermining the heart of the gospel would be reading this as well, Paul unapologetically gets right to the point of authority in this opening. The struggle between the gospel and legalism is still a relevant issue today. We need to be careful as believers to not act like the Judiazers towards new believers, "showing off" our spiritual knowledge and insinuating a salvation checklist towards their behaviors in order to feel good about the way we think they should live. Which gospel are you relying on?

## PRAY

Thank God for rescuing us from our sins and gifting us with the freedom of the gospel. Ask God to deepen our love and passion for the gospel and for opportunities to share the good news with others.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**WEEK 2: NOVEMBER 19, 2017**  
**“NO OTHER GOSPEL”**  
**GALATIANS 1:6-10**

**OVERVIEW**

Galatians is one of the best books of the Bible to help us refine and clarify what the gospel is. The Galatians had been privileged to be taught by the greatest teacher the church had ever known apart from the Lord himself. Yet they still turned from a gospel of freedom back to a gospel of works. Paul wasn't shocked by what the false teachers were doing but was shocked by the favorable response the false teachers received from the Galatian Christians. This response came so quickly after their initial conversion. They weren't just turning away from the doctrine, but from God and from grace. If the gospel is twisted, the all-sufficiency of Christ's work is dishonored, and the way to salvation for sinners is blocked. Galatians 5:1 states it clearly: *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”*

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**A DIFFERENT GOSPEL**

Read Galatians 1:6-10 as a group. What is Paul referring to when he says “different gospel”? Why do you think it was so easy for the Galatians to accept this “different gospel”?

Are there “different gospels” today? Give examples. What are the telltale marks that they deviate from God's Word? Or said another way: How can we tell when people are twisting the truth? What can we do personally to protect ourselves and others from a false gospel?

What does Paul say about any change to the gospel message (vv. 6-9)?

**DICTIONARY**

In verse 7 is the verb "trouble you." The Greek word for this phrase is Tarassō; which literally means to shake back and forth and agitate. Paul strongly denounces the Judiazers perversion of the gospel. This perversion means to reverse.

**GOD CALLS US**

Paul reminds us in verse 6 that God called us – we didn't call Him. This is the order of the true gospel – God accepts us and then we follow Him. Other religions flip this order and require us to give God something. What are some of those things other religions require? Why is this not acceptable to God? What is acceptable to God?

**WHAT IS NECESSARY?**

In this passage the false teachers began to teach that human works is necessary for salvation. Fast forward to today: What do your un-churched friends believe is necessary (if anything) for salvation? Why is being a "good" person not enough for salvation? Read the story of the rich young ruler for perspective (Matthew 19:16-26). What is the point of this story?

**ROMANS ROAD**

Paul gave us the following passages to help us talk to others about salvation. Let's read them: Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9. After reading these passages what is the message of the gospel?

## WHO ARE YOU GOING TO PLEASE?

In verse 10 Paul poses two absolutely incompatible goals: pleasing man or pleasing God. Our life is a series of decisions where we either please God or please man. Below list ways we do both and discuss in your group:

### Please Man

### Please God

#### Relationships

Children

Friends

Church

Our time

Our finances

Our talents

Our priorities

#### APPLY

When do we find it hard to be a God-pleaser rather than a man-pleaser? Why?

#### PRAY

Pray and ask God to help you examine your heart in this area. Pray for the courage to seek God's approval above anyone else's.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**WEEK 3: NOVEMBER 26, 2017**  
**“PAUL CALLED BY GOD”**  
**GALATIANS 1:11-24**

**OVERVIEW**

Many commentaries refer to this passage as Paul's "autobiographical credentials" or simply, his testimony. Often when we hear the word testimony we think of standing in front of the church or a crowd and nervously delivering a speech. Our testimonies, which we all have, are powerful arrows in God's quiver that we are responsible for firing off. There are three things happening in this section of scripture. Paul's pre-conversion, his conversion, and post-conversion. As we dive into this passage, be thinking about these three points in your own story.

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**YOUR TESTIMONY**

Read Galatians 1:11-24 as a group. Paul's message is directly from Christ. Read (Acts 26:16-18). Here we see that Jesus rescues Paul from the Jews and the Gentiles, and sends him directly back to them to open their eyes. How can you use your testimony to share the gospel? Describe examples of when you shared the gospel with others.

**25 WORDS OR LESS**

Let's take a moment to reflect on your knowledge of the gospel. If somebody were to ask you, "What is this 'gospel' you keep talking about?" what would you say? Are you able to keep the crucial aspects of this message central in your thinking? Try writing down a definition of "the gospel" in twenty-five words or less:

Now look up the following passages from Paul's writings, and note what they teach us about certain key elements of the gospel:

- The person of Christ (read Romans 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:8)
- The work of Christ (read Romans 2:15-16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:8)
- Our response to Christ (read Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)

After examining these passages, go back to your written description of the gospel. Do you need to change, remove, or add anything to keep in line with Scripture? If so, do it below.

### **BE READY TO DEFEND**

Finally, examine your definition carefully. This is the truth upon which Christianity stands or falls. Are we living the way we should? Are people recognizing that God has changed us? God wants us to draw close to him. God also wants us to fulfill the purpose *He* has for our life. We should reflect on who we know or encounter in our lives that would benefit from hearing our testimony. God has commissioned us to do this.

#### **DICTIONARY**

Revelation (v. 12): message from God.

Zealous (v. 14): passionate about.

Gentiles (v. 16): non-Jews.

Peter, James (vv. 18-19): two leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Judea (v. 22): the area around Jerusalem.

### **BEFORE**

What kind of life were you leading before your conversion? What were you passionate about? How do you express that same zeal in your walk with God?

### **YOUR "BUT WHEN GOD" MOMENT**

Look at verse 15 of Paul's testimony. He says "*But when he (God)...*" These are some of the greatest words in every believer's testimony. Describe your "*But when God*" moment.

Do you think those who do not have a dramatic change in their lives at conversion are at a disadvantage in testifying about Christ? Why or why not?

### **AFTER**

Describe your life after your acceptance of Christ as your Lord and Savior in your life.

### **GETTING PERSONAL**

Look again at verses 17-18. Solitary time with God, as Paul had in Arabia, is crucial in developing our relationship with God. But we live in a time that puts so much emphasis on activity and accomplishment.

Are you spending time with God, reading His word and praying? Do you take time in your day to meditate on your identity as His child? Do you take time at the end of your day to reflect on it, thanking Him for His grace and admitting your failings?

### **PRAYER**

Pray that God would give us the boldness to share more about what he has done in our lives. Pray that we would be sensitive when we are someone else's divine appointment.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**WEEK 4: DECEMBER 3, 2017**  
**“PAUL ACCEPTED BY THE APOSTLES”**  
**GALATIANS 2: 1-10**

**OVERVIEW**

In this passage Paul sets the time frame of his visit to the apostles and his purpose. Paul needed to confer with the church leaders the message he was preaching to the Gentiles. This was so they could understand and approve of what he was doing. This approval wasn't for Paul's sake as it was for those questioning his apostleship. Paul gives us the example of openly discussing our plans and actions with our leaders and advisors. Good communication will reduce gossip, help everyone understand the situation better, and build unity.

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**CONFIRMATION**

Read Galatians 2:1-10 as a group. When Paul went to Jerusalem (v. 1) it wasn't because he was afraid his message was wrong. He was an apostle, receiving “revelation” (v. 2) from God; he didn't need to check it with anyone else. But he was afraid he “had run my race in vain.” What was Paul talking about?

Why was the Jerusalem leaders' decision about Titus (v. 3) so significant? If they had agreed with the “false brothers” and made the opposite decision, how would “the truth of the gospel” have been lost?

**DICTIONARY**

Freedom (v. 4): Free and freedom occurs eleven (11) times in Galatians. Free means “not under the control or power of another.” Freedom in Christ Jesus is the believer's liberty or release from all that restrains devotion to God. It's not just an ability to make choices; it's the ability to make right choices for truth, love, purity, and fullness of life. It is never independence from God, but obedience to the true God (see Romans 6:16-23). A believer's freedom through His death with Christ (see Romans 7:1-6) and is expressed in new life given by God's indwelling Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 3:16-17).

## **FREEDOM**

What does the Bible say Christians are free from in the following verses?

John 8:31-36; Romans 6:6-7

Romans 8:2-3; Galatians 3:23-25

Galatians 4:8-9

Hebrews 2:14-15

## **UNITY**

What did the apostles in Jerusalem recognize about Paul (vv. 6-9)? How does this episode show the importance of pursuing unity within the church?

As a follow-up, how does it show us the limits of pursuing unity (reread vv. 4-5)?

## **EXPLORE MORE**

Read Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 15:7-8. Both Paul and the Jerusalem leaders made the poor a priority (v. 10). How were God's people in the land of Israel to treat the poor among them?

Read 1 John 3:16-17. How are God's people today to treat the poor among us?

Read Matthew 5:43-48 and 25:31-46. What does caring for the poor, and not caring for the poor, show about us? How does this challenge you individually and as a local church?

## **GETTING PERSONAL**

Though spending solitary time with God is a key part of the Christian life, the Christian life is not a solitary one. Church commitment and church unity are important.

How deeply rooted are you in church life? What are you doing to maintain and show unity with other believers? When might you be in danger of picking and choosing what you need from church life, rather than serving others throughout church life?

## **2 TRUTHS**

The meeting between the Antioch envoys (Paul, Barnabas, and Titus) and the Jerusalem leaders (Peter, James, and John) some 2,000 years ago is relevant today. Here are two practical lessons from that meeting. Discuss these truths in your group if time permits.

1. From the Antioch contingent, we learn, in your zeal for the truth, don't forget prudence. Paul could have stepped into Jerusalem with guns blazing! But he chose prudence. Don't forget the principle of "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Prayerfully consider the best way to take our stand for the truth "with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).
2. From the Jerusalem leaders we learn, in your passion for right doctrine, don't neglect right living. Galatians 2:10 reminds us that the gospel is not a list of items to be lodged in our heads, but a life-changing power meant to be expressed through our hearts and hands. Simply, just as we received grace from God, we should extend grace toward others. Set others free in Christ instead of holding them hostage to your own rules and regulations. Accept one another just as God has accepted you.

## **PRAY**

Thank God for how He saved each one of you and for the unity you have with other Christians from every background and culture. Ask God to help you remember you have His approval, and don't need anyone else's, and to make you truly committed to pleasing Him and serving His people.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

**WEEK 5: DECEMBER 10, 2017**  
**“PAUL OPPOSES PETER”**  
**GALATIANS 2:11-14**

**OVERVIEW**

The hypocrisy Paul describes in this passage comes from the Greek word for hypocrisy which means, ‘play acting, pretending, or wearing a disguise.’ We see in this passage how boldly Paul confronts Peter in front of everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike. Peter stopped eating with Gentiles for fear of what his Jewish friends might think of him. Paul rightly believed that how a Christian acts can and will undermine what that Christian may confess to be true. Do we work as hard at avoiding gospel-undermining behavior as we do at avoiding immoral behavior? If not, it is imperative that we learn to do so. Otherwise, we may find ourselves, in a real way, standing condemned as Peter stood at the meal in Antioch.

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**HYPOCRISY**

Read Galatians 2:11-14. Peter was one of Jesus’ closest friends who had seen Him teach, heal, live, die, and rise. What is surprising about verse 11? What was Peter doing that caused Paul to act like this (vv. 12-15)?

How did Paul view Peter and Barnabas’ actions (v. 14)? What do you think is significant about this insight?

## EXPLORE MORE

Read Acts 11:1-18. Why did Peter originally begin eating with Gentiles? What was so significant about this vision (v. 18)? How does this make his actions in Galatians 2:12 even worse?

## APPLY

Peter's sin was basically the sin of nationalism. He was showing that Christians can't be really pleasing to God unless they become Jewish. But nationalism is just one form of legalism. Legalism is looking to something besides Jesus Christ in order to be acceptable and clean before God. And legalism always results in pride, fear, and often exclusion and strife.

What are some examples today of similar sorts of exclusive social behavior based on failure to understand and live out justification by faith?

What are the reasons why we might find ourselves doing this (verse 12 gives us one motivation)?

## GETTING PERSONAL

Pastor and commentator Timothy Keller writes this about Peter's mistake (and possibly ours too!):

*"We politely sit by 'those other people' in church, but we don't 'eat' with them; we won't really become friends with them, sharing our lives and homes and things with them. We will keep relationships formal and see them at official church meetings only. All this comes from not living in line with the gospel. Without the gospel, our hearts have to manufacture self-esteem by comparing our group with other groups. But the gospel tells us we are all unclean without Christ, and all clean in Him."* Discuss Tim's comment in your group.

## **2 TRUTHS**

Paul's recounting of his confrontation of Peter's hypocrisy in Galatians 2:11-14 gives us two clear truths that are helpful to each of us today. Discuss these truths in your group if time permits.

1. Christians are accountable to one another. God's standard of living applies to us all, and we need to help one another maintain it, even if it involves private or public confrontation. But any rebuke should be given with genuine love and concern for those who falter (Psalm 141:5; Proverbs 27:6).
2. Christians impact others. As Christians, we represent Christ to a watching world – for better or worse. We need to live our lives in conformity with what we believe and teach.

## **PRAY**

Pray that you don't live a certain way and expect others to live another. Pray for tact and to be delicate when approaching someone with an admonishment. Pray to be open when someone may approach you.

## PRAYER REQUESTS



## **PAUL'S ARGUMENT**

The following is a question and answer response by Paul. Discuss each question, answer, and argument given below:

### **Question #1**

Did we Jews become Christians differently than the Gentiles?

### **Answer Given**

"[Even] we...Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles...have believed in Christ Jesus" (vv. 15-16).

### **Argument Affirmed**

There are not two ways of salvation, one for Jews and one for Gentiles. Everybody is saved in the same way: through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Question #2**

Since we already had the Law, why do we Jews believe in Jesus?

### **Answer Given**

"So that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law" (v. 16).

### **Argument Affirmed**

Faith in Jesus Christ justified us (declared us righteous) before God, something the Law did not do.

### **Question #3**

On what doctrinal truth is this faith based?

### **Answer Given**

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 16).

### **Argument Affirmed**

Any person – Jew or Gentile – is justified through faith in Jesus, not by the works of the Law.

### **Question #4**

Why is a person justified by faith, not works?

### **Answer Given**

"Since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (v. 16).

### **Argument Affirmed**

It is literally impossible for the Law to justify anybody – Jew or Gentile.

### **BUT WHAT ABOUT...?**

How would you respond to this argument: "If God justifies bad people, what is the point of being good? Can't we do as we like and live as we please?" Read Romans 6:14-18 to help in your answer.

### **DIGGING DEEPER**

Paul suggests in verse 19 that when he was trying to save himself by obeying the law, he was not able to "live for God." Why is this, do you think?

Now Paul has "died to the law" as the way to save himself, because he knows Christ, and not his obedience, is what saves him. Why does this mean he is now able to truly "live for God"?

In verse 20, who does God see when He looks at a Christian? How does this impact how a Christian lives?

Finally, try to put verse 21 in your own words.

### **GETTING PERSONAL**

It is our obligation to bring everything in our lives such as our thinking, feelings and behavior "in line" with the gospel. Is this something you are consciously doing? Each morning do you look forward to your day and consider how the gospel will impact what you do and how you do it?

### **PRAY**

Thank God that faith in Christ is all you need to be justified with Him. Ask God to help you how to live out the gospel in every area of your life; and to show you ways in which you are expecting other Christians to add works to their faith.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

