

FAITH & FREEDOM

GALATIANS

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Faith and Freedom: Galatians
Adult Bible Study Leader's Guide
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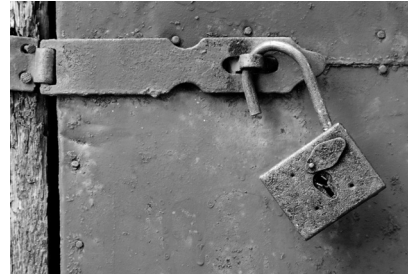
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How to Use *Truth for Living*

Truth for Living:

A comprehensive, trustworthy curriculum that presents the truth of God's Word without compromise. The curriculum plan includes through-the-Bible courses as well as topical courses. Perfect for adults who want a guide in using all of God's Word as God intended.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The FOCUS of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner's learning.
- The GOAL of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Truth for Living* lesson has three distinct parts. GETTING STARTED is the attention-getter. The questions and activities “set the table,” as it were, for the study. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES is the heart of the lesson. A series of study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. MAKING IT PERSONAL applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application.

The Study Book

This leader's guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. Most of the questions in the leader's guide are picked up from the Bible study book. You will notice the question numbers in parentheses after the questions. The answers to the questions are in italics following the questions.

Other Resources

The resource CD has PowerPoint presentations for every lesson. They incorporate the resource visuals and provide a good way for teachers and learners to track the lesson. Other resources include lesson outlines and promotional materials.

Preface

There is surely a craving in the human heart for freedom, a craving planted there by the Creator. However, millions of people around the globe still languish in political bondage or in the bondage of poverty or illiteracy. But the worst bondage by far is spiritual bondage, and the greatest liberty is the freedom Christ gives to those who trust in Him. In the book of Galatians, Paul addressed a group of churches that had become enslaved to religious legalism and needed to be restored to the freedom of the gospel.

In some respects, the challenges we face today are quite different from those the Galatians confronted. We do not find Judaizers insisting that we become circumcised and keep the Jewish law. Nevertheless, we always have to face the potential threat of legalism, the teaching that insists we must earn salvation.

This course examines three different approaches to life. The first is living life with a license to sin. That is not freedom, but slavery to our sinful desires.

Some approach life through legalism. Legalism exists to satisfy a set of rules in attempting to gain salvation. The rules in themselves may be commendable, but they are dangerous if they become a substitute for grace and a source of pride.

Paul taught the third approach to life, the way of liberty. By dying for us on the cross, Christ delivered us from bondage to sin and to the law. We are free, but we have to choose how to use that freedom by faith. The grateful Christian chooses to walk in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit produces His fruit of godly character in him.

The cover art shows an unlocked padlock hanging on a door to symbolize that Christ has already done the work for us. He bought our freedom. We have neither a “lock” to pick nor a “key” we need to discover. Christ has already given us the liberty to walk pleasing to God.

Paul’s example is inspiring. He was a teacher who lived what he taught. His faithfulness in the face of conflicts shows us how to persevere in our walk with God. Paul motivates us by his words and by his life to live freely in God’s grace.





No Substitute for the Gospel

LESSON 1

Topic

The true gospel

Theme

Salvation by grace makes up the heart of the gospel.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will appreciate, defend, and share the gospel with conviction.

Materials

- Slips of paper and pencils
- Resources 1-3
- Glass of water
- Laundry detergent

Scripture Focus

Galatians 1:1–10

Summary

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to churches that had been infiltrated by legalists. The legalists taught that to be saved, Gentiles must not only believe on Christ but also keep the law of Moses. Paul emphasized the good news that Christ died to deliver us from our sins and to provide salvation as a gift. Paul urged the Galatian churches to reject any “gospel” that denied the doctrine of salvation by grace.

Outline

I. Paul Established His Authority (Gal. 1:1–5)

- A. His personal credentials (1:1, 2)
- B. His powerful message (1:3–5)

II. Paul Exercised His Authority (Gal. 1:6–10)

- A. Called the new gospel perverted (1:6, 7)
- B. Commanded new gospels be prohibited (1:8, 9)
- C. Communicated the gospel preacher’s purpose (1:10)

Memory Verse

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

GETTING STARTED

Defining the Gospel

ASK: How would you define the gospel?

ASK: What would you say to anyone who tried to tweak it?

ASK: What “additions” to the gospel have you heard about?

Galatians begins with Paul’s strict warning about those who try to tweak the gospel. His warning should help deepen our loyalty to the true gospel of Christ.

New and Improved?

In 1985, Coke changed its formula to mimic Pepsi. They came out with New Coke, but the public soundly rejected it. As the original formula began to disappear, people bought it up like it was gold. Before long, Coke brought the original formula back as Coca-Cola Classic. Eventually, the company dropped “classic” from their original cola. In the end, Coke fans became even more ardent and loyal to the old, familiar formula.

ASK: What new product or products have you tried that you found to be inferior to the original? (Q1)

ASK: What requirements for salvation have you known people to add to the gospel? (Q2)

Galatians begins with Paul’s strict warning about those who try to tweak the gospel. His warning should deepen our loyalty to the true gospel of Christ.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Religious people throughout history have devised all sorts of ways to try to please God apart from trusting in Christ as Savior. However, the Bible emphatically teaches that only one road leads to Heaven. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

ASK: Why do so many people refuse to come to the Father through Jesus Christ? (Q3) *They want to maintain control over how they are saved. They are proud and accepting the gospel takes humility.*

I. Paul Established His Authority (Gal. 1:1–5)

It seems that Paul wrote the book of Galatians in a hurry. Instead of taking the time to dictate it to a secretary, he wrote it by hand (Gal. 6:11). Likely he was preparing to leave for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) when he heard a disappointing report concerning the churches in Galatia. Since he couldn’t go to Galatia to deal

with the problem, he did the next best thing—he wrote to the Galatian churches.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 to show the major cities in Galatia (in red).

Paul and Barnabas founded the churches in Galatia (Acts 14). Later Paul returned to the region with Silas to strengthen and encourage the believers there (Acts 16:1–8). He could not ignore the report that they were detouring into disaster. He understood that the spread of legalism would destroy the churches if he failed to oppose it.

A. His personal credentials (1:1, 2)

Bible commentators often call the false teachers in Galatia “Judaizers” because they advocated living the Christian life in submission to the Old Testament law. The Judaizers rejected Paul’s message about salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Therefore, they tried to undermine Paul’s authority by charging that he was not an apostle.

The word “apostle” means “a sent one.” To qualify as an official apostle, an individual must have been one of Jesus’ original disciples; he must have seen the risen Christ; and he must have received a commission from Christ. The twelve disciples, except for Judas Iscariot, became the apostles. Matthias replaced Judas (Acts 1:20–26).

Paul’s opponents charged that he had not witnessed Jesus’ earthly ministry, so he was inferior to the official apostles. Furthermore, the original group of the apostles had not appointed him. Given these issues, the Judaizers concluded Paul was a fake apostle with a false message.

READ: Galatians 1:1.

Paul held valid apostolic credentials. Christ appeared to him and specially called him to be an apostle (Acts 9). Paul could indeed speak authoritatively as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:6–11).

The validity of Paul’s apostleship provided the foundation for his instructions to the Galatian churches. He did not express his personal opinions or ideas but proclaimed God’s message under God’s direction and authority. Those who rejected Paul’s God-given message rejected God.

Although Paul had not received his apostolic credentials from any human source, he concurred with all who taught the truth. As he addressed the churches in Galatia, he mentioned that other Christians were with him (Gal. 1:2). Their endorsement affirmed the truth that Paul was preaching the same gospel cherished by the other Christians.

B. His powerful message (1:3–5)

Paul immediately introduced his theme: The gospel declares salvation by grace (1:3). Greek-speaking people typically used the word “grace” when they began letters or met a friend. “Peace” was the customary greeting in the Hebrew language. These two words took on a deeper significance in the New Testament. “Grace” refers to God’s free, undeserved kindness toward sinners. It points especially to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.



“To deliver” means “to rescue out of a desperate situation.”

ASK: What significance do you see in the fact that “grace” precedes “peace” in Paul’s greeting? (Q3) *True peace comes only to those who have first experienced God’s grace.*

“Peace” identifies a state of well-being or wholeness, a restored relationship. Sin produced a state of hostility between the holy God and an unholy human race. Jesus died in our place, enduring God’s wrath against sin. Because Jesus shed His blood for our sins, we can have peace with God (Col. 1:19–22).

Paul’s mention of the Lord Jesus Christ in Galatians 1:3 launched his description of the extent of God’s salvation of sinners.

READ: Galatians 1:4, 5. **ASK:** What key word demonstrates that salvation cannot be by works? (Q4) *Gave.*

Paul presented three facts about the good news in verse 4. First, Christ “gave himself for our sins.” We all have a sin nature from the time of conception. In addition, we all repeatedly commit acts of sin. As sinners, we deserve death, meaning eternal separation from God and His goodness (Rom. 6:23). Christ gave Himself on the cross as our substitute.

ASK: If salvation could be attained by works, then why would Jesus go to the cross? (Q5) *There is no good explanation for the cross in a works salvation theology.*

Second, Paul stated that the purpose of Christ’s substitutionary death was to “deliver us from this present evil world [age]” (Gal. 1:4). Satan blankets the minds of human beings in spiritual darkness (2 Cor. 4:4) and exercises control over their lives in this present age (1 John 5:19). Believers do not live under the domination of sin, as they did before salvation. Christ has rescued believers from spiritual bondage.

Third, this deliverance was “according to the will of God and our Father.” Paul didn’t invent the gospel of grace; God did. It was God’s purpose from eternity past to save sinners. Therefore, Paul exclaimed that God deserves glory forever and ever (Gal. 1:5).

READ: Ephesians 2:8, 9. **ASK:** What did Paul say people would do if their good works earned salvation? (Q6) *Boast about their worthiness to be saved.*

ASK: How should we respond to the fact that God saves sinners entirely by His grace? (Q7) *We glorify God, giving Him the credit and praise for our salvation.*

II. Paul Exercised His Authority (Gal. 1:6–10)

In his other letters, Paul complimented his readers on their faith in the Lord or their love for one another. In Galatians he criticized his readers. He loved them deeply and sincerely (Gal. 4:19, 20), but his concern for their spiritual well-being caused him to address their spiritual failure head-on.

A. Called the new gospel perverted (1:6, 7)

Even though false teachers had lured the Galatians away from the gospel, Paul held the Galatians responsible for abandoning the gospel. In place of the good news (gospel) of grace, the Galatian believers turned to a totally different kind of “gospel” that taught salvation by works instead of grace.

READ: Galatians 1:6. **ASK:** What are some practical ramifications of trying to earn God’s grace for salvation? (Q8) *People become performance focused; people compare themselves to others; people give up trying to be good and resign themselves to being failures; people don’t get saved.*

READ: Galatians 1:7.

The false teachers in Galatia believed they figured out the true gospel, but Paul charged that their new ideas based on an old law weren’t the gospel, or good news, at all (1:7). The Judaizers promoted a system of religion that demanded people keep the Jewish law for salvation. That belief sends people to Hell. Obviously, that’s not good news!

OBJECT LESSON: Show a glass of water. Mention that drinking several glasses a day is good for one’s health. Suggest that the water represents the gospel. Add laundry detergent to the glass of water. Explain that adding works and religious deeds to the “pure water of life” is injurious to the water. It becomes something different and harmful if swallowed.

ASK: Against what contaminations must believers defend the gospel? (Q9) *Infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, keeping the Mosaic Law, confirmation, church membership, rote prayers.*

When teachers pervert the gospel, they disrupt the church. The false teachers in Galatia were turning the gospel of Christ upside down. What they taught was not Christianity but a fraudulent gospel of their own design. Their perversion of the gospel confused the Galatian churches and pushed them toward an outright rejection of the truth.

ASK: What are the usual missions of today’s liberal, gospel-abandoning churches? (Q10) *Their mission includes meeting people’s physical needs (humanitarianism) and fighting for social justice. They strive to make people as comfortable, happy, and welcome as possible.*

As in Paul’s day, churches that pervert the gospel only make the road to Hell a little more pleasant.

B. Commanded new gospels be prohibited (1:8, 9)

READ: Galatians 1:8.

Paul condemned the false teacher’s heresy in the strongest terms: “Let him be accursed,” meaning “set aside for destruction.” The accursed person would come

Philippians 3:4–6 lists Paul’s outstanding credentials as a Jew and a Pharisee in his pre-Christian years.

under the judgment of God. The Judaizers’ teaching contradicted the gospel of grace and therefore merited God’s punishment.

When Paul first introduced the good news of the gospel to the Galatians, he preached Christ to them. Only the message of Christ truly represented the salvation that God had provided by His grace. Any other “gospel” was spurious and deserved to be rejected. Paul urged the Galatians to look beyond the persuasive personalities of the Judaizers, see the error in their message, and reject it. Even if Paul himself or an angel from Heaven were to preach another message, the Galatians were to reject it.

READ: Galatians 1:9. **ASK:** Why might people invent new gospels? (Q11) *To fit their misunderstanding of Scripture; to make the gospel palatable; to gain power or control over people; to gain financially; to gain fame.*

C. Communicated the gospel preacher’s purpose (1:10)

READ: Galatians 1:10.

Paul continued his counterattack on the false teachers in verse 10 by asking in effect, “Who am I trying to please?” There were only two alternatives: he could seek to please people or God. If he had been trying to please people, he certainly would not have written as harshly as he had in the previous verse.

Paul’s claim to please God rather than people was not a self-righteous boast. When he wrote, “If I yet pleased men,” he admitted that before becoming a Christian, he lived to impress others. In those days his ambitious commitment to Judaism had put him on a fast track to success in the Jewish community (Gal. 1:14).

The Judaizers were messengers of another gospel. They changed God’s truth to please people. Therefore, they did not serve the Lord; they served their own interests.

ASK: If the Galatian believers had continued to follow the messengers of another gospel, what would have been the repercussions? (Q12) *Their spiritual lives would have been anemic, the spread of the true gospel would have ceased, the church would turn into a club with people competing to be the top dog.*

READ: Matthew 23:25–28. **ASK:** How does Christ’s condemnation of the Pharisees relate to Paul’s statement, “I . . . pleased men” (Gal. 1:10)? (Q13) *Paul’s statement reflects the true nature of Pharisees—living to please men—that Christ exposed in his condemnation of the Pharisees.*

Paul warned the Galatians not to dilute the gospel to make it appealing to people. No one can improve the gospel, because it is a perfect message, having originated with God. It points sinners to Christ, magnifies the grace of God, and causes Christians to glorify their Heavenly Father.

ASK: As we share the gospel, what are the necessary components to include? (Q14) *All people are sinners; God demands payment for sin; no one can save him- or herself; Christ is fully God and fully man; Christ’s death satisfied*

God's demand; Christ rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death; salvation is freely offered to all people; salvation is appropriated through faith in Christ's substitutionary death.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Use the following activities to help each learner express his gratitude for the gospel and to be able to share it well with others.

Sentence Completion

Have several volunteers complete the following sentence: "I am grateful for the gospel because . . ." (Q15)

In Defense of the Gospel

RESOURCE: Display resource 3. **ASK:** What precautions could we take to make sure the gospel will always be taught and preached in our church? (Q16) (Reveal answers after learners have had opportunities to share their ideas.) *Call pastors with uncompromising stands on the gospel; preach the gospel regularly; use Sunday School material that is strong on the gospel and theologically sound; give people opportunities to share their salvation testimonies.*

ASK: How would you defend the gospel to a critic who insists it is too exclusive? (Q17)

Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Appreciate, defend, and share the gospel.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 1:8. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

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Defending the Gospel

- Call pastors who take uncompromising stands on the gospel.
- Choose theologically sound curriculum.
- Require potential members to share their salvation testimony.
- Preach the gospel regularly.
- Support gospel-believing missionaries.
- Train members how to share the gospel.
- Address current variations of or attacks on the gospel in the evangelical world.

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FAITH & FREEDOM

Living by Faith

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