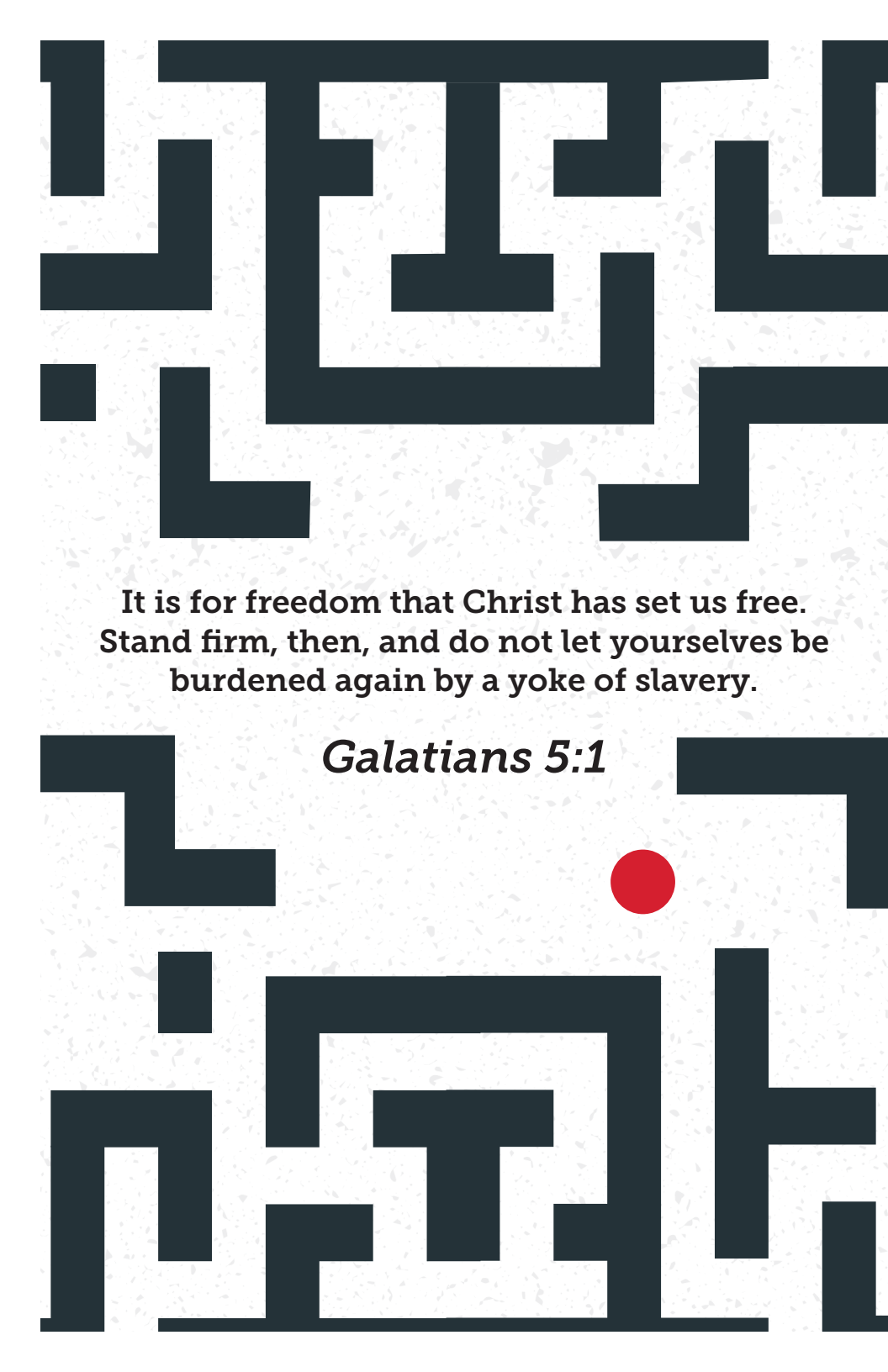




**WHEN YOUR WAY
ISN'T WORKING**

A Study of
Galatians





**It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be
burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**

Galatians 5:1

Hey, there!

When you go somewhere, do you use Apple Maps? Google Maps? Waze? You're not still printing off maps from MapQuest, are you? Or maybe you just trust your memory or use your gut instincts. Do you go the same way every time, or do you detour and head in a different direction just because it's, well, different?

In Galatians, the author Paul's primary message to churches in Galatia is this: **DON'T GO THAT WAY**. What way? The opposite way of the Gospel.

Throughout this study, we're going to take an in-depth look at what the Gospel is, how it impacts our lives, and why it matters so much to move toward it and live in pursuit of it. Paul is encouraging us to stay in step with the Spirit and follow the way of Jesus.

While this New Testament book is on the shorter side, we're going to take our time over eight weeks and dive deeper.

Martin Luther, the great 16th-century theologian and reformer, referred to Galatians as the "Charter of Christian Liberty." He often considered it the most important book in the New Testament. Others have referred to it as the "Bill of Rights of the Christian Life," "The Great Doctrine of Justification by Faith," or the "Magna Carta."

As we'll come to see, Paul wrote this book with a passion and tone that is unique to Galatians. Why? Because, to Paul, it was critical for Christians to understand the truth of the Gospel. Therefore, he passionately defended what he felt was the only way.

The Gospel equation: Jesus + nothing = everything.

Let's dive in.

RiverGlen Christian Church

WEEK 11

PEOPLE PLEASING

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people. I would not be a servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:10



Reading Plan

Week 1

Day 1: *Galatians 1:1–5*

Day 2: *Galatians 1:6–10*

Day 3: *Galatians 1:11–12*

Day 4: *Galatians 1:13–20*

Day 5: *Galatians 1:21–24*

Background

The apostle Paul was a church-establishing missionary. During his first missionary journey, around A.D. 46-47, Paul planted churches in the region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey), specifically in Antioch of Pisidia, Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe.

But soon after he left, the churches in Galatia were infiltrated by false teachers discrediting Paul's authority and convincing people to believe in an alternative, false version of the Gospel.

Paul was not happy. He was fired up and ready to defend what he had taught and established, which had been given to him by the risen Christ.

In fact, we'll notice the tone of Galatians is uniquely different from other letters Paul wrote; this time, he's frustrated. To plant these churches, Paul had to endure brutal months of travel, sleepless nights, and beatings at the hands of those who did not welcome him, only to find out just a short time later that these churches were heading in a different direction—opposite of the Gospel. Paul was righteously angry.

How would you feel? You'd done all that work for...nothing?

This letter to the Galatians is written to defend the Gospel truth. This letter is written to defend the message Jesus had sacrificed his life for. This letter had massive implications for the reality that God sent Jesus for all people for all time. This letter is written to warn people: **DON'T GO THAT WAY**—the way of the false gospel. Instead, choose the way of Jesus. Follow the path of the Gospel.

Like all Scripture, this letter is also written to us—to those who want to follow Jesus. Consider it a warning. Consider it a letter written by a guy who was passionate about defending the truth. Consider it a compass and a guide to keep us heading the way of Jesus.

Bonus:

For background on Paul's first missionary journey, read **Acts 13 & 14**.

Paul's First Missionary Journey



Paul's Life After His Conversion

- 35-37 AD** Conversion outside Damascus, visits Arabia, returns to Damascus
- 38 AD** First visit to Jerusalem
- 39 AD** Travels to Tarsus and surrounding regions
- 45 AD** Second visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas to bring aid
- 46-48 AD** First missionary journey with Barnabas
- 49 AD** Third visit to Jerusalem, attends the Jerusalem Council, writes the Book of Galatians
- 49-52 AD** Second missionary journey
- 53-57 AD** Third missionary journey, visits Ephesus, writes Book of Romans
- 57-59 AD** Arrest in Jerusalem, trials and imprisonment in Caesarea
- 60-63 AD** Voyage to Rome, Roman imprisonment
- 63-67 AD** Released from imprisonment, likely launches fourth missionary journey
- 67 AD** Imprisoned in Rome again
- 68 AD** Martyrdom under Nero

***Dates are approximate**



WEEK 2

WHEN TO PUSH BACK

When Cephas came to Antioch, I
opposed him to his face, because he
stood condemned.

Galatians 2:11

What or who was Paul fighting against? Specifically, Judaizers who were trying to convince the churches in Galatia that they weren't doing enough.

A Judaizer was someone of Jewish descent who believed in Jesus, but they felt that these new "non-Jewish Christians" (aka Gentiles) still needed to keep the laws established by the Torah—specifically, laws around circumcision and food, among others. The Judaizers came in saying: "great, believe in Jesus. We do! But to be a part of God's people, you, Gentiles, also need to follow Jewish customs and laws."

But remember what Paul passionately believed and taught—the Gospel, which is 'Jesus + nothing.' Not the Torah, not God's Law established by Moses, not Jewish customs or traditions, or any religious rule-keeping.

Because of Jesus, there were **no restrictions** on who could be part of God's family, Jew and Gentile alike.

Interestingly, Paul had already encountered this issue before with the apostle Peter. Peter was a Jew. And at one point, he became tempted to add back some Jewish customs in the 'Jesus + nothing' blank. Paul reminds the Galatians in verse 11 that he had to **push back** against Peter, and Peter relented and agreed.

The Gospel—what Jesus accomplished through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave—is everything. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. Jesus has done it all.

Believing and putting our faith in what Jesus has already done is enough.

According to Paul, if anyone puts anything in the 'Jesus + nothing' blank, that's no longer the Gospel. It's no longer even Good News. That's bad news.

Paul uses one of the strongest Greek words available to him back then in Galatians 1:9: "If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be **cursed**" (emphasis added). The Greek word here is "anathema," which means "damned" or "devoted to destruction."

What about us? Would we ever take our cues from Paul—resist and passionately push back against anything counter to the Gospel?

At some point in our lives, we will all face situations where we have the opportunity to push back in a manner that honors Christ and shows love for others.

Here's how to navigate those moments effectively:

1. **Pray:** Ask God for discernment, wisdom, courage, and strength to handle the situation with love and compassion.
2. **Seek wise counsel:** Gain perspective and guidance from trusted individuals on how to handle the situation with wisdom and grace.
3. **If appropriate, have a conversation:** Lead with love and sprinkle in truth, allowing wisdom to guide your interactions.

Reading Plan

Week 2

Day 1: *Galatians 2:1–5*

Day 2: *Galatians 2:6–10*

Day 3: *Galatians 2:11–13*

Day 4: *Galatians 2:14–16*

Day 5: *Galatians 2:17–19*

Bonus: *re-read Galatians 1 & 2*

WEEK 3

NO LONGER I

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

"What separates you from other people? How would you describe yourself (your identity) to someone else? We might highlight our personality or physical traits. Then, we might describe the essential roles we have as father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or friend. Or maybe it's in the interests, values, and beliefs we hold. There are good ways God has wired you or perhaps a role he has called you to. But if we are honest, there are other things that we may attach to our identity that don't honor God or are part of our sinful nature.

When we receive faith given to us by Christ, Paul says in Galatians 2:20, **"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."** So, what does it mean that "I no longer live?" Does it mean we no longer exist? No. Instead, the question becomes: What specifically needs to die for Christ to live in us?

The life we are called to crucify or die to is our **"old life."** This refers to our natural tendency to sin, to do things our way, and to put other things in the place of God. The new life we are called to pick up is God's way of living. In other words, we do as Jesus did, pursue what Jesus pursued, and submit ourselves fully to God's will—not our own. **It's trusting that God's plan is the best for our lives and his ways are better than ours.** It's letting God build our character to reflect him to those around us.

Dying to self is not a one-time event when we initially put our faith and trust in Jesus. It's a lifelong process as we grow and learn to surrender to Christ daily."

Reading Plan

Week 3

Day 1: *Galatians 2:20*

Day 2: *Galatians 2:21–3:5*

Day 3: *Galatians 3:6–14*

Day 4: *Galatians 3:15–22*

Day 5: *Galatians 3:23–29*

Bonus: *Luke 9:23–27*

Reflection:

In what ways do others see Christ in the way I live?

In what ways do others not see Christ in the way I live?

Challenge for the week: Memorize Galatians 2:20



WEEK 4

BEAR EACH OTHER'S BURDENS

If anyone thinks they are something
when they are not, they deceive themselves.

Galatians 6:3

Reading Plan

Week 4

Day 1: *Galatians 6:1*

Day 2: *Galatians 6:2*

Day 3: *Galatians 6:3*

Day 4: *Galatians 6:4–6*

Day 5: *re-read Galatians 6:1–6*

Bonus: *Romans 12*

Have you ever had to carry something really heavy for a long distance? It can be incredibly tiring. Similarly, all of us carry burdens in our lives that feel like heavy weights from time to time. It could be a sin that we struggle with, a health issue we're facing, trouble in a relationship, or something else. But whatever it is, it can feel like a heavy weight on our shoulders that we're tired of bearing.

According to Paul, we don't have to carry that kind of burden alone. As followers of Christ, **we are instructed to carry each other's burdens**. This is more than a suggestion; it's a command. Paul tells us that carrying each other's burdens is how we fulfill the law of Christ. Paul isn't saying that we have to do this to get God's approval; he's saying that Jesus carried our burdens when he died on the cross and we can show people the love of Jesus by following his example.

So, what does it look like to carry each other's burdens?

It could be as simple as listening to a friend who's struggling. It could be praying for someone or encouraging them through a tough time. It could be helping someone out with childcare or meals or something else as they go through a medical issue. There are many different ways we can help carry someone else's burden. By doing so, we lighten their load and demonstrate the love of Jesus in practical ways.

Reflection:

Is there someone in your life you can reach out to right now to offer help, prayers, or encouragement? Can you offer to babysit, cook a meal, run an errand, or do some chores? What is one way you can bear someone else's burden this week?

WEEK 5

● **NO LONGER
SLAVES**

So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Galatians 4:7

Reading Plan

Week 5

Day 1: *Galatians 4:1–6*

Day 2: *Galatians 4:7*

Day 3: *Galatians 4:8–16*

Day 4: *Galatians 4:17–20*

Day 5: *Galatians 4:21–31*

Bonus: *Genesis 15, 16, & 21*
(Abraham's sons, Ishmael & Isaac)

Imagine you've been incarcerated and stuck in prison. Imagine it's been months or even years. You've been stuck going where people tell you to go, eating what others tell you to eat, with no freedom to do as you please.

Then imagine—you get released. **Freedom.** Now, you can go where you want, do what you wish, and live as a free person who can make independent choices.

Who would ever want to go back and continue to live in prison? Of course, we can be imprisoned and enslaved in other ways. Enslaved to shame, sin, or addiction...but in this case, Paul warns people not to become enslaved to the law. What's the law?

The law was established by Moses on Mt. Sinai (read about that in Exodus 19 & 20). The law became known as the Torah, consisting of the 613 commandments for the Jewish people to maintain a right relationship with God. The law was useful for a time. It kept people close to God and reminded people of their sin.

But Jesus came to "fulfill the law" (Matthew 5:17). Because of Christ, the law is no longer needed. Jesus is the better and greater fulfillment of anything that the law could do to keep people close to and in right relationship with God.

So, when Paul says in Galatians 4:7, "**Now, you are no longer a slave, but God's own child,**" that's a big deal. As an adopted child, we receive all the rights that any heir or birth child would receive. We no longer have to keep the law to be part of God's family, which Paul reminds us over and over. We simply receive the inheritance given to us by Jesus as adopted children of God.

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In fact, we can cry out, **“Abba,”** to our heavenly Father. “Abba” is an Aramaic word that means “Daddy” or “Papa.” As pastor and author Tim Keller wrote, “Just as a young child simply assumes that a parent loves them and is there for them and never doubts the security and openness of daddy’s strong arms, so Christians can have an overwhelming boldness and certainty that God loves them endlessly.”

The Son of Man became a man so that we could be children of God and call him “Abba.” Do not go back to the law (any religious duty to get right with God). You’ve been given the same rights and privileges as Jesus to God’s resources. **Don’t go back to slavery; stay the way of freedom.**

Who would ever want to go back?

**Because you are his sons,
God sent the Spirit of his
Son into our hearts, the
Spirit who calls out,
“Abba, Father.”**

Galatians 4:6

WEEK 6

UNCANCELED

If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:15



Reading Plan

Week 6

Day 1: *Galatians 5:1*

Day 2: *Galatians 5:2–4*

Day 3: *Galatians 5:5–6*

Day 4: *Galatians 5:7–12*

Day 5: *Galatians 5:13–15*

Bonus: *re-read Galatians 3 & 4*

There's a trend that's developed over the last several years called "cancel culture." It's a term used to describe mass disapproval by society or a group of people towards someone who may have said or done something people don't agree with. Its goal is to hurt the person being canceled as a way to punish them rather than trying to correct, redirect, or understand them. It generally doesn't matter if the person was right or wrong or misunderstood. They get canceled. As we read in Galatians, we should push back and stand up against things opposed to God's truth; but as a whole, cancel culture lacks a key component of the Christian life—love.

As Christ-followers, we are to live and act differently than the world. Why? To point people to Jesus. And the world will notice—especially in situations where people might disagree. If we go along with what others in our culture and world are doing, how does that show God's transforming work in our lives? Cancel culture seems more like our sinful nature rearing its ugly head rather than the response Jesus modeled when confronted by those who opposed him.

Galatians 5:14-15 first commands us to "Love your neighbor as yourself;" and then follows with a warning: "...if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another."

Reflection:

Is there anyone in your life who you need to uncancel? Is there anyone you may need to forgive? Spend some time quietly asking the Holy Spirit if there is a relationship you need to repair. Write about that below.

WEEK 7

KEEP IN STEP

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step
with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25



Reading Plan

Week 7

Day 1: *Galatians 5:16*

Day 2: *Galatians 5:17–18*

Day 3: *Galatians 5:19–21*

Day 4: *Galatians 5:22–23*

Day 5: *Galatians 5:24–26*

**So I say, walk by the
Spirit, and you will not
gratify the desires of
the flesh.**

Galatians 5:16

Reflection:

At this point, we may think that 'Jesus + nothing' means we don't have to do anything at all to live like a Christian. Wrong. While there is nothing we can do to earn God's love and salvation, there is much we can do to become more like Jesus. The Gospel opposes earning but not effort. Therefore, just because we are free in Christ doesn't mean we are free to live however we decide. **Instead, because we are free, we are now able to live in step with the Holy Spirit.**

What's the evidence of a life in step with the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22 refers to this as the "fruit" of the Spirit. **Take some time to assess and score yourself.**

LOVE

1 2 3 4 5

JOY

1 2 3 4 5

PEACE

1 2 3 4 5

PATIENCE

1 2 3 4 5

KINDNESS

1 2 3 4 5

GOODNESS

1 2 3 4 5

FAITHFULNESS

1 2 3 4 5

GENTLENESS

1 2 3 4 5

SELF-CONTROL

1 2 3 4 5

WEEK 8

**REAP WHAT
YOU SOW**



Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.
A man reaps what he sows.

Galatians 6:7

Reading Plan

Week 8

Day 1: *Galatians 6:7*

Day 2: *Galatians 6:8*

Day 3: *Galatians 6:9–10*

Day 4: *Galatians 6:11–18*

Day 5: *re-read Galatians 1–3*

Bonus: *re-read Galatians 4–6*

Understanding the relationship between sowing and reaping is a good lesson for all of us.

Farmers know: What we plant is what we'll harvest. If we don't plant, we won't harvest. If we plant incorrectly, the harvest won't be fruitful.

Even if we plant correctly, but perhaps God doesn't bring the necessary elements to harvest, we may not see the growth immediately or on our timeline. **But we can trust God will still make seeds grow some way, somehow.**

Paul concludes Galatians with a reminder that what we sow (plant) is what we'll reap (harvest).

Sow prayers? Reap God's responses and answers.
Sow mercy and goodness? Reap God's mercy and goodness.
Sow kindness and friendship? Reap kindness and friendship.
Sow generosity? Reap generosity, purpose, and resources.

Then in Galatians 6:9, Paul says, **"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."**

God is not a vending machine. There are no guarantees that we will reap in the ways we anticipate in this lifetime, although we often do. Even if not, there's a life beyond our time on earth where we will receive a reward or experience the harvest in eternity with Christ.

Whatever the result, the motivation to sow must ultimately be for Jesus: to spread his message and to reach people far from God. That's what Paul worked tirelessly for. That's why he defended the Gospel with such urgency. He was going to defend and protect the seeds of truth received from the risen Christ himself with everything he had. Why? **So that, at the right time, the harvest would be plentiful.**

Today, 2,000 years later, we can thank God for Paul's commitment to speaking the truth. Now, we are reaping what Paul sowed so long ago.

Conclusion

Over the last eight weeks, we've journeyed through Galatians. **We hope you've learned something new, grown in your faith, and enjoyed finding a rhythm as you spent time with Jesus.**

Maybe you're feeling the nudge to put your faith in Jesus. Way to go! Begin by praying the prayer below:

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You've given me everything. I don't want anything other than you. I want to follow your way and your way alone. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins so that you could accomplish what I could not—payment for my sins. Thank you for the gift of faith and the ability to have a relationship with God. I put my full trust and faith in you.
Amen.

**Let us not become weary
in doing good, for at the
proper time we will reap
a harvest if we do not
give up.**

Galatians 6:9



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