

**A Study of
THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS**

“You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

- Galatians 5:4,5

Fellowship of Christian University Students (FOCUS)
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NOTE: Additional copies of this study may be obtained from “<http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/R/William.R.Reed-1/Bstudies/index.html>”

INSTRUCTIONS

This study is formatted to be a daily study of Galatians to be done over a period of 11 weeks. We have tried to design a study that will require, on average, about 20 minutes a day. That being said, please remember that the death of a good Bible study is a legalistic adherence to a “list” or schedule. Godly discipline requires a sensitivity to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach you. If you find yourself being led in a direction different from where our questions would take you, forget our questions, and listen to the “higher authority.” Most of all, enjoy the Word of God. There is no book like it in all of creation.

- Bob Reed and Mark Robinson

Note: We would very much appreciate any suggestions you might have to improve this study. Feedback on whether the questions are too vague, take too long to answer, are too academic, etc. is very much appreciated. Feel free to email us any thoughts you might have as they come up. Our email addresses are breed@ou.edu (Bob Reed) and markrobinson@wildwoodchurch.org (Mark Robinson). Thanks!

BRIEF BACKGROUND NOTES ON GALATIANS

Who wrote it? It was written by Paul, the apostle.

Who were the recipients? This epistle is addressed to “the churches in Galatia” (cf. Galatians 1:2). Most commentators believe that this refers to the group of churches in southern Galatia that Paul founded on his first missionary journey (e.g. Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe). These churches likely had a core of Jewish believers, along with many Gentile converts.

When was it written? Most commentators place the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians around 50 A.D.

Why was it written? This epistle was written to combat the tendency in the fledgling churches to incorporate the legalism of Judaism into Christianity. The Gentiles in these young churches were being pressured to become circumcised, observe the Jewish calendar, and adopt the ritual aspects of Judaism. In a sense, Christianity was in danger of becoming Judaism “with a Jesus face.” In this epistle, the Holy Spirit through Paul aggressively attacks this heresy. In so doing, He makes it clear that Christianity is not an extension of Judaism, it is something entirely different: Christianity is based on the foundational truth that righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ, not through following a set of rules.

This book has had a profound influence on the development of the Christian church. It has been called “the Magna Carta of Christian liberty.” It was Martin Luther’s favorite book, and a theological cornerstone of the Reformation.

Galatians deals with one of the most fundamental questions of religion: “How can I live a righteous life?” The answer is startlingly different from anything one might have expected. The truths contained in this book have the potential to revolutionize your life, as they have already done for countless others through the centuries. ENJOY!!!

WEEK ONE: Galatians 1:1-17

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 1:1-17.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section. For example, one such outline of Galatians 1:1-17 is given below:

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|----------|--|
| 1:1,2. | A formal introduction of Paul to the churches in Galatia. |
| 1:3-5. | Greetings, with a reminder of what the Christian life is all about. |
| 1:6-9. | Paul condemns those who have misled the Galatians with a different gospel. |
| 1:10-12. | Paul emphasizes that his gospel is from God. |
| 1:13-17. | God personally intervened in Paul’s life to appoint him a messenger to the Gentiles. |

Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

(NOTE: Making an outline is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in Scripture. It forces you to think through the content and organization of the text. In addition, it becomes a valuable resource for later review. If you have never done this before, you will probably find this hard to do the first time around. However, it will become easier over time. Persevere! You will be glad you did.)

Your outline goes here.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 1:1-17.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.”

For example, Paul begins his salutation to the Galatians by writing “Grace and peace to you” (Galatians 1:3). Accordingly, you might ask, “What exactly does Paul mean when he writes ‘Grace to you’?”

Write your questions in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

This Bible study adopts a “question-driven” approach. Compare your questions with the questions in this study to get a feel for the kinds of questions one can ask. Coming to Scripture with questions is a great way for God to teach you what is in His Word!

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week.

There is no “right” answer here. Making observations is another way to get you to engage yourself in God’s Word. It helps to clue you in on the meaning of the text and prepares you for the questions that follow.

Day Three:

1. For background info, read Acts 9:1-30 and Acts 26:12-19 (NOTE: Saul is the same person as the Paul who wrote the book of Galatians.)
2. Read Galatians 1:1-17.
3. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father ...”

Galatians 1:11,12: “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 1:16b,17: “I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13: “And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God...”

4. Briefly summarize the point that the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is making in the verses above. (i.e. In what way is Paul’s message not from man, but from God)?
Paul says in these verses that he did not make up the “gospel” that he preaches, nor did he pick it up from somebody else. Rather, he got it directly from God. In other words, this “gospel” was authored by God, and is not of human origin.
5. Why do you think Paul (under the power of the Holy Spirit) considers this point so important that He feels it necessary to emphasize it?
Paul’s teaching is so different from “normal” religion that it is hard to believe it is true. Either Paul’s teaching is his own invention, or much of our understanding is not really based on God’s truth. To the extent that the Holy Spirit can convince us that Paul’s teaching is NOT his own invention – that it really is from God – to that extent we will be forced to consider the possibility that our views are based on human wisdom, and are not really from God.

6. Why do you think it is necessary for YOU to be convinced that “Paul’s gospel” is not “the word of men” but the “word of God?”

Paul is going to say some strange things. A lot of what he says is going to go against my understanding of Christianity. The first step for me to be open to this teaching is for me to be absolutely convinced that Paul’s teaching does not come from Paul, but directly from God.

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 1:1-17
2. Now focus in on Galatians 1:3-5.
3. Did you know that Paul begins EVERY ONE of his letters with the salutation, “grace and peace to you?” Consider the following verses:

Romans 1:7: “*To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: **Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

1 Corinthians 1:3: “***Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 1:2: “***Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Galatians 1:3: “***Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...*”

Ephesians 1:2: “***Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Philippians 1:2: “***Grace and peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Colossians 1:2: “*To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: **Grace and peace** to you from God our Father.*”

1 Thessalonians 1:1: “*Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace and peace** to you.*”

2 Thessalonians 1:2: “***Grace and peace** to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

1 Timothy 1:2: “*To Timothy my true son in the faith: **Grace, mercy and peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

2 Timothy 1:2: “*To Timothy, my dear son: **Grace, mercy and peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Titus 1:4: “*To Titus, my true son in our common faith: **Grace and peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*”

Philemon 1:3: “***Grace to you and peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

4. “Grace” and “peace” were great, motivating themes in Paul’s ministry. Of these two, “grace” is perhaps the more difficult concept to pin down. As we shall see, a proper understanding of this concept is key to appreciating the Holy Spirit’s teaching in Galatians.

In the space below, give a short definition for “grace” that summarizes your understanding of this word.

You’ll have to wait for my definition of grace. In the meantime, stick out your neck and take a stab at coming up with your own definition. We’ll compare definitions later in the study, and then the real fun will start!

5. Consider the following verse:
1 Corinthians 15:10: “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His **grace** toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace** of God with me.*”

6. How does the definition you wrote in Question (3) fit into 1 Corinthians 15:10? That is, can you substitute your definition for grace directly into 1 Corinthians 15:10 and still have this verse make sense?

How does your definition do when substituted into 1 Corinthians 15:10?

7. The word that is translated “grace” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word “charis,” from which we get charity. Here is how Zondervan’s NIV Bible Software Library describes this word: “*The biblical concept of grace is much greater than is suggested in the common definition of “unmerited favor.” “Grace” is a word that expresses a radical view of life and of relationship with God. Grace teaches that God’s attitude toward us is one of acceptance and love; knowing God’s heart, we can “approach the throne of grace with confidence” (Heb 4:16) with every sin and need. Grace is a dramatic statement about the human condition. Each person is helpless, trapped in sin and incapable of pleasing God or winning his favor. Grace is a proclamation. It is the triumphant announcement that God in Christ has acted and has come to the aid of all who will trust him for their eternal salvation. Grace is a way of life. Relying totally on Jesus to work within us, we experience God’s own unlimited power, vitalizing us and enabling us to live truly good lives...grace is not simply a basic orientation to relationship with God. It is also a practical approach to living the Christian life. This aspect of grace helps us to understand the warning found in Gal 5:4, that*

those "who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; [they] have fallen away from grace." Any attempt by believers to struggle toward a life of goodness by works of the law means a return to the futile way of religion. It involves reliance on ourselves and an abandonment of reliance on Christ, who alone can enable us to live righteous lives. We cannot approach Christian experience from the old perspective, for grace and religion are contradictory. We can only live by full commitment to the way of grace and all that grace involves."

8. A possible definition of "grace" is "supernatural power untainted by human effort." Does this seem to you like an adequate definition of "grace?"
I like it! But then, I'm a little biased since it's my definition. What do YOU think?
9. In light of your study above, what do you think Paul meant when he wrote "Grace to you"?
I think he meant that he wanted his readers to experience God's grace in their lives. In other words, he wanted them to know what it meant to live a life according to "God's supernatural power untainted by human effort."

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 1:1-17, then pay special attention to Galatians 1:3-5.
2. According to verse 4, why did the Lord Jesus Christ "give Himself for our sins?"
"To rescue us out of this present evil age."
3. In your own words, explain what the following phrase means: "to rescue us from the present evil age."
I believe this phrase means that God will deliver us from the influence and power of sin that permeates this fallen world we live in.
4. Here is how one commentator explains the meaning of "to rescue us from the present evil age":
"The word "rescue" implies a "rescue from the power of." ... Believers are not [physically removed] out of the present evil world (though that will also be true eventually), but [rescued] from the power of evil and the values of the present world-system through the power of the risen Christ within the Christian. [SOURCE: *NIV Bible Commentary* in the *Zondervan Bible Reference Library* software]."
In what way is the world we now live in "evil?" Do you agree with that assessment? Why or why not?
The Bible teaches that this world we live in is dominated by the influence of Satan, who is called the "prince of this world" (John 14:30) and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); where "kingdom of the air" is a figure of speech meaning the atmosphere around the earth and all that lies within it. I Peter 5:8 states, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil,

prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Now consider the meaning of the word “evil”, which is defined as “causing ruin, injury, or pain” (www.dictionary.com).

Satan impacts the world through both overt and covert means. Overtly, he is active in destroying lives by leading people into destructive and self-destructive acts. Covertly, he sets up the system of incentives and disincentives which influence human behavior to become preoccupied with the things of this world, and distracted from the things of God.

Even good things like family, friends, career, personal achievement, etc., can ultimately lead to destructive outcomes if they take us away from God. If God is life, and knowing Him is our only avenue to eternal life; then anything that pulls us away from God ultimately causes us “ruin, injury, or pain”; i.e. is “evil.” In this sense, the world we live in is “evil,” and we are in great danger of falling under its influence.

1 John 2:15,16: “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

5. According to Galatians 1:5, what is the reason why God wants to “rescue us from the present evil age?”

Ultimately, the reason God wants to rescue me from the present evil age is for His glory (“to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”)

*In other words, while God has a love for me that makes my own love look pitiable and weak in comparison, the fact is that God wants to free me from the power of sin and make me holy because **THAT CONTRIBUTES TO HIS GLORY**. I am “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). My good works are to be displayed so that people will praise God (Matthew 5:16). So the idea is this: God frees me from sin and changes me to be holy. As others see the changes in me, they praise God, since He is the author of those changes. And God is glorified.*

6. Using the understanding you have gained from your study above, paraphrase Galatians 1:3-5 in your own words.

By agreement within the Trinity, God the Father sent God the Son (Jesus) to free us from the bondage of sin so that our lives would become living objects of grace, redounding to the glory of God the Father.

7. What is your attitude toward the world in which we live? Is it a desirable thing to be “rescued from it?” Why or why not?

Of course it is! It is the only way I can truly LIVE.

Day 6:

1. Read Galatians 1:1-17, then focus in on Galatians 1:6-10.

2. Central to Paul's charge is that the "gospel of Christ" is being distorted (cf. Galatians 1:7). In the space below, briefly explain what you think the "gospel of Christ" is. (HINT: The "gospel of Christ" is summarized in Galatians 1:4,5.)
The gospel of Christ is the good news that Jesus has come to free me from sin and transform me to become a holy God-worshipper.

3. According to Galatians 1:5, what is God's primary motivation for working in our lives?
God's glory.

4. Explain how the "gospel of Christ" glorifies God.
The "gospel of Christ" glorifies God because it is all about Him. He does the work. He makes the changes. He sets us free. He conforms us to the image of Christ. And it is all done in His power, by His grace ("God's supernatural power untainted by human effort"). There is no room for man to get any glory. Since it is all His work, it is all His glory.

5. To give you an idea of how seriously the Holy Spirit views the distortion of the gospel, consider this: The expression "accursed (NASB)/eternally condemned (NIV)" [cf. Galatians 1:8,9] comes from the Greek word "anathema," which can be interpreted "damnation."

In other words, the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying that anybody who distorts the "gospel of Christ" is deserving of being sent to hell forever. Is it just me, or does this seem a little harsh to you! Why do you think God considers this subject so important? (HINT: Remember that God's ultimate purpose in working in our lives is to glorify Himself – cf. Galatians 1:5.)

It might seem harsh -- until one remembers what life is all about. God created this world for His glory. Anything that distracts from His glory is thus diametrically opposed to God. Those who teach others -- under the guise of offering religious wisdom, of even being spokespeople for God! – something other than the gospel of Christ are working in direct opposition to God and therefore deserve to be sent to hell forever.

6. A possible explanation for why God is so harsh in His denunciation of those who propagate false gospels is that only the "gospel of Christ" gives God the glory that He deserves. All other "gospels" elevate the role of man and rob God of the credit for His work in our lives. What do you think about that? Could that explain why this issue is so important to God?
I couldn't agree more with this statement! Yes, I do think this is why this issue is so important to God.

7. What are some examples of "false gospels" that you are aware of today?
One kind of "false gospel" teaches that God exists to please man. That He is all about serving man to make man happy, healthy, wealthy, etc. This gospel completely upends the relationship between God and man by painting God as someone who exists to serve man. It is man who exists to serve God!

A second kind of “false gospel” is that which elevates the role of man in the work of God. To the extent man takes credit for God’s work, God is robbed of His rightful glory.

8. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.
Great stuff, huh? God’s Word is amazing. And it gets even better in the weeks ahead!

WEEK TWO: Galatians 1:13-2:10

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 1:13-2:10.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

1:13,14: Before his conversion, Paul was rapidly advancing within Judaism.

1:15-17: After his conversion, Paul went into seclusion in Arabia, and then moved to Syria.

1:18-24: Three years later, he made his first trip to Jerusalem – a brief visit with Peter and James to “get acquainted.”

2:1-5. Fourteen years after that, Paul traveled again to Jerusalem to confront the apostles over the issue of circumcision.

2:6-10. The Jerusalem leadership recognized the authenticity of Paul’s gospel and embraced him in fellowship.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 1:13-2:10.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

Your questions go here.

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?

Your observations go here. After the week is over, you might find it useful to compare your questions and observations with those of the study. That might help you to expand the kinds of questions and observations you come up with!

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 1:13-2:10.
2. What is the main point of 1:13-2:10? What was Paul trying to communicate to the Galatians by telling them this story?
The main point is that Paul’s teaching was divinely inspired -- authored by God, not men.

3. Why is this point important? In other words, why should it matter whether Paul did or not speak with the apostles in Jerusalem?

It was once said of John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist, that “he said some things that were new, and some things that were true. Unfortunately, the things that were true were not new, and the things that were new were not true.”

Paul taught many things that were “new.” If it could be argued that the “true” things that he taught he got from somebody else, but the “new” things were his own invention, the authority of his teaching would be nullified. Instead, Paul says that he learned none of his teaching from other men. It ALL came from God.

4. Paul comments in 1:15 that he was set apart by God for a special purpose from the time he was in his mother’s womb. Based on what you know about Paul, in what way is that true?

Several characteristics of Paul’s life uniquely equipped him for the ministry to which God appointed him. He was trained as a rabbi under Gamaliel, the foremost rabbinic scholar of his time. This gave him an unparalleled insight into the Old Testament. It also educated him in the give and take of rabbinic debate, which would equip him for presenting and defending the gospel. Paul was also a Roman citizen, which opened up doors to him that no other Jew would ever have had access to. Finally, his passion, his intelligence, his perseverance, and physical stamina were all God-given traits that proved indispensable in his ministry.

5. Think about your own life for a moment. Do you feel as though God has set you apart for a special purpose? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

This may be a tough question for you to answer at this point in your life. Years from now, Lord willing, when you better understand your calling and are engaged in your life’s ministry, you will be in a better position to see how God has built into your life the things you need to carry out the special purpose to which He has called you.

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 1:13-2:10.
2. To better understand the significance of Galatians 1:13-2:10, we are going to break down these verses into small sections. For each section below, write down the main point being made:

Galatians 1:13,14: *Paul’s life changed so much from the person he used to be.*

Galatians 1:15-17: *At the proper time, God revealed to Paul the person he was to be. He then spent three years “alone,” not in Jerusalem, but in Arabia and Damascus.*

Galatians 1:18-24: *After this time, Paul met briefly with Peter and James in Jerusalem, but that was the extent of his contact with the church leadership.*

Galatians 2:1-5: *Fourteen years later, Paul hit a crisis point when “false brothers” caused problems because Paul was not requiring Gentiles to follow the Law.*

Galatians 2:6-10: *Paul was vindicated in this conflict when the Jerusalem leadership recognized that his teaching was from God and embraced him in fellowship.*

3. Consider the following progression of thoughts:
- Look at how my life changed so dramatically all of a sudden
 - At first, I went into seclusion and didn't have contact with anybody
 - Three years later, I met Peter and James, but only to “get acquainted” – they didn't teach me anything
 - Fourteen years later, I was accused of teaching heresy because of my emphasis on grace, and so I went to confer with the leaders in the church to see which side of the issue they were on
 - The apostles acknowledged God's supernatural working in my life and embraced my gospel

In light of this progression of thoughts, can you now figure out the main point that Paul is making in Galatians 1:13-2:10? Do you see why it is so important?

Paul's main point was that his gospel was from God and not from men. The gist of the story is that Paul never had an opportunity to be instructed by the teaching leaders in the church -- who were located in Jerusalem -- since he had spent so little time in Jerusalem. Further, when he went to meet with the Jerusalem leadership to see where they stood with respect to grace, they embraced Paul's teaching, recognizing that his teaching was from God. This is a powerful argument that God, not Paul, was the author of Paul's gospel.

Left unstated is the possibility that Paul could have learned the gospel from someone outside of Jerusalem, say from Barnabas. But apparently, nobody viewed that as a serious possibility. Outside Jerusalem, it was clearly understood that Paul was the teacher, not the student; so that even Barnabas deferred to Paul when it came to teaching the gospel.

4. The change in Paul's life was a major “proof” of God's involvement in His life and a validation of the message He was giving testimony to. If you are a Christian, in what ways have you seen God change your life since you have trusted in Him, or while you have been growing in your relationship with Him? If you are not a Christian, what have been your impressions of the lives of the

Christians you have known? In your opinion have their lives helped to validate the message they believe?

The only answer that matters here is YOURS!

Day Five:

1. Consider the following scenario:

Imagine that you are an engineering student at college, and that for several years you have taken classes from the most brilliant, most dynamic, most compelling professor you have ever had. After class, this professor starts meeting with you and several other students and begins teaching you the design of a radical new machine that will transform society. The machine itself uses new technologies that defy established scientific principles, which causes your professor to be the source of much controversy.

Towards the end of your college career, your professor announces to you that He is God, and that He has chosen you for a special mission to take this machine to the world. Your professor makes a dramatic departure from the university and disappears. All of a sudden you and your team are in charge of finding a way of mass-producing this machine and getting people to use the new technology.

After several years you hear of another student, let's call him Paul, who claims to have invented a machine identical to yours. To the best of your knowledge, Paul never had any contact with your professor while he was teaching at your university. He claims that your professor appeared to him in a dream, and taught him the design of the machine. While there is no substantiated proof of this, it is widely known that Paul made a major life-change about the time he claims to have seen your professor in his dream.

Over the years, you and Paul have some brief contact, but your team and his team work largely independently. Finally, after several, relatively small production runs, you are ready to take the machine to mass-production. However, a crisis occurs on your design team, and Paul comes to your team to tell you that there is a flaw in your plans to mass-produce the machine.

Remarkably, Paul not only points out the design flaw that has crept into your plans, but is able to show you new functionalities of the machine that you never even knew it had the capacity to do. Thanks to Paul, you correct the mistake and you and Paul join forces to take this radical new machine to the world!

2. After the events described in (1), would you be convinced that Paul had, indeed, received his design instructions directly from your former professor?

Paul's success in identifying the design flaw corroborates his story that he received his instructions from my former professor so, yes, I would be convinced.

3. Would you be more willing to believe Paul's "theories," even if they sounded really strange to you?

Yes I would.

4. Can you see any parallels between this story and certain events that are described in the Bible? (^_^)

The charismatic professor/God represents Jesus. The “original design team” represents Jesus’ disciples, particularly Peter and James. Paul represents Paul! The “design flaw” represents the confrontation that Paul had with Peter and the Jerusalem leadership over issues involving law and grace. In the end, Paul’s position was vindicated and “his gospel” was affirmed as being from God.

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 1:13-2:10.
2. As we move into the next section of Galatians, the apostle Paul is going to share his “theory” about the Christian life. He is going to say that this theory is of the utmost importance. Without a proper appreciation of his “theory,” he is going to tell you that your Christian life is not going to “work.” In other words, he is going to say that while you might think that your “design” of the Christian life is correct, it is at risk of having a fatal flaw. This design flaw is so serious, it has the capacity to leave your Christian life completely powerless. Are YOU going to believe what the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is going to say? Why?
Well, when you put it to me that way, it seems like the answer is clear. I will believe!
3. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.
Nobody can answer this question but YOU!

WEEK THREE: Galatians 2:11-21

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 2:11-21.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

2:11-13. Paul recounts an incident in which Peter felt pressured by Jewish legalists to disassociate himself from Gentiles.

2;14. Paul publicly rebuked Peter for violating the truth of the gospel by making Gentiles adopt Jewish customs.

2:15,16. Man is not justified by works, but by faith in Christ.

2:17,18. If Christians sin, it's not because they haven't sufficiently followed the law, but because they are lawbreakers by nature.

2;19. Paradoxically, the purpose of the law is to cause one “to die to the law and live for God”

2:20a. Christians have died and been born again, so that Christ lives in them.

2:20b,21. The Christian life is lived by faith, through grace, otherwise Christ's death means nothing.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 2:11-21.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

Thinking of questions is a great way to interact with Scripture. What questions did you come up with?

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?

Did you find anything in particular unusual or noteworthy in this week's study?

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 2:11-14.
2. For what, specifically, did Paul criticize Peter? (HINT: It was NOT for separating himself from the Gentiles.)

Check out Galatians 2:14: When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you

live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

From this we can conclude that Paul was criticizing Peter for trying to impose Jewish law on Gentile Christians. This suggests that the reason Peter "held himself aloof" (NASB) from the Gentile Christians was because they were not following the law.

NOTE: Did you catch the fact that Paul criticized Peter for not living "in line with the truth of the gospel?" From this we can conclude that when Paul speaks of "the gospel," he means something more than how to become a Christian. "The gospel" must also have something to do with how one should live his/her life after they become a Christian.

3. Why do you think that Paul reacted so strongly and publicly in confronting Peter?
We can only speculate about why Paul reacted as he did. One possibility is that Paul recognized the danger, and the appeal, of restricting Christianity to consist primarily of how one can have their sins forgiven and go to heaven. This would essentially reduce Christianity to Judaism "with a Jesus face."

In my opinion, this is a seductive heresy which has affected much of Christianity today. That is, while most Christian churches do not practice the dietary and religious calendar of Judaism, they teach the requirement of the moral law of Judaism and the necessity of man keeping that law. In practice, once a person becomes a Christian, he/she is taught in many churches to live like Old Testament Jews. I believe Paul viewed this as gutting the essence of Christianity, and thus considered this teaching heresy.

Why do YOU think Paul reacted so strongly?

4. Compare Acts 11:1-18 with Galatians 2:11-14. What do these passages tell us about Peter? (NOTE: The events of Acts 11 happen BEFORE the events of Galatians 2 chronologically.)

God had previously commanded Peter, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 11:9b). The implication was that it is God who makes a person "clean;" a person does not become clean by following the Law. By refusing to associate with Gentiles who did not follow the Law, Peter was reinforcing the heresy that man becomes holy by following a set of rules. Thus, these verses teach us that Peter had forgotten, or was confused about, the instruction he had earlier received from God.

5. Peter seemed to be a slow learner on this issue of how the church should deal with the Gentiles. Do you think Paul is too harsh here in his confrontation of Peter? Why or why not? Do you see any applications in the way Paul interacted with Peter for your life today?

It's hard to write off Paul's rebuke of Peter as Paul just having a bad day! In fact, this battle with living by law is one that Paul fought for much of his ministry. I conclude from this that the Holy Spirit was behind Paul's confrontation with Peter.

One possible application is that God's truth is sufficiently important to "fight about." That is, we do not have the liberty to embrace false gospels for the sake of promoting "harmony" or "unity."

6. In Galatians 2:14, Paul charges that Peter "compelled the Gentiles to live like Jews" (NASB)"forced Gentiles to follow Jewish customs" (NIV). What "Jewish custom" was Paul referring to? (HINT: See verse 12.)

Verse 12 states that Peter was "afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group." This suggests that the circumcision group was telling the Gentile Christians that they could not be "clean" unless they were circumcised; and until they were circumcised, they could not join the fellowship of believers.

7. Read Galatians 2:11-21.

8. In the space below, summarize Galatians 2:15,16 without using the words "faith" or "law."

A paraphrase might go something like this: "We who are Jews know that following a set of rules does not make one righteous. We tried that and it didn't work! Instead, we rely solely on Jesus to give us the righteousness we cannot achieve by our own efforts. That is the only way anybody can become righteous."

9. Read Galatians 2:17,18.

10. One (loose) interpretation of verses 17 and 18 is the following:
The Christian life is all about "faith." However, critics point out that Christians continue to sin. They say that this is clear evidence that "faith" is not enough -- unless one wants to argue that Christ is okay with sin. I reply, "Absolutely not!" The fact that Christians continue to sin only proves what the gospel has been saying all along: "Everybody has a sinful nature and needs to be delivered from its power."

What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it accurately represents the main ideas of verses 17-18?

I do! What about you?

11. In 2:17-18 Paul takes a criticism of Christianity (the sin of its followers) and turns it into an apologetic for the Christian faith! How does the sin in YOUR life remind you of the central truths of Christianity?

It poignantly reminds me of my inadequacy to make myself good by my own efforts. Accordingly, my sin highlights the reality that I need help from Jesus.

12. Read Galatians 2:19.

13. One possible interpretation of verse 19 is the following:
I learned that following the law could not produce spiritual life in me, and this insight became the secret that allowed me to live for God!

What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it accurately represents the main ideas of verses 19?

What do YOU think?

14. Read Galatians 2:20-21.
15. Summarize what the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying in verses 20-21 without using the words “faith,” “grace,” or “law.”

The old “me” is no longer who I really am. I am now a new person who has Jesus inside of me. I now know that the “secret” of living a holy life consists of counting on Jesus to live His life through me. I no longer try to produce righteousness in me by following a set of rules. If I did that, I would be making Jesus’ death and resurrection irrelevant, since I would not be availing myself of what He has provided for me.

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 2:11-21, then focus in on 2:20.
2. In 2:20, Paul closely ties the life of the Christian to the life of Jesus Christ.
- 2A. Elaborate on the meaning of the following statement: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

While I might look like the same old guy, and sin like the same old guy, that’s not who I REALLY am anymore. That person no longer lives, but a new me has risen up to take his place. This new me, the REAL me, is a new “creature” (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), intimately connected with the Spirit of Jesus Christ who lives in me.
- 2B. According to this verse, what enables Christ to live out His life through the Christian?

Faith enables Christ to live out His life through the Christian.
3. Consider the following thoughts about Galatians 2:11-21:

In these verses, the Holy Spirit through Paul states that there is a conflict between the “gospel” and a system of righteousness that is based upon following the law. Associated with the gospel are words like “justified,” “faith,” “grace”, “Christ lives in me,” and “righteousness.” In contrast to these are words like “living like a Jew/following Jewish customs,” “works,” “law,” and “Christ died for nothing.”

Do you agree with this analysis? Do you feel like you understand what the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying here?

I agree with this analysis! How about you?
4. Do you believe Galatians 2:11-21 refers primarily to how to become a Christian? Or do you think it is primarily concerned with how to grow after one becomes a Christian?

It is clear that Galatians 2:20 refers to “how to grow after one becomes a Christian,” because Paul says that the life which he NOW lives in the flesh, he lives by faith (NASB) and, clearly, Paul was a Christian at the time he wrote this. Accordingly, when Paul speaks of faith elsewhere in Galatians 2:11-21, there is no reason to suppose that he is referring primarily to how one becomes a Christian.

5. In the space below, briefly describe what a person must do to become a Christian.
To become a Christian, a person must believe that he is incapable of being righteous on his own, and he must rely entirely on Jesus to forgive his sins and produce righteousness in him.

6. In the space below, briefly describe what a person must do to spiritually grow after they become a Christian.
To grow spiritually after becoming a Christian, a person must believe that he is incapable of being righteous on his own, and he must rely entirely on Jesus to forgive his sins and produce righteousness in him.
Colossians 2:6: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

Day Five:

NOTE: Today’s study is primarily intended to better understand what is meant by the word “justify,” which is a key concept in the Book of Galatians.

1. Read Galatians 2:16.

2. Clearly, the central idea in Galatians 2:15,16 is that one becomes “justified” by “faith in Christ” and not by “works.” Circle the choice below that comes closest to describing what it means to “be justified”:
 - a) to have one’s sins forgiven
 - b) to live righteously
 - c) other (please describe in the space below):
My answer is given below. What is your answer?

3. *Biblical Note: The Greek word that is translated “justified” in Galatians 2:16 is derived from the Greek root “dikaioō” and is related to the noun “dikaioōnē”, which is almost always translated “righteousness,” as it is in Galatians 2:21. Here is how one commentator explains this:
“The Greek verb dikaioō is translated ‘to justify.’ We have no verb form in English that means ‘to righteous.’ “
[SOURCE: <http://home.messiah.edu/~mcosby/BIL105.htm>]
In other words, translators use the word “justify” to translate “dikaioō” because there is no corresponding English word for “to righteous”. A better translation than “justify” would be “righteous-ize;” that is, to make righteous – if only this word existed in English. Thus, as you wrestle through what the Holy Spirit is teaching, you will do well to think “righteous-ize” or “make righteous” whenever you see the word “justify.”*

4. Consider the following elaboration of the word “justify:”
Just as “salvation” has both a past, a present, and a future sense to it, so “justify” also has three (completely analogous) senses:
Justification (past): The believer is made righteous before God the moment he/she receives a new nature when they become a Christian.
Justification (present): Despite receiving a new nature, the Christian continues to sin because he/she possesses a sin nature. Yet God enables the believer through the indwelling Christ to live righteously on a daily basis.
Justification (future): One day, the Christian will be “glorified”. He/she will have their old sin nature stripped from them and will stand in the presence of God completely “righteous,” devoid of sin.
In other words, God is engaged in the process of making Christians completely righteous. First, He gives them a new, righteous nature. Then, He enables them to live righteously in this life.¹ Finally, upon their death and subsequent resurrection, they have their old, sin natures completely removed so they can stand sinless in God’s presence.
Do you have any thoughts about the preceding elaboration? Does this make sense to you?
It does make sense to me! How about to you?

5. Go back and look at your answer to Question (2). Then consider the following:
The answer to Question (2) above is both (a) AND (b). However, since Paul is writing to Christians, when the Holy Spirit through Paul speaks of being “justified” He primarily intends the “present” sense of being righteous; namely, living righteously. Thus, the main point of Galatians is about how the Christian can live a “holy life,” overcoming the power of sin and living righteously for the purpose of bringing glory to God (cf. Galatians 1:4,5).
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Briefly elaborate your thoughts in the space below.
I like it.

6. Based upon Galatians 2:16 and the preceding study, fill in the following blank:

Christians grow spiritually by faith in Christ, not by observing the law.

Day Six:

NOTE: Today’s study is primarily intended to better understand what is meant by “observing the law,” which is a key concept in the Book of Galatians.

1. Read Galatians 2:21.
2. In the space below, reword the phrase “if righteousness comes (NASB)/could be gained (NIV) through the Law” -- without using either the word “law” or “works.”
“if righteousness could be gained by following a set of rules”.

¹ This “present” sense of “justification” is frequently called “sanctification” in Christian literature.

3. Here is how one commentator explains what the Holy Spirit through Paul means by “law”:
“Paul's emphasis here is not on the Jewish law (there is no article in Greek with the word "law"), though it includes it, but rather ON ANY SYSTEM OF ATTEMPTING TO PLEASE GOD BY GOOD DEEDS [emphasis added].”
[SOURCE: *The NIV Bible Commentary* in the *NIV Bible Reference Library* software.]
In other words, when the Holy Spirit through Paul speaks of “law,” He is referring to any system by which a person attempts to become “holier” by doing certain things. In the space below, identify some things that people do to become “holier?”
What things do YOU find people doing to become “holier?”

4. Here is what we have learned so far in our Galatians study:
Living righteously/being holy/becoming a better Christian can only be done by “faith in Christ,” not by doing a certain set of good deeds.
Do you feel like you understand this truth? If not, what do you find unclear or confusing about it?
Write down any questions or confusions you have about this. We will return to this topic frequently, so hopefully some of your questions/confusions will be addressed later in the study.

5. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.
Your answer goes here.

WEEK FOUR: Galatians 3:1-5

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 3:1-5.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

- 3:1. Paul is incredulous that the Galatians could have left the gospel of the crucified Christ.*
- 3:2. Paul wants to know how the Galatians began their Christian lives.*
- 3:3,4. Paul asks why the Galatians are trying to live their Christian lives different from how they first began.*
- 3:5. Paul asks on what basis is God currently working in their lives? Because of their faith? Or because they follow the law?*

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 3:1-5.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
Your questions go here.
3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?
Your observations go here.

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 3:1-5.
Biblical Note: Verse 1 is a little unclear in the NASB and the NIV translations. The New Living Translation better captures the true meaning of the verse. It says, “Oh foolish Galatians! What magician has cast an evil spell on you? For you used to see the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death as clearly as though I had shown you a signboard with a picture of Christ dying on the cross.” The emphasis here is not that they witnessed the crucifixion with their own eyes, but that Paul had been very clear that the gospel Paul preached centered around the crucifixion of Christ.
2. Is the Holy Spirit through Paul speaking to Christians or non-Christians in these verses? How do you know?
He is speaking to Christians. We know this because the people he addresses had “received the Spirit” (Galatians 3:2), had “began with the Spirit”

(Galatians 3:3), and had been “given the Spirit” (Galatians 3:5). Only Christians can be said to have received the Holy Spirit.

3. What is the primary subject of Galatians 3:1-5? Circle the best answer, then explain your answer in the space below.
 - a) The primary subject is that one becomes a Christian by faith, not by following “the law.”
 - b) *The primary subject is that one lives the Christian life in exactly the same way that one becomes a Christian – by faith, not by following “the law.”***
 - c) None of the above.
The primary subject of Galatians 3:1-5 is how a Christian should live their life. It is all about continuing to live the Christian life in the same manner that one started.
4. Read Galatians 3:3.
5. Complete the following sentence based on Galatians 3:3. Write in plain English, without using the words “perfected,” “attain your goal,” “flesh,” or “human effort.”

Having begun by the Spirit, are you now ***trying to grow spiritually by your own exertions to be a better Christian?***

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 3:1-5.
2. (Review from Week3/Day4/Question5.) In the space below, briefly describe what a person must do to become a Christian.
To become a Christian, a person must believe that he is incapable of being righteous on his own, and he must rely entirely on Jesus to forgive his sins and produce righteousness in him.
3. (Review from Week3/Day4/Question6.) In the space below, briefly describe what a person must do to spiritually grow after they become a Christian.
To grow spiritually after becoming a Christian, a person must believe that he is incapable of being righteous on his own, and he must rely entirely on Jesus to forgive his sins and produce righteousness in him.
***Colossians 2:6:* “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”**
4. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 3:3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh(NASB)/human effort(NIV)?” (NOTE: The way the grammar sits in 3:3, the expected answer is an emphatic NO!)

Colossians 2:6: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him...”

Hebrews 11:6a: “And without faith it is impossible to please God...”

- Review your answers to Questions (2) and (3) above. How do the verses you just looked at impact how you would answer those questions? After looking at these verses, should there be any difference in your answers? Why or why not?

I believe that the Bible teaches that the way a person grows as a Christian is fundamentally the same way that he/she became a Christian – by faith. In other words, a Christian does not grow spiritually by what they DO, but by what (or in whom) they BELIEVE.

- Given your current understanding, explain what it means to live your Christian life by “faith,” as opposed to following “the law.”

I believe it means that (i) I embrace as true the biblical teaching that I am helpless to produce righteousness on my own; and (ii) I rely on Jesus to produce that righteousness in my life, just as I relied on Him to forgive my sins.

Day Five:

- Read Galatians 3:1-5.
- Observe the following contrasts that the Holy Spirit through Paul draws in these verses:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Path #1</i>	<i>Path #2</i>
Verse 2	“works of the law” (NASB) “observing the law” (NIV)	“hearing with faith” (NASB) “believing what you heard” (NIV)
Verse 3	“by the flesh(NASB)/human effort(NIV)”	“by the Spirit”
Verse 5	“works of the law” (NASB) “observe the law” (NIV)	“hearing with faith” (NASB) “believe what you heard” (NIV)

NOTE: Galatians 3:1-5 contrasts two paths to living the Christian life. One path consists of works/law/flesh/human effort. The other path consists of faith/belief/Spirit. Today’s study is primarily intended to begin the process of understanding what it means to live one’s spiritual life by “observing the law.” Tomorrow’s study will explore the path of living one’s life by faith.

- Review the Week3/Day6 study.

4A. As we shall see, when Paul wrote about “observing the law,” he had in mind the Jewish custom of circumcision. Obviously, circumcision is not much of an issue today (perhaps precisely because of the Book of Galatians!). Nevertheless, the principle of attempting to become more religious/spiritual by following a prescribed set of rules is still an issue today – maybe far more than we realize!

4B. In your own words, what do you think it means to live one’s Christian life by “observing the law.”

I think it means trying to make myself grow spiritually by doing a set of “religious things.” Things like prayer, Bible study, sharing my faith, going to a Christian conference or summer project, etc.

5. Identify some things you do in your life to become a better Christian/more religious. Do you think this is what the Holy Spirit/Paul had in mind by “observing the law?” Explain why or why not.

What things do YOU do?

6. Christians are often exhorted to do more Bible study, pray more, share their faith, increase their financial giving, help the poor, go to a Christian conference, go on a summer project, become a missionary, go to an “unreached people group”, etc. Would you say that these are examples of “observing the law?” Explain why or why not.

I think these CAN be examples of “observing the law.” Take Bible study, for example. The difference between doing Bible study “in the flesh/by human effort” and doing Bible study “by faith/by the Spirit” lies in what I believe.

If I believe that Bible study is like physical exercise – you put your time in, you work hard at it, and you become “fit” – then Bible study has become for me a form of “observing the law.” This type of Bible study doesn’t require any input from God. It is done in human effort with the implicit understanding that I can produce righteousness by something that I do.

Alternatively, if I believe that (i) I desperately need to know God, (ii) I am inadequate to understand God in my own power, (iii) I need God to reveal Himself to me supernaturally, and (iv) I count on the Holy Spirit to illuminate spiritual truths as I study the Bible, then I am studying the Bible “by faith/by the Spirit.” This type of Bible study requires God to do the work. Oh sure, I open up my Bible, and I work through my study. But as I do that, I know that the real work is being done by God. He is the one who opens up my understanding. He is the one who will produce fruit in me. My job is to believe Him to do that.

To put a different spin on it, when I do Bible study “in the flesh/by human effort,” I see this activity as something that I do for God. In contrast, when I do Bible study “in faith/by the Spirit,” I am driven by a sense of need for God, and I see my study of God’s Word as SOMETHING GOD DOES FOR ME.

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 3:1-5.

2. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 3:3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh(NASB)/human effort(NIV)?”

Colossians 2:6: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him...”

Hebrews 11:6a: “And without faith it is impossible to please God...”

3. It is relatively easy to understand that one becomes a Christian through faith alone, apart from works (cf. Romans 3:28): There is nothing that a person can do to earn forgiveness for their sins. The only “path” for forgiveness is to completely trust that Jesus’ death on the cross was sufficient to pay the penalty for one’s sins.

According to the verses above, the Christian life is lived in exactly the same way – by completely trusting in Jesus to make us better Christians. In your own words, explain how to live one’s Christian life by “hearing with faith.”

Let’s take another example. My first significant Christian fellowship came with a group called Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). CCC placed a strong emphasis on sharing the gospel with non-Christians. I didn’t particularly enjoy sharing my faith, and I found it difficult for me to do. However, I was convinced this was something I was “supposed to do” therefore I made myself do it. I felt burdened by the sense that I “had to do this for God.” Looking back, in my opinion, I was sharing the gospel out of a motivation to “observe the law.”

Today, I still share my faith with non-Christians. However, I no longer view this as something I must do to please God, like one of the 10 Commandments of the Old Testament. For the most part (not always!), I share the gospel by faith. That is, (i) I believe the description of humankind presented in the Bible – that every person is inherently sinful and destined for hell unless he/she is rescued by God; (ii) I believe that God’s Spirit resides within me, and that, at the core of my being, my spirit rejoices to do God’s will; and (iii) I believe that I am incapable of getting anybody to heaven – only God can supernaturally convert a person to become a Christian.

Seen from this latter perspective, sharing the gospel really isn’t different than my action of praying to receive Christ when I became a Christian. While there is an activity associated with it (sharing the gospel with a non-Christian/prayer), that activity is motivated by faith. The “essence” of that activity is not the action, but the belief that underlies it. And, the “goal” of that activity is something that can only be accomplished by God, not by my efforts.

4. The Book of Galatians presents a radical new “path” for spirituality: Christian growth is not based upon what we do (“observing the law”), but on what we believe (“hearing with faith”).

How do you reconcile this with exhortations “to do more Bible study, pray more, share one’s faith, increase one’s financial giving, help the poor, go to a Christian conference, go on a summer project, become a missionary, go to an ‘unreached people group’, etc.?” Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.²

These are all good things. However, REAL Christianity does not consist of the doing of good things. It consists of allowing God to do good things by living out His life through the life of the Christian. God’s responsibility is “to do.” My primary responsibility as a Christian is “to believe.”

5. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.
Pretty cool stuff, huh? What impacted YOU the most this week?

² This truth is hard to grasp, so don’t worry if you find yourself confused about what it means to “live by faith.” Rather, be thankful that God’s Word is so rich and deep that it contains many wonderful “surprises” to those who seek to better know the infinite, eternal God of the Universe. We shall return to this subject frequently in the weeks ahead. – And, yes, we shall reconcile the teaching of Galatians to the “faith without works is dead” teaching in the Book of James; cf. James 2:24-26.

WEEK FIVE: Galatians 3:6-18

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 3:6-18.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

3:6-9. Abraham is an example of obtaining righteousness by faith.

3:10. Living by law puts one under a curse.

3:11. One cannot be “righteous-ized” by following the law.

3:12. The law is different than faith.

3:13,14. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by enabling us to receive the Spirit through faith.

3:15-18. Since the law came after Abraham, it did not set aside the covenant of faith that God made with him and “his seed.”

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 3:6-18.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

Here’s a thought: After you finish this week’s study, you might compare the questions you came up with, with the questions asked by this study. That might help you to ask more – and different kinds of – questions as you continue your study of God’s Word.

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?

Here’s another thought: After you finish this week’s study, you might compare your observations with the main points emphasized in this study. That might give you some additional ideas of what to look for as you continue your study in the weeks ahead.

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 3:6-9.
2. Consider the following verses:
Romans 4:1-3,13-15a: “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about -- but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’... It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he

would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath.”

Biblical Note #1: Abraham is considered the “father of the Jews.” His story is recorded in Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Abraham was born in Mesopotamia. In Genesis 12:1,2, the Bible records that God spoke to Abram/Abraham, and told him to go to a different country where he would become a great nation:

Genesis 12:1,2: *“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives, And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing.”*

Abraham was 75 years old at the time and had no children. God continued to tell Abraham that he would have children, which would be the start of a great nation (i.e. Israel). Abraham believed God, and the Bible says this act of faith caused God to make Abraham “righteous.”

Genesis 15:1-6: *“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.’ And Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’ Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”*

At age 100, Abraham became the father of a son. This son, Isaac, would later also have a son, Jacob. Jacob, in turn, had many sons. His sons became the “patriarchs” of the nation of Israel, from which the 12 tribes of Israel were formed. Thus God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled.

Biblical Note #2: Three times in the Book of Genesis, God tells Abraham that he will “make him a great nation”, “make his descendants as the dust of the earth”, and “make his descendants as many as the stars of the heavens.” The third time, in Genesis 15:6, it is recorded that Abraham “believed” God. This is the FIRST instance in the Bible where it is recorded that someone “believed” God. Interestingly, Genesis 15:6 is also the FIRST instance where an individual is called “righteous” in Scripture.

3. In Galatians 3:6, the Holy Spirit through Paul tells us to “consider Abraham.” What specifically is it about Abraham that greatly bolsters the argument that righteousness comes by faith, not by following the law? In other words, if we can be persuaded that Abraham achieved his righteousness by faith, how does that prove that that is also how WE can achieve righteousness in our lives?

Galatians 3:6-10 introduces the argument that “righteousness by faith” is not a new thing. It goes back to Abraham, the progenitor of the Jews. The implied argument goes like this: Abraham achieved righteousness by believing in God. We are Abraham’s direct spiritual descendants. Therefore, we also can achieve righteousness by believing in God.

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 3:10-14.
2. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 3:10: “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”

Romans 4:14,15a: “For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath.”

3. What is the “curse/wrath” referred to in the verses above?

My answer is given below. What is YOUR answer?

4. Do you think the “curse” mentioned in Galatians 3:10-14 and the “wrath” spoken of in Romans 4:14,15a refer solely to the eternal punishment that awaits those who have not had their sins forgiven? Could it also refer to Christians who attempt to live their lives by “following the law” rather than by faith? Explain your answer in the space below.

It is my understanding that, in the context of Galatians 3, the “curse” refers to Christians who attempt to live their lives by “following the law” rather than living by faith. I base this on two things.

First, Paul is writing to Christians. If his argument is intended to emphasize the costs of “following the law” rather than living by faith, this “curse” must refer to something that they should want to avoid. It wouldn’t make sense to be referring to eternal punishment since Christians are already guaranteed to avoid eternal punishment by virtue of having their sins forgiven.

Second, we know that believers will face a severe judgment in which their sins will be dealt with (more on “believer’s judgment” below). It makes sense to equate this “curse” with that severe judgment.

5. Consider the following verses:

John 15:5,6: [Jesus speaking] “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, **and they are burned.**”

1 Corinthians 3:11-15: “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation

*with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and **the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work**. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."*

2 Corinthians 5: 9,10: *"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

Hebrews 11:6a: *"And without faith it is impossible to please God."*

6. Combine what you have learned from Question 4 and the verses in Question 5. These passages indicate a judgment for believers. What type of thing will be judged by God in the believer's life (note especially the context in Galatians 3)? How does this reconcile with Romans 8:1 and other verses which say there is "No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"?

It is my understanding that Christians will be judged for the things they have done "in the flesh," apart from "faith in Christ." Their "flesh" will be "burned up" at the "judgment seat of Christ," leaving their regenerated new natures.

When Romans 8:1 says there "Is no condemnation" for Christians, it is my understanding that Scripture is making a distinction between the Christian's old and new natures. When I sin by acting out of the flesh/human effort, that is not really me doing that. Romans 7:20 states, "...if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." That old nature will be condemned, and destroyed, at the judgment seat of Christ. But since that old nature is not really me, Scripture can say that there is no condemnation for "me." The real me, the new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), will not be condemned. Rather, it will be set free to worship God eternally in heaven, no longer constrained by the bonds of sin.

7. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 1:6-9: *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be **eternally condemned!** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be **eternally condemned!**"*
8. Based upon the preceding study, how serious an offense is it to attempt to become a better Christian/more religious by "following the law?" Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

It is REALLY serious. The combination of (i) Paul's harsh condemnation of those who teach something other than the gospel of grace in Christ, and (ii) the fact that a severe judgment awaits Christians who do not live by faith, but live out of the flesh; underscore how significant an offense God views "following the law."

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 3:10-14.
2. Consider the following verse:
Galatians 3:12a: *"The law is not based on faith."*
3. In the space below, list four behaviors that in your mind are most closely associated with godly living (e.g., sexual purity, sobriety, Bible study, prayer, going to church, being a missionary, etc.). Explain how one could do each of these things according to "law/human effort." Then write what you think it would mean to live these things out by faith.

I previously discussed the issues of Bible study and evangelism, and contrasted doing these "according to the law" and "by faith." So let me take 4 other "good things" from the list above: (i) sexual purity, (ii) prayer, (iii) going to church, and (iv) being a missionary. Space constraints will force me to be brief, but hopefully a comparison of my answers with yours will spur productive thinking on this subject.

BEHAVIOR	BY LAW	BY FAITH
1. <i>sexual purity</i>	<i>Sexual purity "by law" consists of me attempting to achieve righteousness by something I do NOT do. When I am able to maintain "sexual purity," I consider myself as "being spiritual." When I mess up, I consider myself spiritually "dirty" and inadequate before God. My spiritual condition is defined by how well I do in this area.</i>	<i>By faith I recognize that I am hopelessly lost as a sinner, whether or not I remain sexually pure. Even if I resist temptation, the real problem is my heart. By faith I recognize that the only way my heart can be changed is through a miracle from God, not as a result of anything I can do. And by faith I trust that Christ living in me will enable me to be holy in this area of my life.</i>

BEHAVIOR	BY LAW	BY FAITH
2. <i>prayer</i>	<i>Good Christians pray. Therefore, if I want to be good, I need to get better in this area of my life. I discipline myself to pray so that I can grow in spirituality and be more like the person God wants me to be.</i>	<i>By faith I recognize that I can do no good thing on my own. The only way something good can come out of my life is if God does it. Therefore I go to God in prayer, confessing my inadequacies, acknowledging that God is the “doer” – not me, and believing that my prayers make a difference because God has told me they do.</i>
3. <i>going to church</i>	<i>I view going to church as something I do for God. It is one of the things on my “spiritual to-do list.” I measure spiritual growth by how many things I can check off my list.</i>	<i>I view going to church as something God does for me. I recognize that God’s Spirit in me needs the instruction, fellowship, and service that come from church. By faith, I recognize the need I have for spiritual help, and by faith I count on God to meet that need via the “body of Christ.”</i>
4. <i>being a missionary</i>	<i>I believe that people’s eternal destinies hinge on whether I am dutiful in taking the gospel to the lost. I commit my life to evangelism in a desperate race against time, knowing that for every opportunity I waste, a soul may languish in hell for eternity.</i>	<i>By faith I recognize that the only hope for the lost is Jesus. However, I also recognize that everybody who has “been appointed” for salvation will end up in heaven. It does not depend on me. By faith I desire to be used by God for His glory in saving souls, not because it all hangs on me, but because I believe the Spirit of God in me rejoices to participate in the building up of His Kingdom.</i>

What applications of “law” and “grace” did YOU come up with? How do your answers compare to mine?

- 4A. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 3:13,14: “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*”
- 4B. In what way does Jesus enable us to avoid the curse of the Law?
Jesus enables us to avoid the curse of the Law because His death on the cross broke the power of sin over my life. His death won my freedom.
- 4C. Jesus does more than just enable us to avoid the curse, He makes it possible for something else . . . what is it?
Jesus enables Christians to live righteously because He lives inside them and empowers them with His life.
- 5A. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 2:20: “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God...*”
2 Corinthians 5:17: “*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”
2 Corinthians 5:21: “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*”
Philippians 3:9: “*and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.*”
Colossians 1:25-27: [Paul speaking] “*Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”
- 5B. How do these verses relate to your answer to (4C) above?
These verses support my answer to (4C).

Day Six:

NOTE: Having decisively argued that God first established righteousness on the basis of faith, the Holy Spirit through Paul now addresses some questions about the law. The first question is, Did the later addition of the law change the fact that God awards

righteousness on the basis of faith, not works? The second question is, What is the purpose of the law? We take up the first question in today's study. We address the second question in next week's study.

1. Read Galatians 3:15-18.
2. Circle the correct answer to the following question:
According to Galatians 3:15-18, the answer to the question, "Did the later addition of the law change the fact that God awards righteousness on the basis of faith, not works?" is...

YES

NO

- 3A. Consider the following verses:

Genesis 22:17,18a: [God speaking to Abraham] *"Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."*

Galatians 3:16: *"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ."*

Matthew 1:1: *"The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham."*

- 3B. Do you have any idea what Galatians 3:16 means? Elaborate your answer in the space below.

My answer is given below. What did YOU get?

- 3C. One possible interpretation of Galatians 3:16 is that the promises God made to Abraham were extended to "his seed," namely Jesus. This has two implications. First, the principle of righteousness by faith did not just apply to Abraham. Rather, it was intended to apply through Christ to all people ("in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"). Chronologically, the promise was given to Abraham around 1900 B.C. The Law was not given until around 1450 B.C. and Jesus would not be born until 4 B.C. Therefore, since the Law comes in between the promise for righteousness that was extended to Abraham and its fulfillment in Christ, then the giving of the Law must have been for another purpose than to make us righteous. As previously mentioned, the "other" reason for the giving of the Law will be addressed next week.

===== | Abraham | ===== | The giving of the law | ===== | Jesus | =====

The second implication is that the promises that God made to Abraham, which includes righteousness and the Holy Spirit, are in Christ. That is,

Christians have access to these promises only through the person of Jesus. With respect to this second implication, consider (again) the following verses:

Galatians 3:13,14: “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--in order that **in Christ Jesus** the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*”

What do you think of this interpretation? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

It works for me. What do YOU think?

4. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.
This is where you say how God's Word has touched your life this week.

WEEK SIX: Galatians 3:19-29

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 3:19-29.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

3:19a. The law was given because of sin.

3:19b,20. The law is different from “the promise” because it came through a mediator.

3:21,22. The law cannot produce righteousness.

3:23-25. The law was designed to lead us to Jesus.

3:26-29. There is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, since all receive their righteousness through Jesus.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 3:19-29.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

What questions came to mind as you read through this week’s Scripture?

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?

What struck YOU as being interesting or noteworthy in the verses you read for this week’s study?

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 3:19,20.
2. The preceding verses indicate that while the Old Testament contains many commandments, the associated “system for righteous living” based on law was (i) added to highlight man’s sins and (ii) intended to be temporary.
- 2A. Underline the section below that indicates that the law was added to highlight man’s sins.

Galatians 3:19,20: “What, then, was the purpose of the law? **IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS** until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.”

- 2B. Underline the section below that indicates that the law was intended to be temporary.

Galatians 3:19,20: “What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions **UNTIL THE SEED TO WHOM THE PROMISE REFERRED HAD COME**. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.”

3. How about the section that says, “The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.” What can this possibly mean?

It is likely that the Holy Spirit through Paul is contrasting the giving of the law (which was given to the Jewish people through the “mediator” Moses) and the giving of the promises (which was given directly to Abraham by God).

The giving of the law to Moses, part of the “Mosaic covenant,” was a “conditional covenant.” This covenant was an agreement between two parties (God and the Jewish people, mediated by Moses), in which the associated blessings depended on the Jewish people upholding their end of the bargain, with corresponding punishments if they failed.

In contrast, God’s promises to Abraham, known as the “Abrahamic covenant,” constituted an “unconditional covenant.” The blessings associated with this covenant did not depend on Abraham. God unilaterally committed to fulfilling the covenant independent of Abraham’s actions.

In other words, the Holy Spirit through Paul is making the point that the giving of the law was a different kind of covenant than the giving of the promises. What do you think about this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you?

Tough passage – but this interpretation works for me.

4. This teaching about “conditional” and “unconditional” covenants may be new to you. Consider the following discussion of the Abrahamic covenant:

“The Abrahamic Covenant has been described as “unconditional.” This means that God’s promises will be without qualification; that is, that the covenant promises will be completely fulfilled in spite of man’s success or failure to keep whatever conditions or commandments may be contained in the covenant. Fulfillment is dependent upon God and not man. God intends to fulfill the terms of the covenant regardless of whether man fulfills his obligations. Abraham may have had some obligations to fulfill, but even if Abraham failed to fulfill those obligations, God’s promises to him would still have been kept.

In Genesis 15 animals were slaughtered so as to solemnize a blood covenant. Afterwards the animals were cut up and its pieces were lined up in two parallel rows....In the culture of that day, if the contract being made was a conditional covenant, there were certain things that the parties to the agreement would do. In a situation like that described in Genesis 15, if a conditional covenant were being made, both parties making the contract would walk together between the pieces of the animals (e.g., Jeremiah 34:18-19). This meant that the

terms of the covenant would be mandatory on both parties. If one party became guilty of violating any single term of the covenant, it would free the other party from the necessity of fulfilling his own promises contained in the covenant.

But in Genesis 15, Abraham and God did not walk together between the pieces of the animals. God put Abraham in a deep sleep and only God -- in the form of a smoking oven and a flaming torch (Genesis 15:17) -- walked between the pieces of the animals. This meant that the fulfillment of the covenant was based purely upon God's grace, in spite of how often Abraham or his descendants may fail. Abraham could not be a participant in the covenant, but could only be a recipient of a covenant." [SOURCE: <http://www.amfi.org/abracovt.htm>]

5. Review the lesson from Week One/Day Four. In the space below, explain how the "Abrahamic covenant" illustrates the principle of "grace."

In the Abrahamic covenant described in Chapter 15 of Genesis, God did all the work. Abraham slept. This signified the unilateral nature of the covenant. Even if Abraham "blew it" (and he did! -- think Ishmael) God was going to make sure the promises were fulfilled. It is a great illustration of "the supernatural power of God untainted by human effort."

6. Now consider the following discussion of the Mosaic covenant:

"Deuteronomy 27-29 spell out the specific promises concerning what would happen in response to covenant faithfulness or covenant unfaithfulness. Thus the blessings and the curses of the Torah are the covenant promise!

Deuteronomy 28:1,2,15: 'Now it shall be, **if you will** diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, **if you will** obey the LORD your God....However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.'

The key phrases of "if you will" show that the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant. It is very different from the Abrahamic Covenant which is by faith and faith alone. Hence, while the Abrahamic Covenant was unconditional and only required faith to effect it; the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional one."

[SOURCE: <http://www.senac.com/nb/1627/bin/251.html>].

7. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 3:10: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'"

Do you see a connection between this verse and the preceding discussion of the Mosaic covenant? Briefly elaborate in the space below.

When Galatians 3:10 speaks of a "curse," it has Deuteronomy 28:15f. clearly in mind: "However, IF YOU DO NOT OBEY the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, ALL THESE CURSES WILL COME UPON YOU and overtake you."

- 8A. Do you find yourself doing certain things in order to secure God's blessings? Alternatively, are you ever fearful that -- when you screw up -- God will withdraw His blessings from you? Elaborate in the space below.

Sadly, I find myself doing both things from time to time (even though I know I'm not supposed to!). How about YOU?

- 8B. If you answered "yes" to either of the questions in (8A), do you think this proves that you are "living under the law?" Elaborate in the space below.

Yes, it is my understanding that when I live like that, I am "living under the law." My reasoning is based on the fact that I am living as if my relationship with God is "conditional." In other words, I am relying on ME to make my relationship with God "work," rather than relying on Him. What do YOU think?

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 3:21,22.

2. Consider the following verses:

Hebrews 7:18: "For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

Hebrews 7:22b: "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."

3. Now consider the following (loose) paraphrase of Galatians 3:21:

Both law and grace aim to produce righteousness. There is no conflict in their goals. The problem is that the law does not give people the power to live righteously. If it did, there would have been no need to replace it with something better.

What do you think? Does this paraphrase capture the main ideas of Galatians 3:21,22?

I couldn't have said it better myself!

4. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 3:22a: "But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin."

What do you think this verse means?

I think this verse means that all people are "prisoners of sin" and incapable of making themselves righteous by following a certain set of rules.

5. Consider the following verses:

Romans 7:19-23: [Paul speaking] "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do -- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I

find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."

In what sense is the person described in these verses a "prisoner of the law of sin?"

The person described in these verses is "trapped" inside his sinful flesh. He desires to live a better life, but finds himself incapable of doing so.

6. Romans 7:19-23 is talking about Christians (note where it says "for in my inner being I delight in God's law"). Are you surprised to know that Christians can be "prisoners of sin?"

If I didn't have the Word of God to tell me, I could have figured it out from my own experience!

7. Have you ever wrestled with a sin in your life that just wouldn't go away? Have you ever felt trapped by inadequacies in your life that kept you from being the kind of person you know God wants you to be? Just between you and God, elaborate on this below.

I have. How about you?

8. Based on the preceding study, complete the following sentence:

My problem is not that I don't know the right things to do. My problem is that –
in my own power – I am **UNABLE** to do them.

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 3:23-25.
2. In these verses, the Holy Spirit through Paul states that the law was intended to "lead us to Christ." How does that happen? How can trying to live a life based on law lead us to Christ?

True righteousness lies beyond the ability of any person to achieve. While the law identifies the standard of righteousness, it only sets the bar that we have to jump over. It cannot empower us to rise above it.

If we take righteousness seriously, we can only be confronted by our constant failure to live up to God's holy standard. But this failure is a good thing! It makes us realize that we need help. This need drives us to Jesus and the throne of grace, from which we can draw help.

2 Corinthians 12:9,10: [Paul speaking] "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses,

with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Hebrews 4:14-16: “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

3. How often do you go to Jesus in prayer and ask for His help to overcome the sins in your life? (Circle your answer below.)
 - a) More than once every day.
 - b) Once every day.
 - c) Several times a week.
 - d) Several times a month.
 - e) Less frequently than several times a month.

What is YOUR answer?

4. If you ask for Jesus’ help less frequently than once every day, why do you think that is?

One possibility is that I don’t really believe that I need Jesus’ help to live righteously each day. I think I can do it on my own, without His help.

5. Consider the following verses:

2 Corinthians 12:9,10: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

How do these verses relate to the preceding study?

They relate by noting that recognition of my own weakness/inability to be righteous is the crucial first step in receiving God’s grace.

6. Consider this alternative translation of Galatians 3:24:

“the law leads us to Jesus, that we may be righteous-ized by faith.”

As we apply this verse to non-Christians, we understand this verse to tell us that if they place their faith in Christ, then they are saved, by exchanging their sinful life for the righteous life of Christ in a heavenly transaction (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). However, do you think this verse has application for the Christian also? In other words, what would it look like for a Christian to apply Galatians 3:24 in their life . . . being “righteous-ized by faith?”

I think this verse definitely has applications for Christians, as well as non-Christians. For the Christian, “to be righteous-ized by faith” means to depend on Jesus to live righteously, rather than trying to follow a set of rules in one’s own strength.

7. To have faith means to choose to embrace/rest on/depend/believe some thing or things. What specifically is the Christian supposed to believe in attempting to live righteously by faith? Take an area of your life where you have struggled with sin. What specifically would you have to believe in order to walk by faith in that area of your life?

The Christian is supposed to believe a number of things. First, he needs to believe that he wants to live righteously, because that is his new nature. Second, he needs to recognize his incapacity to live righteously on his own. And lastly, he needs to rely on Christ to give him the ability to live righteously.

Take the area of lust. The Christian needs to embrace as true that, at the core of his being, he does not want to engage in sexual immorality, no matter how much his flesh says otherwise! He is a new creature in Christ, he has “put on” a “new self”, and he desires righteousness in his life.

Colossians 3:3,5-10: “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

Next, the Christian needs to believe that he does not have the capacity to fight lust on his own, in his own power. At best, the Christian may be able to control his external behavior by exerting sufficient willpower. But then there is the mind and all of its lustful thoughts. Jesus said that even “looking on a woman” with lustful thoughts is tantamount to adultery:

Matthew 5:27,28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Thus, the Christian needs to believe he needs Christ’s help in order to achieve righteousness in the sexual arena.

Finally, the Christian needs to believe that Jesus is sufficient both to enable him to achieve righteousness, and to replace the longing for immoral sexual pleasure with an even greater satisfaction from living righteously and pleasing Christ.

Hebrews 4:16: “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

From a practical perspective, this means choosing to believe these things to be true, even if I may not “feel” like they are true.

8. The Bible teaches that people are incapable of doing anything good in their own power:

Romans 3:10-12: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Do you have trouble believing this is true?

Most of the time I have no trouble believing this is true. But sometimes I feel “good”, on my own, as if I didn’t need Jesus’ help. At those times, I need to embrace this biblical truth as fact.

9. The Bible teaches that Christians have a new nature and desire to live righteously:
Romans 7:22: “...in my inner being I delight in God’s law.”
1 Corinthians 3:16: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”
2 Corinthians 5:17a: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;”
Galatians 2:20a: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”
Philippians 2:13: “...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
Colossians 3:9b,10: “...you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

While these verses tell us that we desire to live righteously, we all still struggle with the fact that we have competing desires to sin. Think again of an area in your life where you struggle with sin. To the best of your understanding, how would you apply these verses above in your own life to encourage you as you struggle with sin?

I gave my response in Question (7) above. How would YOU apply these verses as you struggle with sin?

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 3:26-29.
2. What do you think Paul means when he says in 3:28, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all on in Christ Jesus”? Is this a statement for women’s rights? An apologetic against racism? A cry out against slavery? Or is it something else? (In answering this question, be sure and also take into account the context of 3:27 and 3:29.)

I think this verse means that there aren’t many paths to righteousness – one for Jews, another for Greeks; one for slaves, another for free men; one for males, another for females. There is only one path, by faith, through grace.

3. Review your life over the past several days. Have you been following the path of righteousness by faith in Christ? How can you know whether you are walking by faith or living under law?

It is generally hard for me to know, moment by moment, whether I am living by law or faith. Somewhat paradoxically, I am most aware that I am living by faith when things are going badly for me. It is at those times that my feelings are telling me one thing, but by faith I choose to believe what the Bible tells me is true instead:

- *That I am not the person who just committed sin; that is sin living in me, and not who I really am.*
- *That I really desire to do the right thing, even when I don't feel like it.*
- *That God is really causing all things to work together for good, even though I am discouraged or anxious about events in my life.*

4. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.
Another great week of God's truth. What did YOU find to be most impacting this week?

WEEK SEVEN: Galatians 4:1-20

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 4:1-20.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

4:1-3. Being under the law is like being a “child heir” in that one does not have access to all the benefits of being an heir.

4:4-7. But now that Jesus has come, we can be “full heirs” of God.

4:8-11. Paul cannot understand why the Galatians would want to go back to being slaves.

4:12-16. Paul appeals to the Galatians on the basis of his previous relationship with them.

4:17-20. Paul warns the Galatians that those who preach another gospel are zealous, yes, but not for a good purpose.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 4:1-20.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
Your questions go here.
3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?
Your observations go here.

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 4:1-11.
Biblical Note: The Greek word translated “basic principles of the world”(NIV)/ “elemental things of the world”(NASB)” in verse 3 is “*stoicheia*”. It was “used of the letters of the alphabet, the ABCs, and then, because the learning of the ABCs is the first lesson in a literary education,” it came to be understood as “the rudiments” or “first principles” [SOURCE: <http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/gal/deffin/gal-10.htm>]. The term is sufficiently general/vague that commentators have differed about the specific nature of these “basic principles of the world.”
- 2A. Consider the following verse:
Galatians 4:3: “*So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.*”

- 2B. What do you think the “basic principles of the world”(NIV)/ “elemental things of the world”(NASB)” are? In what way were “we” in slavery under them? Give your interpretation in the space below. (NOTE: If you find this confusing, don’t sweat it. We shall return to this question shortly.)

I’ll give my answer below. What did YOU come up with?

3. Here is what we know:

(1) Paul was writing to a group that consisted of both Gentiles and Jews. Thus, whatever “basic principles of the world” refer to, they must have been applicable to BOTH Gentiles and Jews.

(2) These “basic principles” had a grip on people’s lives before Christianity, because the bondage/enslavement associated with these principles occurred in the period before Christ came (cf. Galatians 4:4). Thus, they must refer to non-Christian forces, practices, or beliefs.

(3) These “basic principles” were so strong they effectively kept the Galatians “in slavery.”

With that in mind, consider the following interpretation of “basic principles of the world”:

One possible interpretation is that these were the religious beliefs that guided the Galatians before they became Christians. For the Jewish Galatians, that would have included the religious system of the Old Testament (note that verse 10 talks about “days and months and seasons and years,” suggesting the Jewish religious calendar; and the context of Galatians 3 is, after all, the Mosaic Law). For the Gentiles, it would have been their pre-Christian, pagan beliefs (note that verse 8 talks about being “slaves to those who by nature are not gods,” suggesting idols). These religious beliefs were “basic” in the sense that they were primitive compared to the revelation of God’s “New Covenant” by which man is redeemed and adopted as “full sons” in Christ (cf. verses 4 and 5).

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you? Elaborate in the space below.

I like it!

4. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 4:4: “*So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.*”

Galatians 4:8,9: “*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be **enslaved** by them all over again?*”

Assuming that “basic principles of the world” refers to the Galatians’ pre-Christian religious beliefs, can you think of how religious beliefs not based on Christ can cause one to be “enslaved” or “in bondage?” (NOTE: This is the

second time you have been asked this question. If you still find it confusing, you get one more crack at it below!)

My answer is given below.

- 5A. It is common, almost a cliché, to state that “Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship.” Explain the distinction between “a religion” and “a relationship.”
I think the statement is intended to distinguish “religion” as a formal system of rules that one is supposed to follow, with the fact that Christianity is about coming into a life-changing relationship with the living God. As in any relationship, there are “do’s and don’ts” that one should follow to make the relationship go better. But the essence of Christianity is not the “do’s and don’ts” – it is the relationship.
- 5B. Is it possible that one can get so caught up with the traditions and rituals of “religion” that one completely misses the God to whom those traditions and rituals point? How does this relate to the statement that “Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship?”
Absolutely. For example, one can get so caught up with following the traditions and rituals that one never has one-on-one time with God. That would follow directly from (incorrectly) thinking of Christianity as a religion as opposed to a relationship.
- 5C. Is there a sense in which “religion” can trap or hold somebody back from knowing God? Explain.
To the extent that religion points one away from the true God, it serves as a hindrance to keep people from knowing Him. In a sense, “religion” is like a set of directions. If it points one in the right direction, then it is a good thing. However, if the directions are bad, then religion can keep people from “locating” God.
- 5D. Suppose one had the religious belief that one earned blessings from God by being especially good or “spiritual.” Can you think of how that could prevent one from knowing what God was really like?
This belief would misrepresent the character of God. It would place God in the position of a “taker” as opposed to a “giver.” That is, it would cause the worshipper to view God as somebody who wanted “stuff off of them” -- as somebody who’s primary interaction with them consisted of extracting “work” or “effort” from them.
It would be very difficult to love a God who held out the carrot of relationship and acceptance only as long as I performed up to a certain standard.
- 5E. Review your answers to (5A) through (5D). Now read Galatians 4:3 and 4:8,9 again and explain -- in your own words -- how religious beliefs not based on Christ can cause one to be “enslaved” or “in bondage.”

The Holy Spirit through Paul is speaking of a God who wants to bless us with an “inheritance.” However, if our view of God is one of a stern taskmaster, then we will never come into relationship where we view ourselves as true sons who can call upon God saying, “Abba, Father.”

6. Can you think of any specific religious beliefs or practices that you now have, or had in the past, that are/were ABOUT God, but in fact kept you from truly knowing Him? Elaborate in the space below.

Prior to learning about grace, I viewed God as a stern taskmaster. He was “good”, but hard. He had done a lot for me, and now He expected a lot back from me. I had to go through some tough times so that God could teach me that He was not like that at all.

7. In what way have you found your religious experience “enslaving?” How does your relationship with God feel right now? Does it feel like you are enslaved to a religious system?

Looking back on your religious experience, would you say that there ever was a time when “religion” kept you trapped from knowing the true God?

Day Four:

1. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 4:4-7: *“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”*

Ephesians 1:3-19: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a

seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

Hebrews 7:18: *“The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.”*

Hebrews 8:6: *“But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.”*

Hebrews 11:39,40: *“And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us...”*

2. Based upon the verses above, make a list of some of the “benefits, rights, and privileges” associated with being a “son/daughter of God” (cf. Galatians 4:4-7). Write them below, but use PLAIN ENGLISH in describing what they are. (For example, don’t say that Christians have access to Jesus’ “glorious inheritance in the saints;” rather, say that being a full son of God enables one to have special, Spirit-based relationships with other “sons and daughters of God.”)
Here is my attempt to put some of these “benefits, rights, and privileges” into plain English. How does it compare with what you wrote?
-Christians are “sons,” meaning that God views us as “family.” He watches out for us, takes care of us, protects us, and wants what is best for us.
-Christians have the Holy Spirit. Among other things, the Holy Spirit produces a spirit of fellowship/relationship with God in our hearts. That means that there is something in us that draws us to God and causes us to rejoice at being His child.
-Christians are not “slaves.” Among other things, that means that God is not a “user” in his relationship with us. He is a “giver,” not a “taker.”
-Christians are “heirs.” Among other things, that means that God’s kingdom is our kingdom. As we invest our lives in building God’s kingdom, we are also investing in our own kingdom. One of the benefits of being a “part owner” in God’s kingdom is that we can experience the joys of “kingdom ownership.” We can rejoice seeing God’s kingdom grow as people come to Christ, and Christians grow in faith.
-Christians have supernatural power to live life.

-Christians have been “programmed” to evolve into holy beings – to have sin removed from their lives and to be good and righteous.

-Christians have their sins forgiven. No matter how bad we screw up, no matter who we hurt, let down, or disappoint, we are saved from guilt because we are forgiven.

-Christians have been given “secret information.” It has been revealed to them what life is all about.

-Christians are being groomed for “success.” Like a trainer preparing his prize athlete for the big race, God is preparing us to become beautiful on the inside. When He is finished with us, we will be the person we really want to be (“extreme makeover”), and we will unreservedly thank Him for how He made us better.

-Christians have the Holy Spirit. Among other things, this means that God has guaranteed us that He will never let us go. No matter how bad the circumstances, and no matter how badly we may fall, God has promised that He will never leave us.

-Christians have the Holy Spirit. Among other things, this means that we can understand things about God that we could never get on our own. Christians have been supernaturally equipped to be sensitive to God’s “voice” in their hearts , and to feel His presence in their spirits, in a way that others cannot. The end result is that Christians have the capacity to “know” God.

-Christians have hope. That means that when life gets discouraging and seems pointless, the Christian can know there is a purpose behind the difficult circumstances. Further, they know that the difficulties they face are temporary. One day the hard times will be behind them, and they will bask in joy in the presence of God.

-Christians are allowed to have a special relationship with God that was not possible before Jesus came. Their “benefits, rights, and privileges” are “better” than what God gave Old Testament saints.

-Christians can have intimacy with God.

3. If you are a Christian, can you think of a specific example of a “spiritual blessing” that you have received as a result of being a son/daughter of God? Briefly elaborate in the space below.

God has given me supernatural love. Before I became a Christian, I had never experienced love in my heart. God gave me the capacity to love others, and receive love back. This is probably the greatest gift I have ever received. Another blessing is the hope God has given me. Before I became a Christian, life was hopeless and I couldn’t look forward to a future bright and joyful. Now I can, and that has changed my demeanor towards life.

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 4:8-11.
2. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 4:9: “*But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?*”

3. Many people believe that Michael Jordan, who played for the Chicago Bulls from 1985-1993, 1995-1998, was the greatest professional basketball player of all time. He won 6 NBA Championships, 5 MVP Awards, and finished with the highest scoring average in the history of the game.

After winning his third NBA championship with the Bulls in 1993, Michael Jordan stunned the sports world by announcing his retirement from basketball, after which he pursued a career in professional baseball. During the 1994 baseball season, he played for the Birmingham Barons, a Class AA Southern League (minor league) baseball team. He had a batting average of .202 in 127 games, struck out 114 times in 436 at bats, and led all Southern League outfielders with 11 errors. (For those of you who are not familiar with baseball, these are BAD numbers!) Sports fans everywhere were glad when Jordan announced in 1995 that he would return to play basketball for the Chicago Bulls! Why do you think somebody like Michael Jordan would turn away from all his success in basketball to pursue a career in professional baseball?

At some level, Jordan must have believed that life as a baseball player would be better than life as a superstar basketball player.

4. Consider the following verses:
Galatians 3:1-5: “*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?*”

5. Why do you think the Galatians would turn away from their “spiritual success” following the path of faith, to pursue God via a different path, the path of “law?” (NOTE: Paul mentions several times in 4:12-20 how deep their love for him was, therefore, as you answer this question, take into account that Paul was someone that they loved and sacrificed for. What drew them away from the truth that he taught?)

At some level, the Galatians must have felt that life “following the law” would be better than the life they had experienced in the early days of their faith.

6. Have you ever felt dissatisfied with your life as a Christian? Disappointed with the rate of progress in your spiritual life? Have you had times when you felt unfulfilled in your relationship with God? At these times, were you ever tempted to pursue a “different path” in your spiritual journey? In the space below, explain how Galatians 4:8-11 pertains to these questions.

There are times when life is difficult, even when one is living “right.” The Bible frequently mentions that the Christian life is not one that is “happy happy” all the time, devoid of hard times and difficulties:

2 Corinthians 4:8-10: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

1 Peter 1:6,7: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

1 Peter 4:12,13: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.”

When hard times come, there is a tendency to look for “another way.” Perhaps this is what happened to the Galatians. For whatever reason, they felt that the Christianity they were originally taught was in some way deficient. They felt a need for something more than faith. And like Michael Jordan playing baseball, Paul told them that this was NOT a better way. It was, in fact, a step in the wrong direction.

When faced with difficulties or hard times, our response shouldn’t be to redouble our efforts at trying to be holy. Rather, it should be to cling twice as hard to Jesus and depend on Him for His help.

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 4:12-20.
2. Consider the following translations of Galatians 4:17,18:

(NIV) “Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.”

(NASB) “*They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them. But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.*”

Biblical Note: The word that is translated “zealous” in the NIV translation and “eager” in the NASB comes from the Greek root “zēloō”, which has a number of meanings (also “jealous,” “envious”). These people who were teaching a false gospel (cf. Galatians 1:6-9) had something about them that the Galatians found appealing. Maybe it was their passion. Maybe it was the great conviction with which they held their beliefs. Maybe it was their eagerness to embrace and “help” the Galatians. Whatever it was, it is clear that their appealing manner caused the Galatians to be drawn into their false gospel.

3. Read Galatians 4:19 and complete the following sentence:

Paul’s goal was to see ***Christ*** formed in the Galatians.

4. In plain English, what is the meaning of the expression “until Christ is formed in you?”

I think “until Christ is formed in you?” means “until you start to demonstrate the characteristics of Jesus who lives inside you”.

5. What is the connection between the subject of the Book of Galatians -- “living by faith” versus “living by law” – and having “Christ formed” in a Christian’s life?

I think there is a direct connection. Our lives reflect the characteristics of Jesus to the extent that He is allowed to live through us. That happens by faith, by trusting in Him to produce righteousness in us.

6. If you haven’t done so already, at some point in your life you will likely face the decision about choosing one church to be your regular place of worship/fellowship. There are many characteristics one can choose focus on in choosing a church. What insight can you gain from Galatians 4:12-20 about what to look for when choosing a church?

The most important thing is not the zealotness/passion of the church, or the church’s interest in me, or the winsomeness and attractiveness of the people who go to that church. The heretical purveyors of the false gospel in Galatia had these things going for them, yet Paul warned the Galatians to stay away from these teachers. The most important characteristic is that the church preach, and believe, “the true gospel.”

7. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week’s study? Elaborate.

WEEK EIGHT: Galatians 4:21-31

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 4:21-31.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

4:21-23. Abraham had two sons, “one by the slave woman, the other by the free woman.”

4:24,25. The slave woman, Hagar represents the “Old Covenant,” which is equated with slavery.

4:26,27. The free woman, Sarah, represents the “New Covenant” and freedom, which produces far more “children” than the ordinary way.

4:28,29. Just like then, the children of “law” want to persecute the children of “promise.”

4:30,31. But the Scripture says to “get rid of the son of the slave woman,” since they cannot coexist.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 4:21-31.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
Your great questions go here!
3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?
Your trenchant observations go here!

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 4:21-23.
2. The following provides some biblical background concerning Abraham’s two sons, “one born by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.” Consider this biblical background as you answer the questions below.

Biblical Background: God first called Abraham/Abram when he was 75 years old. At the time, Abraham was living in Haran, located near the northeastern part of present-day Syria. He was married to Sarah/Sarai and they had no children. God promised to “make Abraham into a great nation.”

Genesis 12:1,2: “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make

you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.’”

Sometime later, God again appeared to Abraham, promising to give him descendants.

Genesis 12:7: *“And the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.”*

Later, God reiterated His promise by telling Abraham He would give him as many descendants as the “dust of the earth:”

Genesis 13:14-16: *“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, ‘Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.’”*

This led to the establishment of the “Abrahamic Covenant,” whereby God made it clear that these descendants were to be his biological children, despite Abraham’s advanced age:

Genesis 15:2-5: *“And Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’ Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”*

However, Abraham and Sarah became tired of waiting for God to fulfill His promise. They decided to take matters into their own hands. As was the custom in that day, Sarah “gave” one of her servants, Hagar, to Abraham so that Abraham could father a child through her.

Genesis 16:1-4: *“Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, ‘Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her.’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived...”*

Sarah’s and Abraham’s plan worked(!). At age 86, Abraham fathered a son, who was named Ishmael. In this manner, they “helped along” God’s promise to produce biological descendants for Abraham.

Genesis 16:15: *“So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.”*

The Bible says of Ishmael that *“he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers”* (Genesis 16:12). Ishmael became the patriarch of the

nomadic tribes that lived in Arabia. According to the Muslim holy book, the Koran, Ishmael is the spiritual forefather of today's Muslims.

Many years later, when Abraham was 99 years old, God again appeared to him and reiterated His promise of making a great nation out of him. This time, God made it clear that this lineage was to come through Sarah, not Hagar (i.e., the "free woman," not the "slave woman"). When Abraham tried to redirect God's attention to Ishmael, God emphasized that the covenant would be through Sarah's son, who was to be called Isaac.

Genesis 17:1,7,15-21; 21:1-3: "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. ... And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.'" ... Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'

And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!' But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.' ... Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac."

3. Given your current understanding, what do you think is the main point that the Holy Spirit through Paul is making by comparing Abraham's two sons in Galatians 4:21-23? What are the two sons supposed to represent? As you answer this, remember the entire context of the book of Galatians. Paul is clearly giving an illustration of the same point he has been making all along. (NOTE: If this isn't yet clear to you, don't worry about it. We shall return to this question below.)

I hope you are having a lot of fun with this. This is so cool! My answer is given below.

4. Put yourself in Abraham's and Sarah's shoes and consider their "plan" to have a biological child through Hagar, Sarah's servant. Do you think this was a reasonable, sensible thing for them to do? Elaborate in the space below. (NOTE: While foreign to our morality today, there was nothing immoral about Abraham

sleeping with Hagar for the purpose of producing a biological lineage. This was a commonly accepted cultural practice in that day, as indicated by the fact that Sarah “gave” Hagar to Abraham.)

The short answer is “Yes.” This was a reasonable thing for Abraham and Sarah to do. Note that they were doing it to “help God along.” God made them a promise, and nothing was happening (that they could tell). So they thought they would take things into their own hands to make sure that God’s promise would be fulfilled.

5. Review the Week4/Day5 study.
6. Consider the following verses (NASB translation)³:

Galatians 4:23: “But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the **flesh**, and the son by the free woman through the **promise**.”

Galatians 4:29: “But as at that time he who was born according to the **flesh** persecuted him who was born according to the **Spirit**, so it is now also.”

Galatians 3:3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the **Spirit**, are you now being perfected by the **flesh**?”

It should be clear from comparing Galatians 4:23 and 4:29 with Galatians 3:3 that the two sons represent the two “paths” identified in Galatians 3:3 (as discussed in the Week4/Day5 study). In the space below, explain how the two sons illustrate these two paths.

Ishmael represents the path of “law/human effort/man doing it.” Isaac represents the path of “faith/grace/God doing it.”

It is crucially important to note that the way of “flesh” is not necessarily something vile. It wasn’t that Abraham and Sarah got drunk, went to a wild orgy, took part in decadent revelries, and thus Ishmael was conceived. Not at all. They were simply using their “common sense” to help along God’s promise.

*The problem with “flesh/human effort” is not that it is vile. Quite the contrary, it can seem like the sensible, reasonable thing that responsible people should do. The problem is that it is “human” effort rather than “God” effort. **GOD WILL NOT SHARE HIS GLORY WITH ANOTHER.** That which takes away from God’s glory is sin.*

³ The English word “flesh” that appears in these three verses derives from the same Greek root, “sarx,” which allows us to clearly see the connection between these verses. The NIV translates this word differently (“ordinary way” in 4:23 and 4:29; “human effort” in 3:3). While this has some advantages for understanding the meaning of “sarx”, the disadvantage is that it makes it more difficult to see the connection between these verses.

7. Consider the following interpretation of the “two sons:”
Abraham’s and Sarah’s decision to use Hagar to make God’s promise “happen” analogizes Christians’ efforts to produce righteousness on their own (“by human effort,” in the power of the “flesh”). While it seems “reasonable” and “sensible” to make rules and lists to discipline and push ourselves towards righteousness, this is not God’s way. There are no “Twelve Step” programs to better spiritual living – despite the fact that this seems eminently “reasonable” and “sensible” to us. But God’s way is not our way. God’s way is by grace, through faith. It is the result of a “promise,” implemented by His Spirit. It is the way of Isaac, not Ishmael.

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you? Write your thoughts in the space below.

What do you think? Does it seem reasonable to you? Isn’t it cool how God placed this illustration in the Book of Genesis, written over a thousand years before Paul wrote Galatians, to help us understand the difference between “law” and “grace?”

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 4:24,25.
2. Galatians 4:24 states that “*the women represent two covenants.*” What are these “two covenants?”
The “Old Covenant” is generally associated with the (conditional) “Mosaic Covenant” (cf. Week Six/Day Three). It represents “living by law.” The “New Covenant” is the gospel of grace by which God promises to do all the work necessary to “righteous-ize” those whom He has called (cf. Romans 8:28-30). It has roots in the (unconditional) “Abrahamic Covenant” because its only requirement of man is “faith.”
- 3A. What significant Biblical event happened at Mt. Sinai? For help on this, look up Exodus 19. Given that insight, what do you think Paul is implying by identifying one of the covenants with Mt. Sinai?
Some of the Old Testament Law, particularly the Ten Commandments, were given on Mt. Sinai.
- 3B. What are the distinctive characteristics of the covenant that was associated with Mt. Sinai? (Hint: This is referring to the Old Testament Law, of which Paul has been arguing is inadequate to make Christians righteous throughout this letter.).
The Ten Commandments represent the system of law, in that they consist of the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of religious living.
4. Review the Week7/Day3 study.
5. Consider the verses below:

Galatians 4:24,25: “*These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.*”

What is it about the “Old Covenant” that causes the Holy Spirit through Paul to associate it with “slavery?”

The Old Covenant was based upon human effort to produce righteousness. As a system, it was bound to fail. It left its practitioners in bondage to sin. Further, it was misused by its practitioners, leading them away from God, and keeping them “trapped” in ignorance about who God is and what He is really like.

- 6A. Identify a common Christian practice/ritual/discipline that in your opinion may qualify for what the Holy Spirit through Paul has in mind when He speaks of “law/flesh/human effort”. Elaborate your thinking in the space below.

What did YOU come up with?

- 6B. Explain in the space below how the Christian practice/ritual/discipline that you identified in (6A) – while it may seem eminently “reasonable” and “sensible” – can, in fact, lead to “slavery.”

Your answer goes here.

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 4:26,27.
2. What do you think these verses are talking about? What is the Holy Spirit through Paul intending to communicate here? (NOTE: This is a hard question. You will get another crack at answering it below.)
My answer is given below.
- 3A. Consider the following verses from the Old Testament:

Jeremiah 31:31-34: “*Behold, days are coming,*” declares the LORD, ‘*when I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,*’ declares the LORD. ‘*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,*’ declares the LORD, ‘*I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,*’ declares the LORD, ‘*for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*”

Ezekiel 36:25-27: [God speaking] “...I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

3B. What do you think these verses are referring to?

I believe these verses preview the gospel of grace, in which God places His Spirit inside His followers, that they might have the capacity to live righteously.

4A. Consider the following verses from the New Testament:

Mark 2:21,22: [Jesus speaking] “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.”

Hebrews 8:6: “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.”

Galatians 2:20a: [Paul speaking] “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

4B. Do you see any connection between these verses and the Old Testament verses in (3A) above? Elaborate in the space below.

The Old Testament verses prophesize a “new way of doing business” in God’s Kingdom. The New Testament/New Covenant is the fulfillment of that prophecy.

5. Now consider the following possible interpretation of Galatians 4:27a:

5A. Galatians 4:27a: “Be glad, **O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains...**”

Compare this with the following verses:

Romans 7:18a: [Paul speaking] “For I know that **nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.**”

John 15:4,5: [Jesus speaking] “Abide in Me, and I in you. As **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.**”

- 5B. Possible interpretation: *The picture of a “barren woman” in Galatians 4:27a represents the person who can produce no righteous deeds on their own, in the power of their own flesh.*

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you?

I agree with this interpretation! Under the law/Old Covenant, sinners were forgiven but not made righteous. Therefore, they did not have the capacity to live righteously.

6. Now consider the following possible interpretation of Galatians 4:27b:

- 6A. Galatians 4:27b: “...because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

Compare this with the following verses:

Romans 8:3,4: “For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**”

1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet **not I, but the grace of God with me.**”

1 Corinthians 1:30,31: “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who **became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’**”

2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that **in him [in Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.**”

- 6B. Possible interpretation: *The picture of “more children” in Galatians 4:27b represents the fact that the person who abides in Christ, who is empowered by God’s grace/Christ/the Holy Spirit is able to produce far more righteous deeds (“more children”) than those who try live righteously by “human effort.”*

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you?

I believe this is the correct interpretation. If not this, what else could it be?

7. In your own words, summarize in the space below what the Holy Spirit through Paul is intending to communicate in Galatians 4:27.

In these verses, there is a way that seems reasonable/sensible, but does not produce the desired results. It makes “sense” that the woman with a husband would produce more children than the barren woman. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, it makes “sense” that the person who sets his/her mind on being

righteous and strives towards that goal, would produce more righteousness than the one who doesn't try. Yet the opposite is true!

The first step in producing righteousness is to recognize that one cannot do it! In that sense, the person who doesn't even try has an advantage over the one who works hard to be righteous. It is not the responsibility of the Christian to produce righteousness. Rather, the Christian's only responsibility is to rely on Christ to produce righteousness within him/her.

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 4:28-31.

2A. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 4:30: "But what does the Scripture say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.'"

2B. What do you think the Scripture means in the context of Galatians when it says "Get rid of the slave woman and her son"? Elaborate in the space below.

My answer is given below.

2C. Consider the following interpretation:

When the Scripture says "Get rid of the slave woman and her son," it means that living by law and living by faith cannot coexist. The Christian who desires to have "Christ formed in him/her" cannot hope to accomplish this goal by adding law-living to a life of faith. In this sense, living by law is like adding regular gasoline to an engine that is designed to run on diesel fuel. It not only doesn't make the car go, it destroys the engine.

In the same way, not only is living by law unable to produce good works in the Christian's life, it "stops spiritual growth," and, as we shall see in later studies, can actually result in "spiritual death." The solution: "Get rid of the slave woman and her son!" In other words, Do away with attempting to live by law!

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you? Elaborate in the space below.

I love these verses! At first they seem incomprehensible, as in what could these verses possibly mean? But I have come to see that they beautifully communicate in a concise, clear way, truths about law and grace that can otherwise be difficult to grasp. It is passages like this that cause me to worship God for His Word, for His supernatural wisdom that shows that God's ways of doing things are so different than that which the mind of man can devise.

3. What would it mean to "Do away with 'law-living'" in your life? If you became convinced that this is what Scripture was teaching, how would you live your life differently? Explain in the space below.

One way this truth has affected my life is that it has made me pray more, calling on Him daily to empower me so that I can be the person both He and I want me to be. How about YOU?

4. React to the following statement:

Most Christians today live their lives, in essence, just like Old Testament Jews. Oh sure, they don't sacrifice animals or keep strict observance of the Sabbath, but they have effectively replaced one set of laws (Sabbath-keeping, 10 Commandments), with another set of laws (church-going, moral living, family values, etc.). There is little real difference between how they live their lives compared with how devout Jews lived their lives under the Old Covenant. This explains why many Christians show little evidence of genuine spiritual vitality.

In what way do you think this statement is true? What do you think? Is this a fair statement? Elaborate in the space below.

I believe this statement is true. I think most sermons can be summarized in two parts: (i) this is what God wants you to do, (ii) now go out and do it!

This is the Law. This is how Old Testament Jews lived. It completely ignores the fact that I am unable to "go out and do it" in my own power. In calling upon my flesh to produce righteousness, it only sets me up for failure.

5. Consider the analysis of living under the law versus living under the Spirit:

Paul connects the birth of Isaac to the power of the Spirit and the birth of Ishmael to mere human action. However, when you look at it more closely, BOTH sons were conceived through human means (i.e. sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.) We might be tempted to think that living in the power of the Spirit is merely a life of meditation or some other "other worldly" activity. However, what we see from this story is that it was not the physical action or non-action that made the birth of Isaac spiritual and the birth of Ishmael fleshly . . . it was the motivation and faith or lack of faith behind that action. When Ishmael was born it was by their idea and plan, but when Isaac was born, it was merely through the gracious provision of God and the faithful response of Abraham and Isaac.

All that said, how do you apply this principle to your own lives? I believe that the key distinction between living under the law and living under the Spirit has to do with our source of power and mindset about the action. Under the law, we provide the will power and we do things so that God will accept us. Under the Spirit, He provides the power (that we participate in through faith in His promises) and He does things through us (having made us righteous through the gift of His grace.)

What do you think of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you?

I agree. However, while this is easy to acknowledge on a general level, the real test of understanding comes when we talk about specific issues. How do I deal with sexual temptation? How do I become more loving? More patient? Less materialistic? Less selfish? How do I "discipline myself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7) by faith rather than flesh?

6. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.
I hope you have been blessed by this week's study as much as I have been. This is great stuff! And we still have three more weeks to go!

WEEK NINE: Galatians 5:1-15

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 5:1-15.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

5:1. We were redeemed from sin for the purpose of “freedom.”

5:2-4. Those who attempt to live by law are “alienated from Christ” and “fallen from grace.”

5:5,6. We wait to receive our righteousness by faith.

5:7-12. Those who preach another gospel are not from God and deserve severe punishment.

5:13-15. We are free, but not to sin.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 5:1-15.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).

Do you like thinking of questions as you prepare to study the Scriptures? Bible study is so much richer when you see your time in the Word as providing answers to YOUR questions -- rather than somebody else’s questions. This is a skill you will want to cultivate even after our study of Galatians is over.

3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?
Amongst other observations, you should have noted some “shocking” verses here.

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 5:1
2. In your own words, explain what the Holy Spirit through Paul means when He says, “*It was for freedom that Christ set us free.*” What is this “freedom” that the verse speaks of? Elaborate in the space below. (NOTE: Don’t worry if the meaning of this is unclear to you. We will continue to explore this subject in the questions below.)
My answer is below. What’s yours?
3. Review the Week7/Day3 study.

4. Review the Week7/Day4 study.
5. Living by law “enslaves” us by keeping us from knowing God. This keeps us from enjoying the “benefits, rights, and privileges” of being a child of God. One of those benefits is that we have been redeemed from the power of sin so that we can be “holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 1:4-8: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

In light of what you have learned, elaborate in the space below what the Bible means when it says, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free.”

When Paul speaks of “freedom” in Galatians, it is meant as a contrast to the “slavery” that is the fate of those who live by law. The Week 7/Day3 and Day4 studies made clear that living by law enslaves both because (i) it keeps one from knowing the true character of God, and (ii) it is powerless to break the bonds of sin.

Thus, when the Bible says, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free,” it means freedom on both counts. First, Christ set us free so that we can see and know the true God. Second, Christ set us free from the power of sin that we might live holy and pure lives.

6. Consider the following interpretation of the statement “It was for freedom that Christ set us free”:

When a person becomes a Christian, God implants a new nature inside them. This new nature is destined to grow in the image of Christ (cf. Colossians 3:10, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Living by law stunts this process. In effect, it keeps the Christian “trapped/enslaved” in his/her old ways, and (temporarily) blocks them from becoming the person God intends them to be. Jesus Christ came to set people free from this bondage, so that we would be unfettered by the bonds of sin and released (free) to be the person God wants us to be.

Critically evaluate this interpretation in the space below.

In the context of the previous answer, this interpretation addresses the second point; namely, that Christ has set us free from the power of sin.

7. How about in your life? Is your life characterized more by being enslaved to sin, or are you experiencing the freedom that 5:1 talks about? If so, how have you experienced that in your life? If not, what is preventing you from living in the freedom that Christ has bought for us?

Have you ever tasted “freedom from sin?” Would you like to?

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 5:2-6.

2. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 5:4: “You have been **severed from Christ**, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have **fallen from grace**.”

“Severed from Christ,” “fallen from grace” – these are strong statements! What do you think they mean?

My answer is given below. But be certain of this: it does NOT mean that the Christian who attempts to grow in righteousness through law can lose his/her salvation (cf. “Biblical Note” below).

Biblical Note: While a complete study lies beyond the scope of this lesson, you should know that the Bible teaches that salvation is a “free gift,” which -- once given -- is eternally secure (see verses below).

Ephesians 2:8,9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast.”

John 10:28,29: [Jesus speaking] “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.”

Romans 8:29,30: “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

- 4A. In light of the certainty of a Christian’s salvation after they have trusted in Christ, two possible interpretations exist here. One is that 5:4 is saying that those people who call themselves a Christian but are still trying to live the Christian life under their own power, never have really trusted in Christ to begin with. Another possible interpretation of 5:4 would be to say that this verse is talking about actual Christians who have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, but are kept from growing further in their relationship with God because they are trying to grow in the wrong way (under the Law). Based on the immediate context of Galatians 4-5 and the larger context of the entire book, which interpretation do you tend to agree with? What clues from the text help you to make that decision?
- The second interpretation appears correct to me. The Book of Galatians was addressed to people who believed the gospel and received the Holy Spirit (cf. Galatians 3:1-5); i.e., they were Christians. Further, it says in Galatians 5:4 that if they become circumcised, they will have “fallen away from grace.” That implies that they had previously been in a “state of grace.”***
- 4B. Consider this expanded interpretation of Galatians 5:4 (applying it to true Christians):

When the Holy Spirit through Paul says that Christians have been “severed from Christ” and “fallen from grace,” He is not suggesting that they can lose their salvation. Rather, He is saying that Christians can deprive themselves of the empowerment of Christ working in their life. That is, Christians can either live by “flesh”/“human effort” (cf. Galatians 3:3), or rely on Christ’s power to live His life through them. If Christians choose to rely on their own efforts, then they have effectively cut themselves off from the “power of Christ” in their lives.

What do you think this of this interpretation? Does it seem reasonable to you? What do you think it means to be “cut off from the power of Christ” in your life? What would a Christian life cut off from Christ’s power look like?

I agree with this interpretation. A life “cut off from the power of Christ” is a life that has no spiritual vitality, in which the Christian is either unenthused or defeated in their Christian walk.

5. Consider the following verses:

John 15:4,5: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

2 Corinthians 12:9,10: [Paul speaking] “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

How do these verses relate to the interpretation given in (4B) above?

By emphasizing the importance of “abiding in Christ”, of having “Christ’s power rest on me,” these verses indicate that the opposite is also a possibility. That is, that one can choose to NOT abide in Christ, and not have the power of Christ in one’s life. These verses reinforce the teaching in Galatians that one can become “severed/alienated from Christ” and “fall from grace.”

6. Consider the following verse:

Galatians 5:5: “But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

In light of this verse, critically evaluate the following statement:

*Unlike every other religion in the world, Christianity does not teach that people should try to produce righteousness by working harder or being more diligent. Rather, Christianity is unique in that it teaches that righteousness is **RECEIVED** by faith – **NOT PRODUCED** by human effort.*

What do you think? Is this a reasonable characterization of Christianity?

I believe this characterizes a HUGE difference between Christianity and the other religions of the world.

7. Apply the principle in question 6 above to a situation involving whether or not someone should cheat on an exam, view internet pornography, or some other obvious sin issue. Pick one of those scenarios out and then explain below what it would look like to walk by faith in the power and righteousness of Christ, instead of depending only on yourself and your will power to “do the right thing.”

In the case of viewing internet pornography, I think this truth teaches that freedom from this sin cannot be achieved by imposing rules and constraints on myself.

Being accountable to others about this problem, and installing filtering software on my computer, etc., are good things, and I should do them if I am struggling with internet pornography (1 Corinthians 6:18; Matthew 5:27,28). However, these “solutions” do not address the real problem, and hence ultimately must fail. That is, they may keep the problem under check for awhile, but they will not succeed in freeing me from the powerful attraction of this sin.

To be released from this bondage, I need to have my heart changed in a significant way. I need to have Christ change my desires, both to desire pornography less, and to desire His righteousness more. That is a supernatural change that lies outside my ability to produce. The only solution lies in recognizing my inadequacy and relying/believing that Jesus can and will change me.

8. Isn't this amazing truth! What kind of mind could have ever conceived of ideas like this? Do you think it is a fair statement to say that only God could have thought of something like this?

Romans 11:33-36: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

Day Five:

1. Read Galatians 5:7-15.
2. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 5:13; “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...”

Romans 6:15: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

Explain the logic that might cause a person to think that freedom from “the law” means that one need not be concerned about sin in their lives.

One could (incorrectly) interpret “freedom from the law” to mean that God is not concerned about having us live righteously. The logic comes from the fact that it is hard for us to believe that righteous living is important to God if His instruction to us is: “Don’t try so hard!” At another level, I think part of the difficulty with reconciling grace with God’s passion for holiness is that it is hard for us to believe that God is sufficient to get us to live righteously if we don’t do it ourselves.

3. In your opinion, do you think Christianity’s emphasis on “faith in Christ” rather than “observing the law” (cf. Galatians 2:15,16) causes people to live more or less righteously?

My experience is that the emphasis on “faith in Christ” causes people to live LESS righteously. However, in my opinion, the subject of grace has been poorly taught within the church.

4. One objection to the emphasis on faith and God’s grace is that it minimizes the importance of works. Do you think this is a fair objection? Elaborate in the space below.

It is an unfair objection to the Bible’s teaching on this subject. The Bible teaches that grace is the means by which God EMPOWERS us to do works.

5. What would you say to a Christian who was actively engaged in sin (say, sexual immorality)? Suppose you confronted them and told them that they needed to stop sleeping with their boyfriend/girlfriend because it was against God’s law. How would you respond if they told you that God was not concerned that they “observe the law?” Rather, God only required that they completely trust Him to forgive their sins, which they were doing.

I would say that they are refusing to believe God’s truth about who they are. God has given them a new nature, and that “new creature” desires to live righteously. In this context, “who they really are” desires to be sexually pure and free from immorality. If they don’t feel that way about themselves, then their job is believe that despite their feelings.

It is great that they trusted Christ to forgive their sins. But the Christian life is not about believing once and then you are done. It is about a life lived “from faith to faith” (cf. Romans 1:17). Indeed, they will be held accountable at the judgment seat of Christ for what they have chosen to believe, and not believe (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:9,10).

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 5:13-15.
2. Now consider the following verses:

James 2:14-16: “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

NOTE: Today’s study is intended to sort out the seeming conflict between “faith” and “works.” On the one hand, we are clearly told in Galatians (and elsewhere!), that the path to righteousness is based on faith, not on doing a prescribed set of “works.” On the other hand, there are numerous biblical commands that instruct us to do good deeds. Indeed, James 2:14-16 seems to backpedal on the teaching in Galatians by saying that faith – by itself -- is not sufficient: God expects us to follow up His work in our lives by performing good deeds.

While this topic is bigger than we can cover in one day’s study, hopefully the discussion below will help us get a better understanding of what the Bible means when it says that we are “righteous-ized” by “faith in Christ,” not by “observing the law” (cf. Galatians 2:15,16).

3. Given your current understanding, how do YOU reconcile the teaching that (i) Christians are to have “faith in Christ” and not depend on their own efforts to produce righteousness; with (ii) biblical commands to do good deeds, and the James passage which teaches that “faith by itself...is dead?”

My answer is given below.

4. Critically evaluate the following reconciliation:

When the Bible speaks of “faith in Christ,” it means much more than intellectual assent. It means a genuine embrace of biblical truth. James teaches that to SAY that one cares about others but not DO anything about it really means that one doesn’t care. In other words, one didn’t REALLY mean what one said. Genuine faith means what it professes. If I say that I believe that the world will end tomorrow, but I stay up all night studying for an exam the next day, I reveal that I didn’t really believe what I was saying! THAT kind of faith is “dead,” since it is not genuine faith. Genuine faith will always be reflected in actions.

James 2:18: “But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and **I will show you my faith by what I do.**”

Further, the Christian who lives by “faith in Christ” knows that while God wants us to do good deeds, the fact is we are powerless to do so on our own. Faith is exercised both in (i) embracing that we are “new creatures” who want to do the will of God (even if we don’t feel like it), and (ii) acknowledging our inadequacy to God and turning to Him for the empowerment to do “works” (even when we feel we can do it without His help).

What do you think? Does this help to sort out the conflict discussed in (3) above? Elaborate on any additional thoughts or questions you have about this subject in the space below.

I think the passage from James is a helpful reminder of what the true nature of faith is. Faith isn’t just giving intellectual assent that something is true.

Genuine faith places the weight of one's life on the truth of what the Bible teaches.

5. In Ephesians 2:10, it says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." In this verse we find wonderful purpose for the life of a believer. Literally, this verse tells us that we are God's "master pieces," created by Him with specific and wonderful actions that He wants to work through us in this world. Have you ever stopped to consider this before? God not only has saved us, but He has great plans to use us for a glorious purpose IN THIS LIFE! The key, though, is to remember that God wants to do His work through us with His power, therefore, we must submit to Him in faith in order to see Him work fully in and through our lives. How does this truth help encourage you that your life (and your works done by His power through faith) matter to God?

It helps me to recognize that this teaching on grace is not prescribing "license." It is not about being released from God's standard of righteousness. Rather, it is about making it possible for me to achieve that standard.

6. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.
What do you think? Do you feel like you are making progress on this teaching about grace?

WEEK TEN: Galatians 5:16-26

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 5:16-26.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

5:16. Live by the spirit.

5:17. The flesh and the spirit are in conflict with one another.

5:18. To be led by the spirit is to be out from under the law.

5:19-23. Living in the power of the flesh will produce a very different life than living in the power of the spirit.

5:24-26. While we have received new natures, we need to live according to them.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 5:16-26.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
There’s a lot in these verses about the Spirit. Did you have questions about that/Him? Other questions?
3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?

What did you find particularly striking or noteworthy in this week’s study?

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 5:16.
2. Answer the following multiple choice questions below (BE HONEST):

The mature Christian’s capacity to sin is **C) NO DIFFERENT** than the immature Christian :

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| a) somewhat less | b) more |
| c) no different | d) vastly less (he/she has no capacity to sin) |

When it comes to temptation, the mature Christian is tempted...: **C) THE SAME**

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| a) less | b) more |
| c) the same | d) not at all (temptation has gone away) |

In your life experience as a Christian, has temptation **C) STAYED THE SAME** as you have grown?

- a) gone down
- b) gone up
- c) stayed the same
- d) gone away

In your life experience as a Christian has sin **C) STAYED THE SAME** as you have grown?

- a) gone down
- b) gone up
- c) stayed the same
- d) gone away

As you honestly answered those questions above, are you encouraged or discouraged? Why?

I wouldn't say encouraged or discouraged, but sobered: It is sobering to think that the issues I am dealing with now will not fade away as I get older. That motivates me to deal with them now.

3. Consider the following verses that describe the human experience . . . FOR CHRISTIANS:

1 John 1:8,10: *"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."*

Romans 3:10-12: *"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'"*

Romans 7:18a,25b: [Paul speaking] *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. ... So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."*

4. In reality, whether we realize it or not, all of us have a daily struggle with sin. This struggle is real and it is daily for the person living on this side of the grave. However, as we answered the questions in number 2, and looked at the verses above, one of three things might be going through your head.

- a) You might be thinking that your struggle with sin is great (far greater than even your friends or anyone else on this planet knows) and you are feeling hopelessly immature in your Christian life, failing to meet God's holy standard.

- b) You may be thinking that you don't really sin that much, so the verses you read under point 3 really don't seem to apply to you, or to Christians who are mature.
- c) A third option is that you understand that you understand that the normal Christian life is marked by an ongoing battle with sin, and so these verses provide a humbling reminder but not a crushing blow in your pursuit of Christian maturity.

Which of these three options best describes your feeling as you reflect on today's lesson so far? Be honest. Which position do you think best fits in with the teaching of Galatians 5:16-26?

I think (C) fits best. Galatians 5:17 states that the "flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." There is no indication that this situation applies only to new believers/young Christians.

- 5. According to Galatians 5:16, how are Christians supposed to counteract the "desires of the flesh/sinful nature?"

Christians should "walk by the Spirit."

- 6. Galatians 5:16 speaks of "walking by the Spirit (NASB)" or "living by the Spirit (NIV)." This phrase literally pictures the Christian life as a "walk in the Spirit's power." Why do you think that God chose the picture of walking (something we do everyday) to compare the kind of relationship He wants us to have with the Holy Spirit in our lives? What do you think it means (in plain English) to "walk by the Spirit"?

I believe walking by the Spirit means to live my life by faith. To recognize my inadequacy to live righteously in my own power; to embrace God's will for my life as my own; and to rely on God's power to do that which He has called me.

- 7. Just between you and God, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "No Clue" and 10 is "Very Well", how well do you understand what the Bible means when it commands us to "walk by the Spirit?" Circle your answer below, again being careful to be COMPLETELY HONEST.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What did YOU put down?

- 8. If you are having trouble getting your hands around this concept of "walking by the Spirit," don't be discouraged. Think how hard it would be to explain what it is like to walk upright on two legs to somebody who had spent their whole life crawling on all fours.

We have spent our entire lives walking in the power of the flesh. Of course it is difficult for us to understand what it is like to walk in the power of the

Spirit! Why don't you ask God, right now, that He would teach you in your heart how to live His way, in His power, by His Spirit?

I will!

Day Four:

1. Read Galatians 5:17.
2. In your own words, explain what Galatians 5:17 is saying. Can you give an example of a "Galatians 5:17-type" experience from your own life? Elaborate in the space below.

Galatians 5:17 says that Christians have an internal struggle between "the flesh" and "the Spirit." I can think of many examples of "Galatians 5:17-type" experiences in my life. How about you?

3. What is your mental image of "the Christian life?" Is it one of internal spiritual harmony? Peaceful serenity? A cool, calm, confidence in the face of life's challenges? How does that mental image square with Galatians 5:17?

My answer is given below.

4. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 11:28-30: [Jesus speaking] *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

John 14:27a: [Jesus speaking] *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."*

Philippians 4:6,7: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Romans 7:18-24: [Paul speaking] *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*

Galatians 5:17: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

5. Well, what is it? What kind of experience should the Christian expect from being a follower of Jesus? One of internal peace and harmony? Or one of internal turmoil as the flesh and Spirit conflict with one another within the believer (cf. Galatians 5:17)? Try and reconcile these competing pictures of the Christian life in the space below.

In my opinion, I think it is a fair statement to say that “the Christian life” should lead to an experience of overall joy and satisfaction. However, as Galatians 5:17 teaches, there is an underlying internal struggle that can erupt in spiritual turbulence.

An apt analogy might be that of an army that occupies a defeated country. While the enemy is “defeated,” small-time insurgencies can still erupt from time-to-time, producing turbulence and conflict that can be unsettling.

6. Critically evaluate the following reconciliation of the verses above:
The answer to the question, What kind of life can the Christian expect?, is BOTH! Jesus brings peace and relief from the anxiety of life. We can take confidence in the fact that we have a God who loves us, and watches out for us, and guarantees us that all things work out for good (cf. Romans 8:28). On the other hand, the regenerated Christian is home to two natures: A new nature that desires to please God, and an old nature that rebels against God. Both natures are in active conflict with one another (cf. Galatians 5:17).

The reconciliation comes in seeing this latter conflict as the “growing pains” associated with “Christ being formed” in the Christian (cf. Galatians 4:19). Like the “growing pains” associated with childhood, these pains too will pass. One day we will be entirely freed from this body of death, and given a new glorified body in which our new natures will reign without internal conflict. In that day, we will know a peace that “surpasses all understanding.”

Romans 7:24,25a: [Paul speaking] “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

What do you think? Does this reconciliation seem satisfactory to you? Elaborate in the space below.

I like it! How about you?

Day Five:

1. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 5:16-18: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you _____
_____”

2. Suppose the Holy Spirit had asked you to write the book of Galatians and that He dictated the verses above but told you to fill in the remainder of the sentence. How would you have finished Galatians 5:16-18? What would you have written to fill in the blank?

My answer is given below.

3. I would have probably written something like “you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” or “you will live the righteous life God intends for you.” Instead, the Holy Spirit through Paul writes “you are not under law.” Don’t you find that a little strange? Why do you think the Holy Spirit did it that way? What is the meaning of Galatians 5:18?

Clearly, the Holy Spirit through Paul equates carrying out the desire of the flesh with being “under the law.” My explanation for why this might be so is given below.

4. Consider the following verse:

1 Corinthians 15:56: “*The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law.***”

Are you a little surprised by this verse as well? What does Scripture mean when it says “the power of sin is the law?” Write any thoughts you have on this in the space below.

I was surprised by this verse. How about you? My thoughts on this verse are given below.

5. Consider the following verses:

Romans 7:4,5: “*So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, **the sinful passions aroused by the law** were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.*”

Romans 7:9-11: “*Once I was alive apart from law; but **when the commandment came, sin sprang to life** and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.*”

6. The verses above make a powerful point about the relationship between law and sin. Accordingly, consider the following interpretation of this teaching:

It seems perfectly reasonable to attempt to overcome sin in our life by trying harder. More discipline, more resistance to temptation, and more accountability are the “religiously correct” responses to sin. Yet the New Testament, in a dazzlingly radical teaching, says that these approaches are ineffective at

combating sin in our lives. Even more remarkably, Scripture teaches that these approaches will make our sin problem worse -- not better -- because the attempt to impose control on ourselves only serves to inflame our sin natures.

Critically evaluate this interpretation. Do you agree with this statement? Do you think it overstates the biblical position? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

I have definitely had instances in my life where my attempts to control a sin problem only made the sin worse. Here's an example that might be common to most people: Have you ever had a problem with a bad habit, like cracking your knuckles, or chewing your nails, or smoking? Generally speaking, I have found if I try to directly control a bad habit by focusing on keeping myself from doing it, I only make things worse. Have you ever had that experience?

I have also noticed the same principle at work when comes to sin issues in my life. This is consistent with what Scripture teaches about "the law arousing the passions of the flesh."

7. Consider the following verses:

Romans 7:6b: "...we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

Galatians 5:18: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law."

8. One possible interpretation of Galatians 5:18 is the following:
Sin is a huge problem in Christians' lives. While we have the Spirit of God, a battle is taking place inside of us as the Spirit seeks to establish His reign over our sinful natures. The good news is that, if we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, we can break the slavery to sin in which living under law had us trapped.
What do you think of this interpretation? Do you think it accurately represents the meaning of Galatians 5:18? Elaborate in the space below.
I like this interpretation, but I might modify it slightly. "Being under law" represents the entire system by which a person attempts to control their behavior through external constraints. If we are led by the Spirit, we are removed from this "system," and can enjoy true freedom from the power of sin.

9. Read Galatians 5:19-23.

10. Refer to Galatians 5:19-23 in completing the sentence below:

*Actions spring from a source. The source of sinful behaviors like immorality and strife is **THE FLESH, THE SINFUL NATURE**. The source of righteous characteristics like love, joy, and peace is **THE SPIRIT**.*

11. One interpretation of Galatians 5:16-23 is that those who want to live righteously should not focus their attention on behaviors, but on the source of those behaviors. If we want to live righteously, then we need to focus our attentions on following the Spirit.

What do you think of this interpretation? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

I agree with this interpretation.

12. What does it mean in real life to focus on the source of our behaviors, instead of the behavior itself? Walk through what it would look like to deal with a sin in your own life by focusing on the source instead of the behavior?

Consider the sin of being irritable and short-tempered with the people I am living with. I could try and directly control this sin behavior. For example, I could build in “rules” to help me behave better. I might adopt a “count to 10” rule to keep me from losing my temper when I get angry at somebody. I might build in time alone where I can “air out” and build up my “emotional reservoir.” I might confront the people I am living with in an effort to get them to change, so that it will be easier for me to live with them. All of these responses focus on the behavior.

Alternatively, I could realize that the problem is “me;” or better yet, my flesh/sinful nature. What I really need is to have Christ change my heart. This approach would find me confessing my sin to God, and praying for/counting on His Spirit to enable me to be more patient and loving. This approach directly addresses the source of the problem, rather than the problem itself.

Day Six:

1. Read Galatians 5:24-26.
2. In 5:25, Paul says that we not only live by the Spirit, but that we also “keep in step with the Spirit (NIV)” or “walk by the Spirit (NASB)”. The word translated walk in 5:25 is a different word than the one translated “walk” in 5:16 in the original language. The NIV translation is preferable here, as it more accurately captures the meaning of this word. What do you think it means to “keep in step with the Spirit?”
It is my understanding that “keeping in step with the Spirit” means allowing Christ to live out His life through me. This is just another way of describing the Christian experience of living life by “faith/grace” rather than “by law.”
3. We saw in yesterday’s study that the flesh and the Spirit were two sources out of which our behavior flowed. I believe that the Bible also teaches that these two sources also will always lead to two separate destinations. The Spirit will always lead to obedience to God in righteous living. The flesh will always lead to disobedience to God and judgment. Knowing where the Spirit is going, how does that help you to know how to “keep in step with the Spirit” in your life today?”

If I think I am “keeping in step with the Spirit,” but I find myself rebelling against God’s standard of righteousness, then that is a strong indication that I am not living according to the Spirit.

4. Consider the following verses:

Ephesians 4:30: “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*”

1 Thessalonians 5:19: “*Do not quench the Spirit.*”

These two verses also help us to understand the concept of keeping in step with the Spirit. How do they help you to understand the idea of keeping in step with the Spirit better?

These verses remind me that the Spirit resides within me and has the desire to move in my life to produce righteousness. Thus should encourage me to be willing to believe Him to do that.

5. Based on what you have seen in today’s study, how would you apply the concept of keeping in step with the Spirit to various areas of your spiritual life? (Including following Biblical commands, reading and studying God’s Word, praying, responding by faith to God, evangelism, etc.)

Let’s take the biblical command to give financially to support God’s work. Many Christians follow the Old Testament practice of “tithing,” in which they dedicate a fixed percent of their income to church, charity, and mission organizations. This is a clear example of living under law, since it reduces financial giving to a rule.

In contrast, the New Testament teaches that “he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

In other words, God has graced me to be “cheerful giver.” That is who I really am, even if I don’t feel that way. By faith I embrace God’s command to give financially, believing that that is what I really want to do, and I trust that God will produce liberality and generosity in me to make me a cheerful giver. How that plays out in my life, in terms of how much to give, is something that I should “purpose in my heart,” by praying and seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

6. Suppose somebody you knew was struggling with a powerful sin in their lives. Maybe it was anger towards a parent/child/spouse, or materialism, or pornography. How would you counsel them to deal with this sin in their lives?

How could you help this person put into practice the biblical instruction on “walking by the Spirit” and “keeping in step with the Spirit?”

My advice would be different depending on whether the person was a Christian or non-Christian. In both cases, I would emphasize that the real problem was in their heart. If they were not a Christian, I would tell them that they needed to have Christ in their lives to help them solve their problem.

If they were a Christian, I would tell them that they needed to allow Christ to live out His life through them. That would require them to (i) recognize their inadequacy to overcome their problem on their own, (ii) believe that they had a new nature that desired to do God's will in this area, and (iii) rely on Christ to overcome their sin problem and produce righteousness within them.

7. What did you find most spiritually impacting in this week's study? Elaborate.

What did you find spiritually impacting this week? I hope you find your spirit being refreshed by this wonderful “gospel of grace.” Only one more week to go!

WEEK ELEVEN: Galatians 6:1-18

Day One:

1. Read Galatians 6:1-18.
2. Summarize these verses by making an outline consisting of numerous “sections”, attaching a brief description for each section (cf. Day One of Week One). Write your own outline in the space below. Try not to refer to other outlines that may be presented in your Bible and elsewhere.

6:1,2. Keep watch spiritually over your brothers, helping them when they need it.

6:3-5. Don't think yourself too good to help others, but be conscientious to carry the load the Lord has given you.

6:6. Those who receive instruction in God's Word should be quick to share good things with their instructor.

6:7,8. Put your efforts towards pleasing the Spirit, not pleasing one's sinful nature.

6:9,10. Persevere in doing good, especially to other believers.

6:11. Paul closes his letter by writing with his own hand.

6:12,13. Those who want you to follow the law are doing it for wrong motives, that they can boast in what they have done.

6:14. The only thing Paul boasts in is the cross.

6:15. It's not about the outside (circumcision), but about the inside (a new creation).

6:16,17. Peace and mercy will flow to those who follow the true gospel; those who preach a different gospel should not contest with Paul.

6:18. Paul expresses the hope that the Galatians will know grace in their spirits.

Day Two:

1. Review Galatians 6:1-18.
2. Think of some questions that might lead to an important spiritual “discovery.” Write them in the space below, then pray that God would answer your question(s).
This is your last chance to come up with questions for our Galatians study. What questions did you come up with?
3. What observations do you have of this passage? To say it another way, what stands out to you most about what you read this week?
What insights and observations did you make this week?

Day Three:

1. Read Galatians 6:1-10.

2A. In the space below, make a list of all the things that Galatians 6:1-10 says Christians should do.

- *Reach out to fallen brothers/sisters to restore them to fellowship*
- *Help out others when they have a heavy load*
- *Support, financially and otherwise, your Bible teachers*
- *“Sow to the Spirit”*
- *Do good to all men, but especially to other Christians*

2B. What is the common theme of the instructions in Galatians 6:1-10?

The common theme in Galatians 6:1-10 is to help other Christians.

2C. Are you a little surprised by the statement, “do good to all men, and *especially to those who are of the household of the faith*” (Galatians 6:10)? Do you think this verse is teaching that service to others in the body of Christ is more important than other kinds of Christian service, such as evangelism? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

I don't think this verse necessarily teaches that service to Christians is of higher importance than evangelism. But I do think it emphasizes the importance of serving the body of Christ. It reminds us that “charity” begins at home.

3. Read Galatians 6:11-18.

4A. Consider the following verses:

Galatians 6:14,15: “*But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*”

4B. What do you think it means when it says, “*neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation*”?

My interpretation is given below.

4C. One possible interpretation of Galatians 6:15 is that the gospel is not about what happens on the outside of a person (circumcision, things a person does), but about what happens on the inside of a person (being a new creation).

What do you think? Is that a satisfactory interpretation of this verse? Elaborate your thoughts in the space below.

It is not the outside that matters, but what is inside. External things matter only to the extent that they reflect the internal. I am called to place my trust in Christ and to embrace the fact that I am a new creature, whom Jesus desires to live through.

Days Four and Five:

NOTE: The remainder of our Galatians study is designed to encourage you to reflect on all that you have learned this semester.

1. Read through the outline below and see if you can find a succinct “heading” for each of the indicated sections of Galatians. Try and write your headings so that by reading them, one after the other, you can “walk through” the main ideas in Galatians. (Feel free to rearrange sections, or come up with your own outline if you’d like.)

HEADING: GREETINGS FROM PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

- 1:1,2. A formal introduction of Paul to the churches in Galatia.
1:3-5. Greetings, with a reminder of what the Christian life is all about.

HEADING: OTHERS ARE PREACHING A FALSE GOSPEL

- 1:6-9. Paul condemns those who have misled the Galatians with a different gospel.
1:10-12. Paul emphasizes that his gospel is from God.

HEADING: PAUL’S GOSPEL COMES FROM GOD

- 1;13,14. Before his conversion, Paul was rapidly advancing within Judaism.
1:15-17. After his conversion, Paul went into seclusion in Arabia, and then moved to Syria.
1:18-24. Three years later, he made his first trip to Jerusalem – a brief visit with Peter and James to “get acquainted.”
2:1-5. Fourteen years after that, Paul traveled again to Jerusalem to confront the apostles over the issue of circumcision.
2:6-10. The Jerusalem leadership recognized the authenticity of Paul’s gospel and embraced him in fellowship.
2:11-13. Paul recounts an incident in which Peter felt pressured by Jewish legalists to disassociate himself from Gentiles.
2;14. Paul publicly rebuked Peter for violating the truth of the gospel by making Gentiles adopt Jewish customs.

HEADING: RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES FROM GOD BY FAITH, NOT LAW

- 2:15,16. Man is not justified by works, but by faith in Christ.
2:17,18. If Christians sin, it’s not because they haven’t sufficiently followed the law, but because they are lawbreakers by nature.
2;19. Paradoxically, the purpose of the law is to cause one “to die to the law and live for God”
2:20a. Christians have died and been born again, so that Christ lives in them.
2:20b,21. The Christian life is lived by faith, through grace, otherwise Christ’s death means nothing.

HEADING: THE FOOLISHNESS OF LIVING BY LAW

- 3:1. Paul is incredulous that the Galatians could have left the gospel of the crucified Christ.
- 3:2. Paul wants to know how the Galatians began their Christian lives.
- 3:3,4. Paul asks why the Galatians are trying to live their Christian lives different from how they first began.
- 3:5. Paul asks on what basis is God currently working in their lives? Because of their faith? Or because they follow the law?

HEADING: ABRAHAM AS PRECURSOR OF THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH

- 3:6-9. Abraham is an example of obtaining righteousness by faith.
- 3:10. Living by law puts one under a curse.
- 3:11. One cannot be “righteous-ized” by following the law.
- 3:12. The law is different than faith.
- 3:13,14. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by enabling us to receive the Spirit through faith.
- 3:15-18. Since the law came after Abraham, it did not set aside the covenant of faith that God made with him and “his seed.”

HEADING: THE LAW WAS GIVEN TO LEAD US TO CHRIST

- 3:19a. The law was given because of sin.
- 3:19b,20. The law is different from “the promise” because it came through a mediator.
- 3:21,22. The law cannot produce righteousness.
- 3:23-25. The law was designed to lead us to Jesus.
- 3:26-29. There is now no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, since all receive their righteousness through Jesus.

HEADING: WE HAVE BEEN REDEEMED FROM LAW TO BE FULL SONS OF GOD

- 4:1-3. Being under the law is like being a “child heir” in that one does not have access to all the benefits of being an heir.
- 4:4-7. But now that Jesus has come, we can be “full heirs” of God.

HEADING: PAUL BEGS THE GALATIANS TO RETURN TO FAITH LIVING

- 4:8-11. Paul cannot understand why the Galatians would want to go back to being slaves.”
- 4:12-16. Paul appeals to the Galatians on the basis of his previous relationship with them.
- 4:17-20. Paul warns the Galatians that those who preach another gospel are zealous, yes, but not for a good purpose.

HEADING: ABRAHAM'S TWO CHILDREN PICTURE LAW VERSUS GRACE

- 4:21-23. Abraham had two sons, "one by the slave woman, the other by the free woman."
- 4:24,25. The slave woman, Hagar represents the "Old Covenant," which is equated with slavery.
- 4:26,27. The free woman, Sarah, represents the "New Covenant" and freedom, which produces far more "children" than the ordinary way.
- 4:28,29. Just like then, the children of "law" want to persecute the children of "promise."
- 4:30,31. But the Scripture says to "get rid of the son of the slave woman," since they cannot coexist.

HEADING: WE HAVE BEEN FREED SO THAT WE MAY LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY

- 5:1. We were redeemed from sin for the purpose of "freedom."
- 5:2-4. Those who attempt to live by law are "alienated from Christ" and "fallen from grace."
- 5:5,6. We wait to receive our righteousness by faith.
- 5:7-12. Those who preach another gospel are not from God and deserve severe punishment.
- 5:13-15. We are free, but not to sin.

HEADING: WALK BY THE SPIRIT

- 5:16. Live by the spirit.
- 5:17. The flesh and the spirit are in conflict with one another.
- 5:18. To be led by the spirit is to be out from under the law.
- 5:19-23. Living in the power of the flesh will produce a very different life than living in the power of the spirit.
- 5:24-26. While we have received new natures, we need to live according to them.

HEADING: BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS, ESPECIALLY CHRISTIANS

- 6:1,2. Keep watch spiritually over your brothers, helping them when they need it.
- 6:3-5. Don't think yourself too good to help others, but be conscientious to carry the load the Lord has given you.
- 6:6. Those who receive instruction in God's Word should be quick to share good things with their instructor.
- 6:7,8. Put your efforts towards pleasing the Spirit, not pleasing one's sinful nature.
- 6:9,10. Persevere in doing good, especially to other believers.

HEADING: FINAL EXHORTATION TO EMBRACE GOD'S GRACE

- 6:11. Paul closes his letter by writing with his own hand.
- 6:12,13. Those who want you to follow the law are doing it for wrong motives, that they can boast in what they have done.
- 6:14. The only thing Paul boasts in is the cross.
- 6:15. It's not about the outside (circumcision), but about the inside (a new creation).
- 6:16,17. Peace and mercy will flow to those who follow the true gospel; those who preach a different gospel should not contest with Paul.
- 6:18. Paul expresses the hope that the Galatians will know grace in their spirits.

Day Six:

1. Reflect on all the great truths that you have learned in your study of Galatians this semester. What did you find most spiritually impacting in your study? Elaborate in the space below.

What most impacted YOU in studying this great book of the Bible?