

## Small Group Materials: Introduction to Galatians

*Leaders' Note: We'll be spending the next few months in the book of Galatians. This study is intended to provide just a brief overview of the book. We'll delve deeper into the specific issues as we move through it in smaller chunks.*

**Pray for your time together in God's Word.**

### Questions for Discussion

**Ask the Group:** Think about the first time you heard the Gospel message. Who or what influenced your understanding of the Gospel?

*Possible Answers: A friend's opinion, a pastor, pop culture.*

**Ask the Group:** How would your understanding of the Gospel be different if you did not have the Bible?

*Possible Answers: You would need a full trust in the authority and authenticity of the Gospel "preacher" and the Gospel they were preaching; there would be nothing to compare their message to. If needed, remind your small group members that the church in Galatia did not have the Bible in the sense that we do today. It was being written!*

**Read to the Group:** Just as it's best to read an email or watch a movie in one sitting, the same is true for letters in the Bible. We'll take the next 20 minutes to read through Galatians. Pay attention to who wrote it, who was receiving the letter, and why the author was writing to them. Also, note the author's tone. In the original Greek text, his writing is much more aggressive and forceful in nature--at times, even sarcastic!

**Read all of Galatians out loud.** Option: Give group 15-20 minutes to look at the book on their own

*Leader's Note: The following chart (sans answers) is also located on the handouts for your group members. You can choose to have a "guided whiteboarding" time where you complete it together as you read through the passage, or have your group members fill it out on their own and share their responses after you've finished reading.*

<p><b>Author:</b></p> <p><i>Possible Answer: Paul</i></p> <p><i>Leader's Note: Ask your group members to share what they know about Paul. If needed, you can divide your group into three smaller groups to read the passages below and report out on what they</i></p>	<p><b>Audience:</b></p> <p><i>Possible Answers: Church of Galatia</i> <i>Gentiles, new believers, had Paul visit them and share the Gospel</i></p>
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<p><i>learned about his background. An important aspect to highlight is his authority as an apostle.</i></p> <p><i>Acts 8:1-3</i></p> <p><i>Acts 9:1-9</i></p> <p><i>Philippians 3:4-7</i></p>	
<p><b>Major Themes:</b></p> <p><i>Possible Answers: Grace and freedom; multiple contrasts: Liberty vs. legalism, Fruit of the Spirit vs. desires of the flesh, true vs. false gospel, law vs. grace, sonship vs. slavery</i></p>	<p><b>Other Items of Note:</b></p> <p><i>Leader's Note: Your group members can fill in any interesting first observations about this book as a whole, letter-writing in ancient times, specific verses to come back to in later studies, etc.</i></p>

### Questions for Discussion

**Ask the Group:** Have you ever witnessed someone in the process of making a colossal mistake? How did you respond and why?

*Possible Answers: Bad decision in an athletic event, career move, area of sin.*

**Read to the Group:** This letter is Paul's response to the Galatians making a colossal mistake about the Gospel. They had recently been visited by "agitators". These agitators were asking the churches in Galatia to add Jewish cultural traditions to the practice of their faith in order to validate their salvation. Paul writes this letter to combat the "false teaching" and to defend his apostleship. Paul's central point in Galatians is that salvation is based on trusting Christ and not in fulfilling religious or cultural behaviors.

**Ask the Group:** What is the central message of the Gospel?

*Possible Answers: Grace, through Christ, not law saves you.*

- What false teachings have distracted you in the past from the Gospel?  
*Possible Answers: Fitting a certain cultural "Christian" mold, having salvation based in good works, prosperity gospel, etc.*
- What risk is there in losing the central message of the Gospel?  
*Possible Answers: If we add works to the Gospel message, Jesus Christ's death becomes meaningless. We put ourselves, again, under the law and works, then Christ is of no benefit to us. Christ came to abolish the law and bring freedom; losing that centrality should be offensive and should provoke a forceful or aggressive nature in our defense of the Gospel.*
- How can you actively combat the false teachings you encounter?  
*Possible Answers: Continually returning to the central message of grace and freedom of the "Christ-alone" Gospel; being mindful of the ways we may be adding to the gospel in our lives; using Scripture as a filter of authoritative truth.*

**Ask the Group:** What is our community application of this passage?

*Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.*

### **Glossary**

**Agitators:** Those in the church who spread false teaching about what the Gospel means.

**False Teachings:** Teaching that does not line up with the true Gospel message and Scripture.