

## Study: Galatians 1:11-24

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

### *Questions for Discussion:*

**Read** the following statements. Discuss as a group if they are true or not and how you **know** they are true.

- 1) The world is round.
- 2) The Witch's Hat tower near the U of M Campus is only open one day per year.
- 3) Pepperoni and Mushroom pizza is the best type of pizza there is.

*Possible Answers: Scientific evidence, Wikipedia, because it's printed in the small group materials, someone knowledgeable or respectable told me, the Bible says so, because I've seen it myself...*

**Ask the Group:** Let's review [Galatians 1:1-10](#). From these verses, what was Paul's main concern for the Galatians?

*Possible Answer: That they are believing a Gospel different from the one Paul preached.*

**Read [Galatians 1:11-24](#) as a group.**

Optional: Ask someone who enjoys being dramatic (and is willing to read something spontaneously) to stand up and pretend they are making a speech to the group as they read the text. The purpose of this is to grasp that Paul is, in essence, making a persuasive speech.

<sup>11</sup> I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin.<sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. <sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. <sup>17</sup> I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

<sup>18</sup> Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

<sup>21</sup> Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

<sup>23</sup> They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."<sup>24</sup> And they praised God because of me.

Questions for Discussion:

**Ask the Group:** According to the text, what is the source of Paul's authority?

*Possible Answer: Revelation of Jesus Christ*

Optional (For Additional Discussion):

In order to better break down and discuss the passage, one can see Paul's argument as though it were a persuasive essay (like the ones you had to write in English class). If this section of Galatians were an essay, what would be the thesis? What are the arguments Paul poses to support his thesis?

*Possible Answers: His thesis is that, as an apostle, his own authority (and thus the authority of the Gospel he preaches) comes not from others, but from God.*

Point 1: *He used to get his authority from the zealous pursuit of traditions, but that was wrong.*

Point 2: *God set him apart from birth for a different purpose that superseded his own (or other people's) plans for his life.*

Point 3: *God "revealed his son in" Paul - it was not a tradition that was taught.*

Point 4: *Paul's interaction with the original apostles was limited in that it was a) delayed by three years, and b) only with Peter and James his brother, and c) only for 15 days. Thus he was not "underneath" them, or taught by them.*

Point 5: *He was unknown amongst "the churches of Judea that are in Christ", other than for the story of his conversion. Meaning he was not taught by them either.*

**Read the sections of Acts 9 below for some background on how Paul came to believe in Jesus:**

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem...<sup>13</sup> "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name..."

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. <sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. <sup>21</sup> All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" <sup>22</sup> Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Questions for Discussion:

**Ask the Group:** What was different about the source of Paul's authority before and after he believed in Jesus?

*Possible Answers: Before - he upheld traditions and received authority from the chief priests. After - revelation of Jesus trumps all.*

**Ask the Group:** What does Paul mean by "set apart from birth?"

- How does this fit into the argument he's making?

*Possible Answers: God foreknew what Paul would experience! Not only that, but God planned it. See Acts 9:16, where Jesus says about Paul "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." The fact that Paul's future circumstances and position were preordained confirms that Paul's claims of authority come from God.*

**Ask the Group:** Do you feel like God has known you since birth?

- How has this shaped the way you view yourself and/or God's role in your life?

Background/Context Note

For more information on Paul's view on this topic, see Romans 8:29-30, 9:11-29, and Eph 1:4-5.

**Ask the Group:** Can you think of any examples in Scripture of how people respond to God's calling? What is unique about their responses?

*Possible Answers:*

*Moses in Exodus 3:1-11*

*Gideon in Judges 6:15- 18 and 7:19-25*

*Simon, James, and John in Luke 5:1-11*

**Ask the Group:** In verses 11-14, Paul gives a brief testimony of his own conversion. What are the key moments he highlights?

*Possible Answers: He persecuted the church, was zealous, advancing in Judaism, immediately responded to God's call.*

- If you had to give your faith story as an "elevator speech" (i.e. a story that could be shared during an elevator ride), what would you choose to highlight, and why?

**Ask the Group:** Paul states that God was "pleased to reveal his Son in me **so that** I might preach Him among the Gentiles". How do you think God is calling you to respond to the Gospel?

**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.*