

# NO OTHER GOSPEL: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE ON GALATIANS

## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This guide is not the object of the study. It is a pointer to the Bible, which should be the focus of the study/discussions. To get maximum benefit from the study, a few suggestions could be helpful.

### **a. Preparation**

Each member of the group needs to go through each study before the actual meeting time. This would deepen your insights and greatly enrich the discussions. Then spend some time in prayer for the study and for the group.

### **b. The Discussion**

Each member must participate in the discussions.

The guide is designed in the Inductive Bible Study method, which aims to get the message of the Bible by first getting the details of the text and then drawing the conclusions and lessons from them. Each sub-section has 3 questions:

1. **Observation:** Meant to help you get the facts directly from the text. Ask yourself the question: ‘What does the text literally say?’ Do not spend too much time on this question.
2. **Interpretation:** Meant to bring out the meaning of the text. ‘What do you think the writer intended to communicate? How do you think the first readers of the text understood its message?’ Allow sufficient discussions on this question.
3. **Application:** Meant to help you relate the message of the text to your own life. They are questions for personal or group application of the facts. Allow sufficient discussions on this question. The applications should be as honest and as practical as possible.

### **c. Memory Verse**

As a key verse for the study, it helps you to keep in memory whatever is learnt in the discussions. Do your best to memorize it. Check on one another at the beginning of the next study.

## PREFACE

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians is one in which we see the apostle on the war path. The Galatians were converts to whom Paul had preached the gospel, together with Barnabas, on his first missionary journey. But they now seemed to be in danger of adulterating the gospel they had received by mixing it with another. Some people were also out to influence them and scandalize Paul and the gospel he had preached.

We live in a context where we receive a wide variety of teachings. Similarly, spiritual harvesters abound. We hear so many things that it takes much conscious effort to choose what to and what not to believe. Otherwise we become doctrinal nomads; tossed all over like waves in the sea.

Over the years of church history, people have lived to greatly appreciate the value of this epistle in setting forth the message of the gospel. Martin Luther claimed Galatians as “my Epistle.” So wedded was Luther to *Galatians*, both in interest and temperament, that together, they shaped the course of the reformation.

As we study this book, we look at the Galatians and understand what they were going through, then evaluate ourselves against their experiences. We look at ourselves and our context and see the areas in which their experience ‘strikes home’ in our own. And as we listen to God speak to us, we make choices and decisions that will greatly influence our beliefs and lifestyles. Paul’s battle is a battle for the gospel; a battle for people. And this battle is ours today. Battling not only for our own souls, but also for the souls of others around us.

**NOTE:** All scripture quotations in this guide are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright. By International Bible Society.

## STUDY 1: THE DIVINE GOSPEL (Gal. 1: 1 - 24)

### *Introduction*

“Tossed back and forth by the waves”; “blown here and there by every wind of teaching”. These could be the expressions to describe many Christians of our time. When we hear different and at times conflicting teachings, not only can we get confused, but we might also be left wondering where it all comes from.

### *a. A Solemn Warning (Gal 1:1 – 10)*

1. a. From the start of his address to the Galatians, Paul uses some very stern expressions. Point these out.  
b. Why is he so hard on them?
2. Why did Paul fear so much for the Galatians?
3. What was the content of the gospel that you heard and accepted when you got saved?

### *b. The Origins (Gal 1: 11 – 24)*

1. What is the basis of Paul’s great confidence in the gospel he preached? How does he prove it?
2. Why would it be so important for him to go into all this debate?
3. How can we develop such strong convictions about the truth of the Gospel that we believe and preach?

### *Memory verse: Gal 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.

When he was challenged to address an unjust dealing at work, a brother in Christ simply responded: “I pick my fights!” He meant that he could not take the risk of facing his leaders when he was not sure what consequences would follow. The need to ‘rise to the occasion’ and contend for what we know is right often presents itself to us, both outside and inside the church. How we respond matters a great deal.

### *a. Defending the Truth (Gal. 2:1 – 10)*

1. What were the highlights of Paul’s visit described in this passage?
2. a. What do you think were the threats to the gospel at this point?  
b. How did Paul respond to each of them?
3. What are some issues in your context that you think are potential threats to the truth of the gospel, and against which you need to stand, as individuals and as the church?

### *b. Confronting the Error. (Gal. 2:11 – 21)*

1. a. How and why did Peter change attitude towards Gentiles when at Antioch?  
b. What arguments does Paul use to confront Peter’s error?
2. a. On what ground did Paul feel free to challenge Peter’s behavior?  
b. What wrong message was Peter communicating about the Gospel by his ‘hypocrisy’?
3. a. Have you ever happened to behave in a way that contradicts the truths you believe? What caused you to do that?  
b. What would you do in a circumstance where you hear the truth of the Gospel trampled on?

### *Memory verse. ( Gal 2:11)*

We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

## STUDY 2: CONTENDING FOR THE GOSPEL (Gal. 2:1 – 21)

### *Introduction*

## STUDY 3: THIS IS THE GOSPEL. (Gal. 3:1 – 3:25)

### *Introduction*

Back in 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany lived a man, Martin Luther, a catholic monk. Held by a paralyzing sense of his own sinfulness, Luther tried to “earn his salvation.” He fasted for days on end, and slept without a blanket in freezing winter. He obeyed every ‘law’ of the monks. He later said: “I kept the rule so strictly, that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his sheer monkery, it was I.” He pushed himself so hard that one day he cried out: “I do not love God! I hate him!” But soon he found, in the pages of scripture, this beautiful truth! Sola Fide!<sup>1</sup>

### *a. Sola Fide: Faith Alone! (Gal. 3:1 – 3:14)*

1. a. What was the problem of the Galatians as portrayed in this passage?  
b. Outline how Paul attempts to convince them that they are justified by faith?
2. What do you understand this statement to mean: “The righteous will live by faith?”
3. In what areas of our Christian experience (as individuals, fellowships and the wider church) do we see ourselves under the same kind of pressure as the Galatians? How will you respond to such?

### *b. The Purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:15 – 25)*

1. What, according to this passage, was the relationship between the law and the promise?
2. How would the law lead people to Christ?
3. In view of the above, what should be our attitude towards the Law of Moses? What is its relevance to us today?

### *Memory Verse (3:23,24)*

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

## STUDY 4: BLESSED IN THE GOSPEL (Gal. 3:26 – 4:20)

### *Introduction*

It is said that a young eagle would stay forever in the nest, not conscious of its capacity to be the king of the air, unless it is helped to discover itself and live its name. Then it goes out and soars in the skies. There is a way that failing to understand ones identity affects whatever they are and do.

### *a. A New Identity. (Gal. 3:26 – 4:7)*

1. a. How does Paul describe the Galatians’ new identity in Jesus Christ?  
b. What blessings have come to them with this new identity?
2. What is the significance of being a “son” and an “heir” in this context?
3. Do you count yourself to have a ‘new identity’ in Christ? What blessings have you received through this?

### *b. Live the Name! (Gal. 4:8 – 20)*

1. a. What was Paul’s concern for the Galatians?  
b. Paul contrasts several states/experiences of these people. Identify them. How did they get to each of these states?
2. Why do you think Paul appeals to the testimony of his past relationship with the Galatians?
3. Is there any area of your life in which you know you are not living up to your identity as a son of God? What will you do to change this?

### *Memory Verse (Gal. 4:7)*

So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

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<sup>1</sup> Shelly, Bruce, Church History in Plain Language. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1995.

## STUDY 5: FREEDOM IN THE GOSPEL (Gal. 4:21 – 5:12)

### *Introduction*

It has been said that whoever takes you to jail can by no means be your brother. Neither is he a friend. He wants to kill you! While these assertions are highly debatable, they reflect man's love for freedom. No one wants to be jailed; restricted. People take up arms, fight and kill; nations are ruined, all in the name of defending freedom. If physical or political freedom is so valuable, so is spiritual freedom as well!

#### *a. Slave or Free? (Gal. 4:21 – 5:1)*

1. Identify the different areas of comparison and contrast described in this passage?
2. a. "Who are the 'children of Hagar' in this analogy?  
b. What do you think would be the significance of knowing that they are the children of the "free woman?"
3. For us today, what are the benefits of being "children of promise ...of the free woman?"

#### *b. Guard Your Freedom! (Gal. 5:2 – 12)*

1. What arguments does Paul use to persuade the Galatians not to let themselves be circumcised?
2. a. Why was the question of circumcision such a major issue in Paul's message?  
b. What do you think this statement meant to the Galatians: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free?"
3. Are there areas in which you need to guard your freedom in Christ? How will you do this?

### *Memory Verse (Gal. 5:1)*

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

## STUDY 6: THE FRUITS OF THE GOSPEL. (Gal. 5: 13 – 6:10)

### *Introduction*

Many a time, the cross we are called to bear as Christians seems heavy; like when temptations assail us. Then we wonder how far God can let us stretch the rules. Just how far can we indulge our freedom? Having attempted to convince his readers of the teaching of the true gospel, the apostle now turns to instruct them concerning the behaviour agreeable to it. Yes you have freedom in Christ, so.....

#### *a. A Titanic Battle. (Gal. 5:13 – 26)*

1. a. How should the people use their newly found freedom in Christ?  
b. Outline the "acts of the sinful nature" mentioned in this passage.  
c. What would mark a life lived by the Spirit?
2. In view of the above, and of the conflict mentioned in this passage, what would it mean for the Galatians to "live by the Spirit?"
3. a. The writer seems to suggest that there is a perpetual conflict in each believer. In what areas of your life do you experience this conflict?  
b. Share with one another what actions you might take to experience the victory of the Spirit in these areas; and take time to pray for one another.

#### *b. Doing Good. (Gal. 6: 1 – 10)*

1. a. Identify the different instructions that the apostle gives to the Galatians, which would govern their relationships within the Christian community.  
b. How does he motivate them to do this?
2. What would it mean to "carry each other's burdens" while each one carries "his own load?" (verses 2 and 5: NIV)
3. Is there anybody you know whose burdens you can help "carry"? What practical steps will you take for that?

***Memory Verse (Gal. 5:16)***

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

***Memory Verse (Gal. 6: 15)***

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

**STUDY 7: WHY DIFFERENT GOSPELS? (Gal. 6: 11 – 18)**

***Introduction***

Trust matters. It is because we trust that we believe those we interact with are motivated by a desire for our ultimate good. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. And where motives are twisted, someone is bent to suffer. In this letter, Paul battled, with the preachers of another gospel, for the soul of the Galatians. Before signing off, he lets us see what this battle is all about.

***The Motive for Another Gospel. (Gal. 6: 11 – 18)***

1. a. Why did these other people try to compel the Galatians to be circumcised?  
b. What contrast do you see between their motives and Paul's convictions and experience?
2. What would be the significance of the Galatians understanding and appreciating these differences between their influencers?
3. What practical examples can you learn from Paul, as you consider your own life and service?

***What Really Counts! (Gal. 6: 11 – 18)***

1. From this passage, why does “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mean anything?”
2. a. Why do you think it was important for the people to “follow this rule?”  
b. How does this reflect what has been discussed in the entire book of Galatians?
3. Have you experienced the reality of a new creation in your life? Share your testimony with your group, and take time thank God for what He has done in each of your lives.