

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

VIDEO
ACCESS
INCLUDED

ELIZABETH WOODSON

LIVE FREE

A STUDY OF
GALATIANS

ELIZABETH WOODSON

LIVE FREE

A STUDY OF
GALATIANS

Lifeway Press®
Brentwood, Tennessee

Published by Lifeway Press® • © 2025 Elizabeth Woodson

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Lifeway Press®, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100; Brentwood, TN 37027-7707.

ISBN: 978-1-4300-9501-9

Item: 005847566

Dewey decimal classification: 227.4

Subject heading: BIBLE. N.T. GALATIANS--STUDY AND TEACHING \ CHRISTIAN LIFE \ FREEDOM

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright ©2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. ESV Text Edition: 2016. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

To order additional copies of this resource, write Lifeway Resources Customer Service; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100; Brentwood, TN 37027-7707; FAX order to 615.251.5933; call toll-free 800.458.2772; email orderentry@lifeway.com; or order online at lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America

Lifeway Resources
200 Powell Place, Suite 100
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

Author represented by Erik Wolgemuth of Wolgemuth & Wilson

Cover design by: Micah Kandros

EDITORIAL TEAM, LIFEWAY WOMEN BIBLE STUDIES

Andrea Lennon
Director,
Lifeway Women

Tina Boesch
Manager

Chelsea Waack
Production Leader

Laura Magness
Content Editor

Sarah Kilgore
Production Editor

Lauren Ervin
Art Director

Shiloh Stufflebeam
Graphic Designer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	ABOUT THE AUTHOR
5	HOW TO USE THIS STUDY
6	FOREWORD
10	SESSION ONE: Introduction
22	SESSION TWO: Paul's Defense of Gospel Freedom Galatians 1
44	SESSION THREE: Freedom from the Law Galatians 2
66	SESSION FOUR: Freedom by Faith Galatians 3:1-14
88	SESSION FIVE: Free through Christ Galatians 3:15-4:7
110	SESSION SIX: Children of the Free Woman Galatians 4:8-31
130	SESSION SEVEN: Spirit-led Freedom Galatians 5
150	SESSION EIGHT: Live Free Galatians 6 & Conclusion
170	APPENDIX: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
172	ENDNOTES
177	VIDEO REDEMPTION CARD

ABOUT *the* AUTHOR



ELIZABETH WOODSON is a Bible teacher and author who is passionate about equipping believers to understand the rich theological truths of Scripture. She loves helping people internalize their faith and connect it practically to everyday life.

She is a contributing author for *World on Fire*, and the author of *From Beginning to Forever* and *Embrace Your Life: How to Find Joy When the Life You Have Is Not the Life You Hoped For*. Elizabeth is also a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary with a Masters in Christian Education and regularly serves as a teacher for Lifeway Women Academy.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book is designed to be used in a specific way, with the days of personal study walking you through the three-step study process of observation, interpretation, and application. However, the homework will also prepare you for two other essential components of this study: small group discussion and video teaching.

Our study of the Bible happens best in community. You will likely have questions as you walk through the workbook. Your time in community with me through the video teachings and/or with your small group will help resolve those questions for you.

In light of this, below are my recommendations for how to best use this study:

GROUP STUDY

Step 1: Complete the homework.

Step 2: Discuss the homework questions with your small group. I have noted some of the questions that will work well for group discussion, and these can be found on the “Group Discussion” page at the end of each session.*

Step 3: Watch the video teaching. Turn to the last page of this book for information on how to stream the teaching videos.

INDIVIDUAL STUDY

Step 1: Complete the homework.

Step 2: Watch the corresponding video teaching. Turn to the last page of this book for information on how to stream the teaching videos.



*LEADING A GROUP?

An extended leader guide PDF is available for free download at lifeway.com/livefree. The leader guide offers several tips and helps along with discussion guides for each session.

FOREWORD

Welcome to *Live Free: A Study of Galatians*. This study is designed to help you learn how to study the Bible. Many of us approach our study of the Bible with the primary purpose of finding truth to help us live well. And this is not a bad goal. But while the Bible was written *for us*, it was not originally written *to us*.

Each time we open our Bible, we are entering a conversation that is already in progress. These conversations are words written by the biblical authors to groups of people who lived in a different time and culture than us. The biblical authors also had a specific message they desired to communicate to their audience. So, before we look to see what the text means for us, we need to learn what the text meant to its original audience. This study you're holding in your hands was designed to teach you a process that will help you read Scripture in this way.

The process I encourage for Bible study is called the Inductive Bible Study Method, an approach that looks at the text first for observation, next for interpretation, and finally for application.¹ This process invites us to slowly walk through the text by asking three critical questions:

1. Observation asks, "What does it say?"
2. Interpretation asks, "What does it mean?"
3. Application asks, "How does it apply to my life?"

The order in which we ask these questions matters. Unfortunately, we tend to rush too quickly to application, skipping observation and interpretation. When we do this, we run the risk of developing application points that might sound good but aren't faithful to the original meaning of the text. We also rob ourselves of the opportunity to grow in our Bible study skills—to become good students of Scripture we must trust the process, which includes developing the tenacity to keep going when it gets hard.

At some point in time, all of us have come across a passage of Scripture that was confusing or difficult to understand. In this moment our first response is usually to find a commentary or look at the study notes in our Bibles. While this

seems to be a helpful response, it rushes us out of a very important part of our learning process—applying our own minds to the text. Even though our lack of understanding can make us uncomfortable, this discomfort is often the place where learning happens. As we take the time to wrestle with the text on our own, rather than look for quick answers, our ability to read the Bible well grows!

For this reason, as you walk through this study I encourage you to refrain from using commentaries until after you have finished the homework and listened to the video teaching. Then, feel free to use them to answer any remaining questions you might have!

The following commentaries on Galatians are trustworthy and informed my study and writing of this book:

- *Galatians for You* by Tim Keller
- *Galatians (The Story of God Bible Commentary)* by Nijay Gupta
- *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* by David Platt

Keep in mind, commentaries don't only come in the form of books. Other types of commentaries include videos, the notes in your study Bibles, online articles, podcasts, and/or sermons from trustworthy sources. These resources can be very helpful, but when used prematurely they will stunt the growth of your personal Bible study muscles.

The ultimate goal of Bible study is to grow in our knowledge of and love for God. This growth is not merely an accumulation of knowledge for knowledge's sake; we need to apply what we learn about God to our lives. Knowing God more changes us. For this reason, at the end of each week's homework we will be challenged to meditate on what we have learned about God in that week's portion of the text and then identify at least one way we can live differently based on what we've learned. These two small steps are simple but powerful and will cause your relationship with God and others to be forever changed.

A WORD *from* THE AUTHOR

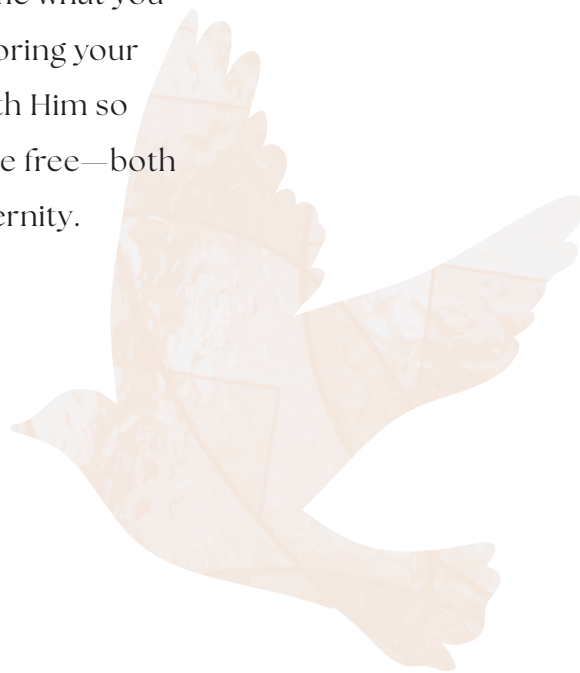
When people ask me to share my favorite books of the Bible, I usually mention one written by the apostle Paul. I resonate with his passion for ministry and appreciate the clarity and directness with which he communicated. He was a man deeply acquainted with the nuances of culture and could contextualize the gospel without losing the core of its message. He also understood the distractions, false gospels, and idols that constantly vie for our attention and heart affections. I believe that in each of the thirteen letters Paul wrote in the New Testament, he always invites us to choose the better way—the way of Christ.

This theme of choosing the better way rises to the top of his letter to the church at Galatia. In my glorified imagination, I see Paul writing this letter with great fervency after learning how the Galatian believers were being led astray by the false gospel of legalism. With each word he writes, Paul fights to ensure that nothing stands between the Galatian believers and the freedom they have in Christ, for it is this freedom that fuels both their eternal salvation and the abundant life they experience daily. The same holds true for us today. When we are freed from the power of sin, we are simultaneously freed to experience the *shalom* (wholeness and peace) that God designed us to enjoy.

As you read Paul's words, I hope you see his love for God's people shine through, even in the moments when his words are sharp and spicy! More importantly, as Paul slowly and methodically defends the truth of the gospel, I hope you are overwhelmed in all the best ways by God's love for you and the intentionality of His plan of redemption. You are deeply loved by a God who, through Christ, overcame what you could not, restoring your relationship with Him so that you can live free—both now and for eternity.

Elisabeth

You are deeply loved
by a God who, through
Christ, overcame what you
could not, restoring your
relationship with Him so
that you can live free—both
now and for eternity.





INTRODUCTION

The book of Galatians is a small part of a big story, a story that includes all sixty-six books of the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, every word, event, and character is interconnected and points to an overarching message about God's redemption of humanity through Jesus Christ.

This larger story, also known as a metanarrative, provides the framework we need to interpret the rest of Scripture. If we study a part of the Bible without considering the big picture, we risk incorrect or incomplete interpretation of a passage. We miss the broader themes that run throughout the text. We fail to see the significance of the cultural, historical, and literary context. And worst of all, we end up using the Bible to justify our own beliefs or opinions rather than allowing it to shape our thinking and transform our lives.

So, before we zoom in on the message of Galatians, let's zoom out to make sure we understand the story of the Bible.

ZOOM OUT

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

Sin Enters
the World

God Creates
the World

Moses

The Judges

The Kings

Exile



Genesis 1–2

Genesis 3

Genesis 4–50

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 & 2 Samuel

1 & 2 Kings

1 & 2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Jesus's Birth

Jesus's Death

The Church

Jesus's Return

Creation
Restored

REDEMPTION

RESTORATION

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 & 2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 & 2 Thessalonians

1 & 2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 & 2 Peter

1, 2, & 3 John

Jude

Revelation

CHAPTER 1: CREATION

GENESIS 1–2

From the very first sentence in Genesis, we are told that God created the world. Out of nothing, all of creation came into being by His power. From the overflow of His love, God created nature, animals, and humans—male and female. Unlike the rest of creation, God created humanity in His image. As image bearers, we were designed to be God’s representatives, reflecting His glory to the world. We were also given the responsibility to cultivate the earth, building a beautiful world for the benefit of humanity and God’s glory.

In the beginning everything was perfect. Then something changed.

CHAPTER 2: FALL

GENESIS 3

Eve got a visit from Satan in the form of a talking serpent. He suggested that she shouldn’t follow the rules God had given her but should do what she thought was best. In rebellion, Adam and Eve rejected God’s rule over them and decided to live as their own gods. With this one decision they unleashed sin into the world, and suddenly, what God created perfect was broken. But in His grace, God promised to fix all that sin destroyed.

CHAPTER 3: ANTICIPATION

GENESIS 4–MALACHI

As the story unfolded, God’s restoration plan was accomplished through a series of promises, called covenants. God started with a man named Abraham, making a covenant to bless his family and to use his family to bless the world. After hundreds of years, Abraham’s descendants, the nation of Israel, became enslaved. Remembering His covenant, God used a man named Moses to set them free. But He also made another covenant with Israel.

Through Moses, God committed to be Israel’s King, and they committed to follow Him. God gave them the law, showing Israel

how to live as His people by loving Him and loving others. But Israel had one problem—they kept choosing their way over God’s way. In the midst of it all, God made another covenant with Israel through a king named David. God promised to raise up a King that would rule forever, perfectly leading Israel to love God and love others.

But Israel continued to persist in a sinful lifestyle. God used prophets to call them to repent, but they didn’t listen. So, in love, God punished Israel by sending them into exile. During this exile, He made one last covenant with them, promising to provide a permanent solution to their sin. He would save not only Israel but all of humanity through a future King who would lead them to live in God’s way.

God eventually released Israel from exile, but they continued to struggle with sin. Israel needed God’s promised Savior and, for hundreds of years, they waited, anticipating His arrival.

CHAPTER 4: REDEMPTION

MATTHEW–JUDE

One night, a virgin girl named Mary gave birth to a baby named Jesus. This child was the Messianic King God had promised Israel. At thirty, Jesus began His ministry by telling Israel He is God, their promised King and Savior. Along the way, He gathered a few disciples to follow and learn from Him. With them by His side, Jesus told Israel about the kingdom of God, teaching them that kingdom living involves rejecting selfishness, embracing God’s sovereign authority, and prioritizing the flourishing of all humanity.

Jesus told Israel that salvation from sin and entrance into the kingdom comes through Him alone. Some accepted His message. Most didn’t, and they ended up killing Him because of it. But three days after Jesus’s death, He was resurrected from the grave—conquering sin and death and restoring the kingdom of God for Israel and the entire world!

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples one last mission: Tell the world the good news. The promised King has come, and eternal life is available to all through Him. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples set out on this mission, and it is one we, as the church, continue today.

Living counter-culturally, as members of the body of Christ, we commit ourselves to self-sacrificially love God and love others. We obey His commands as we corporately proclaim the gospel, both in word and deed. Through our words we invite people to experience eternal life through faith in Jesus. Through our actions we live out the implications of the gospel, helping to heal the brokenness caused by sin and build a world where *all of creation* thrives. Even amid the difficulties of life, we resist the false gods of this world to find our hope and comfort in the one true God because our ultimate allegiance is to His kingdom.

CHAPTER 5: RESTORATION

REVELATION

In the final pages of the story, we are told that one day our Savior and King, Jesus Christ, will return to fully restore the kingdom of God. God's plan of salvation will be complete. Sin, evil, death, and Satan will be no more. When this happens, believers will not escape to a far-off world; we will stay here. Heaven and earth will be reunited, and all of creation will be perfectly restored.

In a world with no sin, believers will perfectly love God and love others. We will live out our divine design as image bearers, reflecting the glory of God and thriving alongside all creation in the fullness of our restoration. We will live in the kingdom of God, under His rule, and love and worship Him forever.

As we study the Bible, it is easy for us to forget this larger story and focus on what a single passage means for us as individuals today. But every passage in the Bible is designed to point us to a larger message about who God is, who we are in Him, and what it means for us to live in His world. Through Christ, God has redeemed humanity so that we might live in shalom—peace and wholeness—with Him for eternity. By centering our understanding of Galatians within the larger storyline of the Bible, we are able to guard ourselves against misinterpreting Scripture. We are also able to keep the main thing the main thing, which is the glory of our triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



From Genesis to Revelation,
every word, event, and character
is interconnected and points
to an overarching message
about God's redemption of
humanity through Jesus Christ.

TIMELINE *of* PAUL'S MINISTRY

DATE	EVENT	SCRIPTURE
AD 33*	Paul's Conversion on the Road to Damascus	Acts 9:1-20
AD 33/34	Spends three years in Arabia	Gal. 1:17
AD 36/37	Meets with Peter in Jerusalem, flees to Tarsus	Acts 9:26-30; Gal. 1:18-21
AD 37-45	Lives and ministers in Syria/Cilicia	Gal. 1:21-24
AD 44-47	Ministry with Barnabas in Antioch	Acts 11:25-26
AD 46	Visits Jerusalem during the famine	Acts 11:27-30
AD 46-47	First Missionary Journey Writes Galatians	Acts 13:4-14:26
AD 48	Returns to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Council	Acts 15
AD 49-52	Second Missionary Journey Writes 1&2 Thessalonians	Acts 15:36-18:22
AD 52-57	Third Missionary Journey Writes 1 & 2 Corinthians	Acts 18:23-21:17; 1 Cor. 16:1-8; 2 Cor. 2:1-4; 7:8-16
AD 57-62	Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, transferred to Caesarea, and imprisoned in Rome (house arrest) Writes Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon	Acts 21:27-28:31
AD 62-64	Released from house arrest and travels to Spain on his fourth missionary journey Writes 1 Timothy & Titus	Titus 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:13,20
AD 64	Arrested and imprisoned in Rome again Writes 2 Timothy	2 Tim. 2:9; 4:6
AD 64-67	Martyred	

**All dates are approximate and may vary by source.¹*

MAP of PAUL'S MINISTRY



*Based on map #119 in the Holman Bible Atlas.?

WATCH



Watch the Session One video and take notes below.

Now, through this week's teaching video, let's zoom in on the story of Galatians together, focusing on its historical, cultural, and literary context.

1. What is *context* and why should studying it be an essential part of our Bible study process?
2. Who is the author of Galatians? | *Historical Context*
3. When was Galatians written? | *Historical Context*



Paul's Defense of
**GOSPEL
FREEDOM**

GALATIANS 1

Paul is writing to the churches in the region of Galatia. However, one thing hinders his letter from being well-received—his reputation. False teachers have been spreading lies about Paul, telling the Galatian believers that he is self-serving, dishonest, and devoid of authentic spiritual authority. So, in the first chapter of his letter to the Galatians, he will share about his testimony and early years of ministry to refute these falsehoods. He realizes that to convince the Galatians they are being led astray by a false gospel, he must first demonstrate that he is a trustworthy source and worth listening to. From Paul's example we're reminded that our spiritual reputation and testimony can either hinder or help advance the proclamation of the gospel.

Day One

READ GALATIANS

Read or listen to an audio version of the entire book of Galatians.
Then answer the questions that follow.

What questions do you have after reading through Galatians?

What are your initial thoughts after reading through the book?

In one sentence, summarize your understanding of the main idea
of Galatians.

Day Two

INTRODUCTION & GREETING (1:1-5)

Paul opens his letter to the Galatians with a greeting that establishes his authority and reminds them of the God who has graciously rescued them from their sins.

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead— ² and all the brothers who are with me: To the churches of Galatia. ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. ⁵ To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

GALATIANS 1:1-5

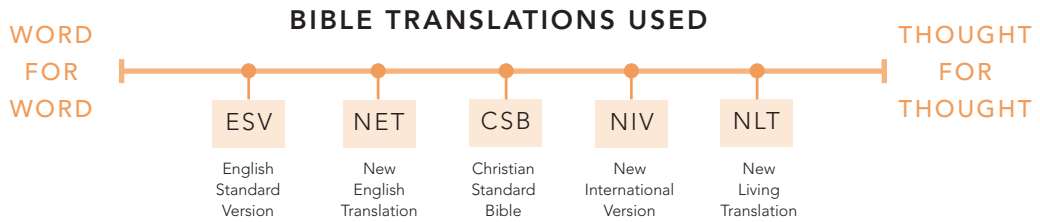
1. In **1:1**, Paul introduces himself as an *apostle* and mentions two sources of apostolic authority. Which one is greater?

Why do you think Paul begins the letter by making this distinction?

DIGGING DEEPER

An *apostle* is someone who has been directly taught and sent out on mission by Jesus Christ. These people have the authority to speak on behalf of Jesus and their writings are considered Scripture.¹

Throughout the study, we will compare verses in different Bible translations. Good online resources to compare Bible translations include biblehub.com and biblegateway.com. You can use the chart below to learn a little more about the different translations we will use in this study.²



2. Look up **1:2** in the NIV and NLT. In addition to Paul, who is sending this message to the Galatians?

Are you surprised by who is included in this group? Why or why not?

3. Fill in the table below to summarize how Paul describes the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ in **1:1-4**.

	GOD THE FATHER	JESUS CHRIST
1:1		
1:4		

4. Read Ephesians 2:1-5:

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ²in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. ³We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, ⁵made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!

How does this passage help you understand why Paul says we need to be rescued in **1:4**?

5. Reflect on Paul's description of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Why do you think he decides to end his greeting in **1:5** by ascribing glory to God?
6. **REFLECT & RESPOND:** Look back to Paul's description of God the Father and Jesus Christ in **1:1-4**. What are some practical ways you can glorify God for His gracious gift? Give one or two examples.

Day Three

ONE TRUE GOSPEL (1:6-10)

Paul wastes no time in sharing the reason for his letter. He is frustrated that the Galatians have walked away from the gospel truth he taught them. He wants to make sure they know what they are hearing from the Judaizers about the gospel is not true!

DIGGING DEEPER

The Judaizers were a group of Jewish Christians who believed faith in Jesus *and* adherence to the Mosaic law were required for salvation and that these requirements applied to both the Jews and the Gentiles. (See p. 50 for more on the Judaizers and legalism.)

⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! ⁹ As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him! ¹⁰ For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

GALATIANS 1:6-10

7. How does Paul describe the Galatians' actions in 1:6?

The Galatians are turning away from:

The Galatians are turning to:

8. What comparison does Paul make between the “different” gospels that the Galatians are being taught and the gospel of Jesus Christ in 1:6-7? Check the correct answer below.

- The different gospels help clarify the gospel of Christ.
- The different gospels are more confusing than the gospel of Christ.
- The different gospels are contrary to the gospel of Christ.

For more, read “Let’s Talk About: The Gospels” (p. 32).

9. **REFLECT & RESPOND:** In today’s current culture, there is an overflow of information about Christianity available online. Through content avenues like sermons and social media posts, people can help others grow in their understanding of Christianity. However, what’s said isn’t always true and may lead people to internalize information that is contrary to the faith it claims to represent.

What are some examples of “different gospels” that are being taught today, either from church pulpits or online?

What is the danger of believing these modern-day false gospels?

How can we be more discerning about the spiritual information we consume in these spaces?

10. Compare **1:7** in the CSB and the NIV. Fill in the chart below to indicate what words or phrases are used.

CSB	NIV
<p>" _____ you"</p>	<p>" _____ you into _____"</p>
<p>"want to _____ the gospel of Christ"</p>	<p>"trying to _____ the gospel of Christ"</p>

How does comparing **1:7** in these two translations help you understand the impact of these "different gospels"?

11. Who is the "we" Paul is referring to in **1:8-9**?

The Greek translation for "a curse" is *anathema*, which means condemned to hell.³ Why do you think Paul believes this should be the end result of those who are preaching "different gospels" to the Galatians?

12. In **1:10**, Paul asks some questions to refute false information that was being spread about him. What was he being accused of? Is there any merit to these claims? Explain your answer, using Galatians 1:1-10 to help with your response.

13. **REFLECT & RESPOND:** As Christians, sometimes we have to fight against pleasing people. Whether it's motivated by fear or an unhealthy desire to be celebrated or affirmed, giving into this temptation leads us to choose the approval of man over the approval of Christ.

Describe a situation in which you were tempted to please others rather than serve Christ. Did you give into temptation? Why or why not?

Read Psalm 139:23-24. What insight do these verses provide into how we can overcome this temptation?



LET'S TALK ABOUT

The Gospel

Galatians 1:6-9

The word *gospel* is derived from the Greek word *euangelion*, which literally means “good news.” This term was originally used to announce various types of news, ranging from victory in battle to the birth of a child.⁴ In Scripture, *euangelion* takes on a spiritual meaning, as it is used to announce the good news that the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, has come to earth. While many people associate the gospel with the first four books of the New Testament, which describe the life and ministry of Jesus, they aren't the first place in Scripture where the gospel is described.

We receive the first announcement about God's plan of salvation back in Genesis 3. (See “Zoom Out: The Story of the Bible” on pages 12-16.) God created the world and entrusted its care to His image bearers, Adam and Eve. However, they chose to

disobey God's instructions, leading to sin and destruction instead of the environment of *shalom* (peace) God had created.

Then in Genesis 3:15, as God punished Adam, Eve, and the serpent for rebelling, He told them, “I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” This verse is often referred to as the *protoeuangelion*, or the “first gospel.” God promised that sin would not prevail forever and that, one day, one of Eve's descendants would emerge victorious over it!

The rest of the Old Testament builds off this promise, as we see God continue to make promises (or covenants) to redeem humanity. Therefore, when we come to

Matthew 1:1 and learn about Jesus's birth, it is good news because it is the fulfillment of all the promises God made throughout the Old Testament.

When sin entered the world, it sought to destroy everything. It created a counter pathway to the life God designed for us. As we read through the Old Testament, we observe the devastation produced when we choose sin's door to "life." But because Jesus the Son came to earth, died on the cross, and was resurrected, we are no longer bound by the power of sin. He set us free, and through Him we are able to experience life with God. This new life brings *shalom* for us individually and corporately. Then one day, when Christ returns, He will heal all of creation from the effects of sin, and we will live in *shalom* for eternity.

This is the gospel!

We are no longer bound by the power of sin. Jesus set us free, and through Him we are able to experience life with God.

Day Four

PAUL'S TESTIMONY, PART 1 (1:11-16)

Paul knows the Judaizers have been telling the Galatians mistruths about him. Specifically, that he does not have any authority to teach the gospel. So, before he can show the Galatians why the Judaizers are misleading them, he first has to prove that he is worth listening to.

DIGGING DEEPER

For Paul, Judaism was a way of life based on the beliefs and practices of the Torah, but also on the historic traditions of the Jewish people. For his past self, this necessitated his participation in a movement to defend these traditions against Christians.⁵

¹¹ For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. ¹² For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵ But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

GALATIANS 1:11-16

14. In **1:11-12**, Paul emphasizes the true source of the gospel he preaches. Fill in the chart below to summarize what he says.

Who Paul *did not* receive the gospel from

Who Paul *did* receive the gospel from

Why is he making this distinction for his readers? Look back to **1:10** for help with your answer.

15. Compare **1:13** in the CSB (on previous page), ESV, and NET. What word is used in place of “intensely” in the following two translations?

ESV _____

NET _____

What do these descriptions reveal about the way Paul was persecuting the church?

16. In **1:13-15**, Paul shares about his life before Christ. We are given more detail about his story in Acts 7:57–8:3 and Philippians 3:4-6. Read both of these passages and then note below what you learn. (Note: “Saul” was Paul’s Jewish name.)

Before Christ, Paul was:

17. In **1:15-16**, Paul lists three things that God did on his behalf. Note them below.

a.

b.

c.

What was the goal of God's work in Paul's life?

18. Reflect on Paul's salvation story. How does what he shares in **1:16** help support his claim in **1:12-13**?

19. **REFLECT & RESPOND:** What tends to make us believe that our past actions can prevent God from using us for ministry?

In these moments, how can Paul's testimony encourage us?

Sadly, many Christians around the world are still being persecuted for their faith. Take a few moments to pray for these brothers and sisters, asking that God would protect, encourage, and provide for them. Visit christianresponse.org or persecution.com to learn more about the persecuted members of the global church and ways you can support them.

Day Five

PAUL'S TESTIMONY, PART 2 (1:17-24)

Paul continues to share his testimony to defend his apostolic authority. His after-conversion experience shows how he received his information about the gospel from one primary source, Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.

¹⁸ Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you. ²¹

Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ. ²³

They simply kept hearing, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.

GALATIANS 1:17-24

20. Why is Paul intentional about telling us he didn't speak with the apostles in Jerusalem following his conversion (1:17)? Look back to 1:12 for help with your answer.

DIGGING DEEPER

The apostles who came before Paul were Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Matthias took Judas's place after he died (Matt. 10:2-4; Acts 1:23-26).

21. In **1:17-21**, Paul shares about where he goes after he encounters Christ on the road to Damascus. Use the map to illustrate his journey by labeling each city with a number that corresponds with its order in Paul's travels. (#1 = Damascus, #2 = Arabia, and so on.)



Then write the letter "J" in the region where the Judean churches were located.

22. Look back to **1:18-19**. Fill in the chart below to summarize Paul's journey to Jerusalem.

After how many years did Paul go to Jerusalem?	
How long did he stay?	
Who did he see while he was there?	
Why might these people be considered influential by Paul's readers? Look up John 1:42 for help with your answer.	

23. How does the Judean church respond to reports about Paul's ministry (1:22-24)?

In light of Paul's life before Christ, why is their response significant?

24. **REFLECT & RESPOND:** After his conversion, Paul spends many years in solitude with God, learning gospel truth from Him. Why do we as believers need to spend time in silence and solitude with God?

What obstacles prevent us from regularly practicing this spiritual habit? Which do you struggle with most?

REFLECTION

UPWARD: What did God teach you about Himself through Galatians 1?

INWARD: How would your life change if you believed this truth?

OUTWARD: Share what you learned this week with a friend or family member.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank God for being present with you in your study time and ask Him to help you live out the truth you learned this week in Galatians 1.

DISCUSS

Discuss the following questions with your Bible study group. A more extensive leader guide is available for free download at lifeway.com/livefree.

1. (Question 4, p. 27) Read Ephesians 2:1-5. How does this passage help you understand why Paul says we need to be rescued (1:4)?

(Question 6, p. 27) **REFLECT & RESPOND:** Look back to Paul's description of God the Father and Jesus Christ in 1:1-4. What are some practical ways you can glorify God for His gracious gift? Give one or two examples.

2. (Question 10, p. 30) How does comparing 1:7 in the CSB and NIV help you understand the impact of the "different gospels" the Galatian Christians encountered?

(Question 9, p. 29) **REFLECT & RESPOND:** What are some examples of "different gospels" that are being taught today, either from church pulpits or online? What is the danger of believing these modern-day false gospels? How can we be more discerning about the spiritual information we consume in these spaces?

3. (Question 17, p. 36) What was the goal of God's work in Paul's life?

(Question 19, p. 36) **REFLECT & RESPOND:** What tends to make us believe that our past actions can prevent God from using us for ministry? In these moments, how can Paul's testimony encourage us?

4. (Question 23, p. 39) How does the Judean church respond to reports about Paul's ministry (1:22-24)? In light of Paul's life before Christ, why is their response significant?

(Question 24, p. 39) **REFLECT & RESPOND:** After his conversion, Paul spends many years in solitude with God, learning gospel truth from Him. Why do we as believers need to spend time in silence and solitude with God? What obstacles prevent us from regularly practicing this spiritual habit? Which do you struggle with most?

5. (p. 40) **REFLECTION:**

Upward: What did God teach you about Himself through Galatians 1?

Inward: How would your life change if you believed this truth?

Outward: How can you share what you learned this week with a friend or family member?

WATCH



Watch the Session Two video and take notes below.

**TO ACCESS THE VIDEO SESSIONS, USE THE INSTRUCTIONS
IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.**