

height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

John 17:23 ESV - 23 I [Jesus] in them and you [God] in me, that they [believers] may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

**2**

Read Galatians 2:12-16 in your Bible

Matthew 23:23, 25, 28 NIV - 23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! **You give a tenth** of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. **But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness.** You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ... 25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! **You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.** ... 28 In the same way, on the **outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**

Matthew 23:13 NIV - 13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

**3.**

Matthew 22:37-39 ESV - 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Romans 2:4 ESV - 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Galatians 2:18-21 NLT - 18 Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. 19 For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law--I stopped trying to meet all its requirements--so that I might live for God. 20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

## ***"Landmines to the Gospel"***

*Galatians- week #3*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The path to the Gospel should be easy. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus - period. Simple, straightforward, Jesus plus nothing! But there will always be those who attempt to place requirements on believers that become barriers, or landmines, that derail us from that easy path. Sometimes we do this unintentionally by expressing strong opinions of what a "Real Christian" should do. At other times we may try to impose rules to help "earn our way" to heaven. Regardless of the source, these non-essentials create the kind of division Paul found in Galatia. Paul was intent on setting the record straight; it is not by following the rules that we are saved but by God's grace and Jesus' death and resurrection alone.

### **Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)**

What is one trait that you would say everyone in your family shares?

### **STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)**

#### **Essential or Non-essential?**

**1. Read 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Ephesians 3:16-19; John 17:23  
ESV - 23**

The believers in Galatia were told by Jewish converts that they must adhere to the Law in order to be acceptable to God. Specifically, that they must be circumcised. This put the burden of salvation on their ability to keep the law's requirements. But that is not what the Gospel tells us! Our intimate bond to God is not dependent upon keeping the law. What does our relationship with God depend on? (1 Corinthians 1:30-31, Ephesians 3:17)

What does John 17:23 reveal about God's intention for His relationship with us as well as our relationship to one another? When we require anything in addition to faith in Christ we put a landmine in the path of our brothers. What are some of the common landmines that can destroy unity among believers? Have you personally witnessed division that resulted from some of these non-essentials?

## Hypocrisy in the Church

### 2. Read Galatians 2:12-16, Matthew 23:23, 25, 28; Matthew 23:13

One of the most common complaints you will hear about the church is that it is filled with hypocrites. This is not a new development. What hypocrisy was Peter guilty of according to Paul in Galatians 2:12-16? Maybe you have been there yourself. Someone enters the room and you suddenly change your behavior. What are some rules that you may feel pressured to observe in order to meet the expectations of others, even if you don't believe that God sees this as an essential of the faith? (what you drink, how you vote etc)

Some of Jesus' strongest criticism was leveled at those who were hypocrites in the church. In Matthew 23:23, 25, 28, what were they focused on and what did they miss? The real danger in hypocrisy is revealed in Matthew 23:13. What happens to those who are trying to enter the kingdom of God when hypocrites weigh them down with non-essentials? (Matthew 23:4) We must fight to keep the door to the Kingdom of God wide open to our brothers and not cause them to stumble by imposing our own rules and opinions on them.

## Slaves to Non-essentials or Freedom in Christ

### 3. Read Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 2:4; Galatians 2:18-21

If we want to know what is really important to God, look at Matthew 22:37-39. When we love God and love people everything else falls into perspective. Have you ever witnessed a street preacher demanding his audience to repent? What was the people's response to that message? The truth is we don't respond to the law and our guilt for breaking it, we respond to God's kindness, His grace and the good news of the gospel. (Romans 2:4)

Of course, we ourselves can get stuck on that moral treadmill, becoming slaves to the non-essentials. Paul certainly had experience living that life. In Galatians 2:18-21 what did he share about what he found to be true of the law? Trusting in our ability to keep the law puts us in constant jeopardy. What is it that gives us freedom in how we live (Galatians 2:20)? How do we put that into practice in our lives on a daily basis?

## WRAP-UP

Sometimes we, as Christians can unintentionally plant landmines in the path of others that can damage people's faith, create roadblocks between them and God, or take them out of the fight entirely. Paul talks about some of these landmines in Galatians; non-essentials that are turned into non-negotiables. In Paul's day it was things like being circumcised. For us it might be how you vote, or dress or the music you worship through. Paul was adamant that the message of the Gospel was simply to follow Jesus. So, we must be mindful of the things we may be unintentionally adding to the message of Jesus. God beckons us to proclaim a gospel of love that keeps the gates of His Kingdom wide open to all who are in Christ.

## Memory Verse

*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" - Galatians 2:21 NIV*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

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*Challenge- Rather than finding fault in others, this week look for ways you can love them and build them up. Send a note of encouragement to a friend who is struggling.*

## Bible Verses

### 1.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 ESV - 30 And **because of him [God] you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Ephesians 3:16-19 ESV - 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and