

Bible Verses

1.

Read Galatians 4:8-20 in your Bible

Galatians 1:10-12 NLT - 10 Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant. 11 Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. 12 I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 14:8-18 in your Bible

2.

2 Corinthians 1:5-6 NLT - 5 For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. 6 Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NLT - 7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3.

Galatians 4:9-10 NLT - 9 So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? 10 You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years.

"Incarnational Ministry"

Galatians- week #8

INTRODUCTION

Life is messy. That's the unfortunate truth about living in this world with its brokenness and sin. Even within the walls of the church, doing life together can be challenging. But as we see through Paul's experience in Galatia, when Jesus is brought into the equation God's purposes can be accomplished. Paul did just that as he spent time ministering in the Galatian church. And after he had moved on, he maintained a close connection to the church there. When he heard that they were wandering from the right path, Paul told them the truth in love to bring them back. Paul shows us that living the Christian life means letting Christ live in and through us so that we bring Jesus into each and every situation we encounter, allowing Him to do His ministry through us.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What event in history would you like to have personally attended?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Incarnational Ministry of Paul

1. Read Galatians 4:8-20; Galatians 1:10-12; Acts 14:8-18

The problem Paul was addressing in his letter to the Galatians arose when the Jewish converts (Judaizers) challenged Paul's teaching with regards to keeping the Jewish law of circumcision. Although they were zealous in presenting their beliefs that Gentiles needed to be circumcised, they did not bring the truth of the Gospel as Paul had done. What does verse 17 reveal about their underlying motivation? Have you observed instances where people were zealous for the outward appearance of Christianity, but neglected the substance of faith?

Compare the Judaizers' motivation that with what motivated Paul to bring his message in Gal 1:10-12, and what his desire was for the Galatians (Gal 4:19). What would you say was the focus of Paul's ministry? Why do you think people would focus more on appearances than focusing on the central issues of faith?

Following the rules to be approved by God was probably appealing to the Gentiles who came from a pagan culture. We see how spontaneously the Galatians worshiped pagan gods in Acts 14:8-18. How did Paul characterize such actions in Gal 4:8-9? We might similarly attempt to "save ourselves" by worshiping what we think we need, be it money, relationships, prestige or something else. What would you consider some "red flags" that indicate something is competing with Jesus for first place in your life?

Dependent on Jesus but Free **2. Read Galatians 4:9-10**

When we strip away everything that's been piled on to the requirements of our faith, we find that our relationship with Jesus is at the heart of Christianity. In verse 9 Paul says, now that they know¹ God or rather that they are known¹ by God, why return to what is weak and useless? The Greek word for "know" in this passage is a complete and intimate knowledge. Paul answers his own question in verse 10. Why were they returning to observing regulations rather than relying on a relationship with Jesus?

In contrast Paul pleads with them to be free from the law and observances they were placing their trust in. What things would you say we must set aside if we are going to be totally dependent on Jesus and free from the law? How does having an intimate knowledge of Jesus aid us in giving those things up? So perhaps we should focus more on knowing Jesus and less on following the law.

¹*ginōskō*.- "to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand," or "to understand completely" The verb is also used to convey the thought of connection or union, as between man and woman,

Opportunities in Hardships

3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:5-6; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul refers to an infirmity he suffered from and how the Galatians responded (Gal 4:13-14). There are many hardships suffered by faithful believers. Paul is our example of not allowing a hardship to hinder your ministry. How does 2 Corinthians 1:5-6 demonstrate that opportunity for ministry can come through hardship?

There are those who may think suffering results from a lack of faith. How does Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 indicate otherwise? Have you ever discovered unexpected opportunities for ministry, or witnessing, linked to a hardship you've suffered?

WRAP-UP

It's easy to feel we must follow the rules to be accepted by God, but it's not true. The Galatians fell into this trap when the Judaizers insisted they must be circumcised to be acceptable to God. But Paul's ministry was focused on Jesus and the truth of the Gospel that our acceptance by God is based on our relationship to the Savior and what He has done for us. The more we know God, the more we can put our trust in Him, rather than trusting our ability to observe the law. And that dependence on God gives us true freedom in Christ.

Memory Verse

He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.
- 2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT

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)

Challenge-. If you are currently facing challenges or hardships, ask God to show you how they can be changed into an opportunity to comfort others and glorify Him.