



CONTRAST

the series guide

CROSSWALK

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Welcome to the next and newest series from Crosswalk Church.

We decided that we would study this book of Paul, Galatians, as it holds wonderful questions and even greater answers. The truths found here are timeless for the follower of Christ, and we should all take heed to the advice and counsel given.

Studying a book of scripture takes commitment, dedication, and desire. While this is not the longest of the series we have done, we will go deep into the word of God as expressed in this letter from the Apostle Paul. We know that Paul wrote this letter, its authorship has never been in question, but we are not 100% sure when it was written. We do think it was written before the letter to the Romans, as it seems to be Paul's first step in a much broader theological argument laid out in Romans 1-8 specifically.

We welcome you to this study, and hope that you find a deeper meaning and further focus on Jesus through the study of these words, the context in which they were written, and the meaning held therein.

As the Apostle often states: *Grace to you, and Peace.*

Pastor Tim and the Crosswalk Team

WEEK 01

Galatians 1:1-5

Something is brewing, and I'm not talking about a great cup of coffee.

The atmosphere is charged, it is sultry, even sweating. It's like being in Florida before the squalls that inevitably come each late afternoon. There is lightning, there is thunder, and there is bound to be an interruption of the status quo. Although Paul has his wits about him, and is being led by the Holy Spirit, this epistle, or letter, is being written with Paul being deeply frustrated as to how they are perverting the Gospel in Galatia.

It is with deep clarity, and some restraint, that Paul is reaching out to them in order to address the mistakes they are making, in order to clarify, and in order to redirect them back to the true Gospel.

While there is restraint in these first five verses, you can sense the storm that is coming.

Sometimes this happens in our lives, we have to exercise restraint when trying to teach people who are doing something so wrong that it actually

gives God a bad name. For Paul, it was the choices that the church in Galatia was making that caused him pain, anxiety and frustration. He sent this epistle, this letter, in order to help them understand they were heading in the wrong direction. It is truly a study in CONTRASTS; what is of God and what is not of God, what is kingdom and what is not kingdom, what is truth and what is half truths or lies.

This letter was sent as a pastor, as a mentor, as an elder, and as a person of authority in the church. It was Paul's hope that they would listen to him and lean back into the kingdom of God. It is so easy to be led astray by those who have selfish motives, but right sounding words.

This is why we study scripture, to know what God is trying to tell us, each and every day.

**Have you ever had a storm
in your life that you
needed to recognize?**

**Do you think Paul had a right
to be upset about what was
happening in Galatia?**

**What does the authority of
the church mean in your life?
Does it mean anything?**

This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

I used to get letters when I was a student missionary. This was before the time of emails, so they were by and large hand written letters. However, one friend would always type them up, but then he would, with red marker, draw arrows and underline things he wanted me to know. This was his way of highlighting what was important for me to read and understand. It felt a little like I was reading a paper that had been graded already, but it was helpful as I understood the emphasis much more quickly. Paul does this same thing for us.

Right from the beginning of the letter, we are seeing Paul grab our attention and showing his intention for the letter by filling the typical formal greetings with two strong emphasis: His God-given authority and his Christ-centered message. Once we get a hold of these concepts, we can read the letter with expectation and unabated

enthusiasm, knowing
where this letter is heading.

His choice to remind us that there was no governing body that gave him his authority means a couple of things; 1) he has had to establish his authority from other places, 2) he is not so interested in the system and politics as he is interested in the kingdom and its purity.

Secondly, he wanted everyone to understand that the Gospel is of the utmost importance, and, in fact, there is nothing else that he is going to speak of. The Gospel and its consequences, these are the things that he is going to busy himself with. The gospel and its consequences are important to Paul because he understands that the consequences of the gospel are pretty significant, and to take the Gospel seriously means we have to take the consequences equally as seriously. Seems obvious, but the truth is that we often love the Gospel, but

we often forget to live it,
those are the consequenc-
es we have to recognize.

Living the Gospel means more love, more grace, more compassion, more justice, and more advocacy. These are the consequences of the Gospel.

[illegible]

**When was the last time you
had to establish the
authority given to you?**

**Have you ever decided to
commit to studying and
sharing the Gospel?**

**What are the consequences
of the Gospel that you can
think of?**

Galatians 1:2

**All the brothers and sisters here join me in
sending this letter to the churches of Galatia.**

This is a great text! It is short, but it has so much in it. It has hope, it has unity, and it has community. The idea that there are people around the ancient world that are connecting with those in Galatia means there is a great deal of understanding from other communities of what Galatia is going through. They care, they connect, and Paul wants to recognize that.

Specifically, he wants to recognize that the mother church, in Antioch, is taking care of and praying for their sister church in Galatia. I can't help but think of the Crosswalk churches, Redlands and the way we feel about our other churches out there. We pray for them, we have high hopes for them, and when needed, we want to be of help in any way that we can. It is the community of believers that is highlighted here, and this is important for all believers to realize that there are many who are out there, who care for them, and who pray for them.

**When was the last time you
prayed for other believers?
Do it now!**

**Do you know who is out
there praying for you?**

**Why do you think it is
important that communities
of faith watch out and care
for each other?**

Galatians 1:3

May God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

This is Paul's specific greeting to both the Gentiles and the Jews. Grace (Charis), to the Gentiles, and Peace (Shalom) to the Jews. In this greeting is the whole of the Gospel. Some commentators say that it was a warning to the Galatians in that they were in danger of falling out of grace and at war with God, and therefore needed the peace that comes from making peace with God. However, that seems a bit dramatic.

Rather, it seems that this was a relatively common greeting that Paul used in all of his writings. It does however, as mentioned before, have all of the gospel included in these two words. Grace, for Paul, was synonymous with Jesus, his work, death and resurrection. And Peace, which came with the acceptance of that same-said Grace.

It is not hard for us to understand how important these two words are in our soteriology (theology of salvation). For without grace, we would have no peace.

This is a great way to open a letter, to show that Paul cares for them, and to remind them of the totality of the Gospel in two words. I don't know how you sign-on or off your correspondence, but perhaps consider this greeting or as a sign-off. It will remind those you are writing of the goodness of our God each and every day.

How do you finish your emails? What is your greeting? How can you point those you are corresponding with to the gospel?

Do you like getting letters that have great introductory sentences?

How can you let someone know that you are praying and caring for them today?

Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.

While Paul had already referred to the resurrection of Jesus in verse 1, here he brings into view the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. The NEB translates this as “who sacrificed himself for our sins.” This brings to mind Jesus’ own description of his mission in Mark 10:45 “The son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Behind this language stands the image of the suffering servant we see in Isaiah 52 who bore our sins and carried our sorrows...

We get a glimpse into the radical character of sin, another major theme Paul develops throughout Galatians. Paul takes sin seriously, as should we.

In the second part of the verse, we see that Paul describes the death of Jesus that did something that nothing else could do, which is bridge the gap between us as sinners and God as righteousness. It is only his righteousness that is able to save us

from what the world has become. And while Paul speaks of “this evil age” as being in the first century, we can certainly understand the implications for that in today’s world as well. It seems that things have not gotten better, and probably worse. However, I think that every generation feels like they are living in the worst age ever, so let’s be circumspect here. There has always been evil, and we need to recognize that Christ died in the midst of an evil age, and we are living in one as well. The only one who conquers an evil age is Jesus!

**What feels evil
about this “age”?**

**How does Jesus bridge
the gap between sin and
righteousness?**

**Why do you think Paul has
spoken of the Gospel so
often, even in just these 4
short verses?**

Galatians 1:5

All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

When Paul speaks of God, he always gives the highest praise. This is why he concludes this long introduction with a doxology, "To whom be the glory forever and ever, Amen!" This was no mere formality to include this praise. To contemplate who God is and what he has done in Jesus is to be in a stance of worship, of praise and thanksgiving.

Of course we study the bible, we study doctrine, but not out of simple curiosity or vain conceit. We don't study just to know more or be right more often. Rather, we do this in order that we might fully understand what Grace and Peace truly are. We do it to understand the Gospel to its full extent, and to live that truth in a more profound and powerful way. As Calvin put it so well, "So glorious is this redemption that it should ravish us with wonder." (Calvin, CNTC 11)

**When was the last time you
sang a doxology to God?**

**Do you feel awe at the
mention of the Gospel and
God's great love for us?**

**Has the Gospel become
commonplace in your life?
Or are you still "ravished with
wonder?"**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

Have you ever held a position of power or authority? What is/was it like? Is that an easy or difficult position for you to be in? What challenges or triumphs did you encounter?

Head

- Read together Galatians 1:1-5, and share anything that stands out to you or any questions/comments that immediately pop-up.
- Right from the start, Paul clarifies his authority before getting to the heavier matters. Where does his authority come from and why is that important?
- How does our attitude or approach to sharing the gospel change if we're seeking man's approval instead of God's?
- In vs.4 Paul gives a brief, but beautiful, presentation of the gospel. In this presentation, what did God the Father "plan" and what did Jesus' actions do for us? Do those things differ from any of your previous ways of thinking?
- After presenting the gospel, Paul leans into "the glory of God." What are some ways we can glorify God in everything we do?

Heart

- In this text we see that one of Jesus' motivations for dying for us was to "rescue us from this evil world..." What evils of the world are you most often aware of, or plagued by? How can you experience relief or rescue from them?
- In this letter, Paul is writing to a group of believers who are tempted to believe that their salvation is based on what they do (works). Have you ever fallen into a similar trap (legalistic thinking/performance-based mindset)? What are some ways you can break free from that type of thinking?

Hands

- Paul is very clear about how he obtained his authority. How can we more boldly proclaim and live in the authority and power Christ has given us?
- Paul ends this section by proclaiming glory to God. How can we better reflect that attitude in all that we do?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

**“...all glory belongs to God
through all the ages of
eternity. Amen.” Gal. 1:5**

[illegible]

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶ I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News ⁷ but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

It is with a bit of an abrupt tone that Paul continues. Usually, he spends some time affirming the community to which he is writing. But this time, as we mentioned before, a storm is brewing and breaking between Paul and the church in Galatia. However, Paul reserves his hardest and harshest words for those who are seducing the people away from the Gospel. They are preaching a news that is not good at all.

Paul uses the word “shocked”, but another translation is “astonished.” These are strong words. He was genuinely confused and shocked by the news he had received from this church. It was further deepened by how quickly the confusion happened.

It is clear from the book of Acts that Paul’s mission-

ary journeys were wildly successful, so you can imagine his concern at how quickly (it could be argued that they fell into lies almost immediately) they could be drawn away with a false gospel that, contrasted with the true gospel, is no gospel at all. Paul literally said they have been deserting the gospel. The word means to take people to another place, to move them from one place to another. This is what was happening. Because of their willingness to be led astray from the true Gospel, they were no longer in the place where God wanted them. Have you ever been somewhere where God didn’t want you because of what you were led to believe?

**Has there ever been a time
when you were led astray?**

What was that like?

**How did you lose sight of
the gospel? What were the
mitigating factors that led
you astray?**

⁸ Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. ⁹ I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

In these verses, Paul is creating a clear contrast between the gospel that he has been preaching, and the false gospel they have been preaching. He is using the strongest words possible, and then he repeats himself in order to emphasize the importance of his words. Did you notice that he included himself in the curse if he was to preach anything other than the true Gospel of Jesus Christ? Fascinating that he is so convinced that he would indict himself if he were to stray away as well.

So what was being preached? It is proposed that perhaps there was a role that angels were to play in salvation in this false gospel, as Paul mentions angels three times in this letter. While there is more to expand on these

thoughts, we will get to it later.

A simple way to know if the gospel that is being preached to you is false is simply this; if it is Jesus plus something else, then it is a false gospel. The call of the true Gospel is the priority and preeminence of Jesus in our salvation. Anything else is a perversion of the simple and powerful message of the Gospel that was given to us from Jesus and in the Gospel accounts found in scripture.

Paul uses strong words. For those people, even angels who pervert the gospel are called “anathema” or accursed. This is not a place I ever want to find myself. Rather, I want to make sure that I have excised all extraneous ideas out of my theology and soteriology. What this means

is that leaning into the idea that Jesus is enough, and his grace is sufficient is all we are called to know and share.

[illegible]

Have you ever mistaken something that sounded right for the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Why would anyone want to put something else on top of the simple Gospel message?

What can you do to make sure that never happens in your life either again, or at all?

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.

Paul is not trying to make any friends. The time for that has passed. Now, he is about the business of correcting false beliefs that have come into fashion in Galatia. He begins this work by reminding them that he did not learn of the Gospel of Jesus by any other means than by Jesus himself. It was the self-revelation of Jesus that Paul learned from directly. On the road to Damascus, as God knocked him off his horse and caused blindness Paul was directly taught about the goodness of God, about Jesus, and about the power of the Gospel.

Paul explains this to them so that they might not argue from human reasoning that what he

was saying made no sense. The heresy they were falling into had a great deal to do with secret knowledge that only these other teachers claimed to have. Paul would have none of it, as he didn't need his Gospel to be verified by any human being, rather, it had fallen from the very mouth of God!

When did you first hear of the Gospel in a way that made sense to you?

Did you share it immediately, or did you take the time to understand it more completely before you began to share?

Do you think Paul should have been trying to get approval of people? Should have have said things in a kinder way?

¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God’s church. I did my best to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

Paul wants us to understand that if they are zealous about what they believe, he was even more zealous than they ever could be. He is reminding them that there were no circumstances that would have prepared him to accept the gospel according to his history as a Jew and as a persecutor of the church. His main point is to reiterate that there was nothing that should have set him up for a positive response to the gospel. Quite the opposite was true, actually.

We have to remember that Paul was a rising star when it came to Pharisaic Judaism. He was a student of Gamaliel, and his zealotry for his tradition led him to persecute those who were followers of Jesus. Those followers of Jesus were redefining the community that Paul had come to know and love, and therefore protect. Paul was not of the mind that

anyone could be Jewish, rather, he believed in the exclusivity of the Jewish community and lineage. He rabidly protected those borders up until the moment of his conversion to Christianity.

[illegible]

Was your conversion so dramatic?

Have you told your conversion story?

Who do you think might benefit from hearing the story of how God chased you?

¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being.

Paul is continuing to let them know that his appointment to the Gospel was divine, and not by any human machinations. He is confident in his calling, as you can see. He is sure that God called him to this ministry and had a plan for him from the very beginning. And the calling was not general, rather, it was specific to his job to proclaim the good news to those outside of the Jewish faith. This also reminds us of the initiative of God to choose and call Paul to this work. Paul was set apart for this work. Paul was called to this work. And God revealed his son through Paul.

Furthermore, this is the call that we all have. Not from a church or another human being, but from God. The fruits of your labor will confirm the call that God has on your life.

It is with the power of the Holy Spirit that this calling is shown to the world, it is through the Spirit's efficacy that the world can know who Christ is, through you!

**To what kind of ministry were
you called?**

**How can you know this is
the type of ministry you
were called to? What are the
results?**

Has your call ever changed?

Galatians 1:17-19

¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸ Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother.

Paul is again affirming that his calling or his credentialing is not coming from any human being, but rather, it is coming from God, and continues to come from God. He reminds us that he did not seek approval of the church, the approval of Peter, until much later. Paul waited 3 years before he went up to Jerusalem to have that conversation. Perhaps he waited as he needed the world to know that he had changed, perhaps he wanted to study, or perhaps he was simply led by the Holy Spirit. The reason doesn't matter, the process does, as he is telling us now.

Paul is setting up the argument that his authority, which comes from God, supersedes the authority of those who are preach-

ing in Galatia as he was writing this. It is important to note that Paul is doing this because the church was becoming established, and Paul's authority did not come from the church, initially. However, it was affirmed later with Peter. Paul did not need the church's authority. Paul only needed the power of the Holy Spirit, which was in abundance in his life.

**Where does gospel authority
come from? Do you have it?**

**Why is it important for
Paul to walk us through his
history?**

**What sort of argument do
you think Paul is setting up?**

**How can you claim the
authority that has come from
God to you?**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

Were you ever tricked, maybe by a sibling or a friend, into believing something to be true that clearly wasn't true, but you only found out the truth much later? If so, what was the trick and what was the truth?

or do they have good intentions? Explain.

- What do you think is the good news that Paul is talking about? What then is the "other gospel" that is being presented and how is it framed as good news?

Head

- Context: Paul and Barnabas would have helped plant the churches in the region known as Galatia, and according to the letter, it's not long after Paul has brought the good news of Jesus to this region that some other Jews, known as Judaizers, are trying to preach a gospel of Jesus AND Law to those without a Jewish background (i.e. Gentile believers). Paul is trying to root out this Jesus AND teaching.
- Read as a group Galatians 1: 6-9 and share any thoughts, insights, or impressions you had as you read through the passage.
- According to verse 6, why is Paul shocked?
- How have the people in Galatia turned away from God according to Paul?
- Who do you think are the ones that are twisting the truth and why are they twisting it? Do you think they are trying to purposefully deceive

Heart

- If the gospel isn't good news for everyone, is it good news for anyone? Discuss.
- Why do you think Paul's language is so strong here (he's shocked, he curses)?
- The Judaizers were trying to tell the Jewish Christians that to be made right with God that had to accept Jesus AND get circumcised (i.e. obey the old covenant law). What do we ADD to the gospel of Jesus in our world today, saying that it's not just believing in Jesus that saves us, it's Jesus AND...?
- Why do we complicate the gospel so much? Why is it so hard to simply accept what He has done for us? Why do we keep thinking our salvation is up to us?
- Why was it hard for the Jews to accept the Gentiles? Why did they try to make the Gentiles act and think and look like them? How do we as Christians do this today?

Hands

- Take some time to consider how you would put the truth of the gospel into your words. Use a passage like John 3: 16-17 below, to simplify the message of God's love and salvation. Write out those words somewhere you can think of them regularly and consider sharing them with someone you think may need to hear them this week.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3: 16-17, NLT

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 03

Galatians 1:20-24
Galatians 2

²⁰ I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie. ²¹ After that visit I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea didn't know me personally. ²³ All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!" ²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

Paul is adamant, apparently he has to be. His reputation precedes him, and the fact that he is the one who used to persecute the Christians was widely known. He made a tour of the churches in Syria and Cilicia so that he might meet them, minister to them, and to be sure, his preaching of the Gospel message was well received as well as marveled at. All of this Gospel coming from one who persecuted believers previously was amazing.

But Paul is not so interested in telling the history of his faith journey as he is telling it for this reason; that they might accept his authority and understand his zealousness for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul seemed to be a man

of extremes, but also of extreme effectiveness for the Gospel.

**Have you ever had to
establish your authority to
say something?**

**Was it easy or difficult? Did
people believe you?**

**Paul is trying so hard to get
them to listen, what were the
obstacles they had to deal
with in hearing him?**

¹ Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too. ² I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my efforts had been wasted and I was running the race for nothing. ³ And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

Paul is continuing his story of why they should take him seriously. He wants the church to understand that while he had a positive relationship with Jerusalem, it wasn't critical to his ministry elsewhere. However, Paul felt that the Holy Spirit was guiding him to go to Jerusalem to make sure the leaders there were in accord with his preaching to the Gentiles. He even brought a Gentile, Titus, with him. The importance of this meeting cannot be underestimated. Paul was his own man, preaching the gospel as God had given it to him. However, he understood the importance of the established church, and didn't want to

work at cross purposes to them. Of course, he was always cognizant of the fact that the church was not always right, and this notion did leave a difficulty in the relationship with Jerusalem at times in his ministry.

However, the important piece we need to recognize is that Paul is letting the church in Galatia know that he is accredited, if you will, both by God and by the church. All of this is in aid of getting them to listen to him. He is about to help them understand what the true gospel really is, and to do this, they need to recognize his authority to preach this word to them.

[illegible]

**What helps you listen to
someone from the church?**

**What sort of trust needs to
be built in order for you to
listen to them?**

**What makes you lose trust in
the words coming from the
church?**

**Do you trust your pastors
now?**

⁴ Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. ⁵ But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you.

Freedom in Christ. What does that mean to you? What does it really mean to be free in Jesus? This question was pertinent to Paul in that he saw some of the leaders in Jerusalem trying to force regulations upon the new believers. Paul, who came from that same tradition, did not believe those regulations and restrictions were relevant to believers in Jesus anymore. This, of course, would be a difficult thing for those raised in the Jewish tradition to fully accept.

Have you ever had a hard time understanding or accepting what Freedom in Christ really means? How does it affect the decisions you make everyday?

What does freedom truly look like to you? Maybe an important question to ask is what freedom meant to Paul in this instance. He seems to push back on the idea that the regulations of Judaism are relevant any longer. Does this have any parallel to your life as a Seventh-day Adventist?

What is freedom in Christ to you? Write it out so you can really think about the words you are using.

Why is it so important to Paul?

What does it mean to live without the freedom which Christ gives?

⁶ And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)

⁷ Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews.

⁸ For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹ In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. ¹⁰ Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

Calling is confirmed in community. Paul recognized this. Although he was not interested in their status, he was interested in knowing if they believed that his teachings were from God. They affirmed that they were, and they also affirmed his calling to preach the word of God to the Gentiles. The reason he was happy to have their affirmation was not so that he could go and do the work, but rather so he knew that the body of Christ was in one accord.

This was important because when the body is divided, it is very difficult to be effective for the kingdom. Paul had no interest in creating his own kingdom, all he did was for the kingdom of God, and to be able to work alongside brothers and sisters in the faith is a particular blessing. Have you ever felt the blessing of working alongside those who believe in the same way you do?

**How does it make you feel
to work together with those
who believe?**

**What is the passion of your
heart, and are you working in
that space for Jesus?**

**How can the church help you
realize your gifts and your
passions?**

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

Boom!

Now we are getting to the meat of the discussion. Paul is not too happy with Peter and the wishy-washiness of Peter's convictions when it comes to what Gentile believers were to do and not to do. Paul had experienced the freedom in Christ, as had Peter. But Peter was too connected to his tradition of origin and he caved to some peer pressure that was happening from the other disciples.

Have you ever pulled back from the freedom you have had in Christ due

to the pull of your tradition? For those of us who grew up in the SDA tradition, sometimes it feels as if we have a great deal of rules and regulations that we need to adhere to in order to be in good standing with God. Do you find that to be true?

What do you think of Paul's question to Peter at the end of this text?

How can we not get sucked back into behaviorism?

Does freedom mean there are no rules?

We might fall into the same trap with the law when we fail to recognize the freedom from the law that we are given in Jesus. And while it might seem that we are living lawless lives, this is really not the case. The opposite of the law is lawlessness, but the opposite of grace is damnation. We are freed from the accusations that come from the law, and we are freed to live better than the law demands. The law is the lowest bar that is laid for us. Love demands more.

[illegible]

**What do you think about
keeping the law?**

**Does it feel weird to say that
we don't need to keep the
law for salvation anymore?**

**Why was Paul so serious
about this?**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.

Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

Have you ever met a public figure or celebrity that you admired? Did meeting them live up to your expectations? Why or why not?

Head

- Read together Gal 1:18-24. Why do you think it's so important for Paul to express how little contact he had with the Twelve?
- Notice the actions of the believers in verse 24. It's a testament to the believers' faith that they could believe Paul had experienced a genuine conversion and could glorify on his behalf.
- Read Gal 2:1-10. According to Paul, what was the attitude of the leaders of the church to his work?
- What is the significance of Titus, a gentile, not being required to be circumcised (v. 3)?
- Paul states that false believers were the ones who caused problems surrounding Jewish regulations. (v. 4-5) What freedom were these false believers attacking? Why did Paul refuse them so strongly?
- Compare and contrast the attitudes and experiences of Paul and the church leaders in Gal 2:1-10 with what happened in Gal 2:11-15. Identify the ways in which Peter's hypocrisy conflicted with Paul's mission.
- In Gal 1:17-21, Paul proudly proclaims that our old selves were crucified with Christ and that the Christ lives in us now. That's the gospel truth in this passage, and the warning is that when we fall back on keeping the Law, we render the Christ's grace meaningless.

Heart

- What "commission" has God given you?
- Paul was very adamant about fulfilling his divine calling even if it pitted him against other church leaders. How can we protect our commission from becoming about people-pleasing?
- Think about your walk with Christ. Has your understanding of "freedom in Christ" grown over the last two years?

- In this passage, we read about Paul becoming upset with Peter because his hypocrisy could create a crisis of faith among the Gentile believers in Antioch. Are there any aspects of the Christian faith that challenge you when you're public? What implications would a faithful vs inconsistent witness have in those situations?

Hands

- Take some time to consider how you would put the truth of the gospel into your words. Use a passage like John 3: 16-17 below, to simplify the message of God's love and salvation. Write out those words somewhere you can think of them regularly and consider sharing them with someone you think may need to hear them this week.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

**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.
(Gal 2:20)**

WEEK 04

Galatians 3 & 4

¹ Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. ² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³ How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? ⁴ Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? ⁵ I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ. ⁶ In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." ⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. ⁸ What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. ¹⁰ But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." ¹¹ So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." ¹² This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life." ¹³ But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

The tone of this text can only be understood as a tone of disbelief. To Paul, it is unthinkable that they could have changed their thoughts so quickly, they must have lost their minds! He even goes so far as to attribute this change to a spell or curse being cast upon them. He reminds them of what gave them the Holy Spirit, and it was not the Law of Moses, rather, acceptance of the good news of Jesus Christ that allowed them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that the truth was "before their very eyes".

It is not hard for us to miss very easy things that are right

before us. It feels like every-time I go to the refrigerator at my house I am missing things that are before my very eyes. It is laughable how many times my wife has to find something for me. Even when I thought I knew where something was, if it gets moved, I will probably miss it.

The same thing is happening to the Galatians, some of them are simply not able to see what is plain before them. The gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ is what brought the community together, it is what saved them and gave them hope; yet they are forsaking this truth because

there are those that are subverting that truth. Probably, with a mixture of truth and lies together. This is often how we are led astray.

But Paul makes the case that gentiles are spiritual descendants of Abraham in that his "belief was credited to him as righteousness" and not by any law. This is an important point that Paul is trying to help them understand. They are not to be under the influence of the law in the same way they were before they met Christ.

**Have you ever changed
your mind so quickly that
everyone around you can't
understand?**

**Have you ever missed
something that was "before
your very eyes?"**

**Have you ever been confused
by a lie that contained some
truth?**

**Have you ever been guilty
of mixing truth with a lie in
order to get what you want?**

Galatians 3:15-22

¹⁵ Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ God gave the promises to Abraham and his child. And notice that the Scripture doesn't say "to his children," as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says "to his child" – and that, of course, means Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise. ¹⁹ Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. ²⁰ Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham. ²¹ Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. ²² But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.

It is always fun when Paul steps into teacher mode! He is doing some serious exegesis of the scriptures to help us realize that the heir to the legacy of Abraham's faith is Jesus, not just his literal children. Paul here clearly defines the function of the law. In verse 19 he says that is to show people their sins. But he also reiterates that the law was only a stop-gap until the one who truly convicts hearts arrives on the scene. Jesus functions as the law and the law-giver, but he also supersedes the law. We really should no

longer need the law due to our having Christ and the Holy Spirit as our guide and convictor.

But the truth is that there is not a conflict, as it says in verse 21. We are prisoners of sin, but we are deeply saved and made right by the cross of Christ and his sacrifice for us. The law is not bad or evil, but it does nothing to save us. For that, we need what happens through the grace of Jesus.

**Have you ever felt like you
needed the law to know what
was right?**

**How can you live without
bondage to the law, yet still
be a good person?**

**What is the biggest lie you
have been told about the
grace of Jesus? Do you still
have to work to move past it?**

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. ²⁴ Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. ²⁵ And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. ²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

What does it mean to have unity in Christ? What does it mean to be under one baptism? These words are hallmarks of the writings of Paul, but they have often been ignored, or they have been taken for granted with little study.

To be one in Christ definitely means that we are of one purpose. The overarching purpose for a Christian is to give Glory to God and to make him known. Whether it be by how we act, how we live our lives, the way we speak the gospel of Grace into others, the way we conduct ourselves in our discussions and interactions, all of these things fulfill

the gospel call to go and tell all the world of who Jesus is. (Matthew 28:19-20)

But it also means that we have something that binds us together in a much greater way than the law ever could. We are not bound together by law, rather, by love, and that glue is always stronger.

**What does it feel like to be
bound by love?**

**Did the law ever lead you to
think that you might not be
saved?**

**How can you help find more
unity with your brothers and
sisters in Christ?**

Galatians 4:1-20

¹ Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. ² They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. ³ And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world. ⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶ And because we[c] are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child.[e] And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. ⁸ Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. 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. ¹¹ I fear for you. Perhaps all my hard work with you was for nothing. ¹² Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles—free from those laws. You did not mistreat me when I first preached to you. ¹³ Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News. ¹⁴ But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth? ¹⁷ Those false teachers are so eager to win your favor, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to shut you off from me so that you will pay attention only to them. ¹⁸ If someone is eager to do good things for you, that's all right; but let them do it all the time, not just when I'm with you. ¹⁹ Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. ²⁰ I wish I were with you right now so I could change my tone. But at this distance I don't know how else to help you.

At the top of this text we see that there is a strong emphasis on moving from slavery to freedom in Christ. But the lever on which this all hinges is what Jesus did to purchase our freedom from sin. The only way that slaves can become sons and daughters is if their freedom is somehow given to them, through purchase or trade. In this respect, the gospel is such good news as we were slaves and through Christ's sacrifice, we have become heirs to the kingdom of God.

There is a stark contrast between being a slave and being a son or daughter.

Ownership matters, and when we are sons and daughters we have given ownership over to God for everything we are and everything we have been given. And as such, we are given the full rights that a son or daughter would be given, and that is the right to be loved by God unconditionally! Paul makes it very clear that there is only one condition for the experience of the Spirit in our hearts, because God sent his Spirit into them! There are no steps we need to take in order to deserve the Holy Spirit, rather, we are given this spirit by the grace of God, just like our Salvation!

But we are warned not to go back into slavery, which seems obvious, but needed to be said. It needed to be said as those Christians in Galatia were falling back into the ways of slavery rather than moving forward into the grace of God for a more and fuller expression of the kingdom in their lives.

**Could you imagine wanting
to be a slave once you were
freed?**

**Have you ever gone back
to old habits that you had
become comfortable with?**

**What does freedom really
mean to you?**

Galatians 4:21-27

²¹ Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says? ²² The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. ²³ The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise. ²⁴ These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. ²⁵ And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. ²⁶ But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. She is the free woman, and she is our mother.

²⁷ As Isaiah said,

“Rejoice, O childless woman,
you who have never given birth!
Break into a joyful shout,
you who have never been in labor!
For the desolate woman now has more children
than the woman who lives with her husband!”

Paul uses the example of Abraham's two sons in order to illustrate his point. There was something that was put in place early on in the history of humanity. A covenant or promise that God had made with his people. It functioned for a time the way it was supposed to. However, now, we see that there is a new covenant, one that supersedes the original covenant. A new covenant that comes from love, is guided by love, and is judged by love.

Paul is using his knowledge of scripture to make his case. However, he is using scripture

allegorically, which can be seen as a bit of a push in the way that scripture should be used. However, in verse 24 he mentions the way that he is using this scripture, and what each piece of the allegory means. We rarely use scripture in this fashion, but Paul gets a pass because he explains what he is doing.

**Have you ever seen someone
using scripture in this
allegorical way? What did
you think of it?**

**How come we don't do that
at Crosswalk, even if Paul
thought it was okay?**

**What is your method of
studying scripture?**

Galatians 4:28-30

²⁸ And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. ²⁹ But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit. ³⁰ But what do the Scriptures say about that? “Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” ³¹ So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.

Paul is continuing in his use of allegory, but he is wrapping up this section. He wants people to understand that something new has arrived, and that this something new is ordained by God and is better than what was before. While this might seem obvious to us, it is important to remember that many of these concepts would be considered new to the congregation, and even objectionable to those who came from a Jewish background.

Paul likens their desire to fall back into traditions as a desire to stop their forward progression toward the Gospel and a greater expression of what the kingdom of God can look like in the world. The example Paul is wrapping up is something that they would have had a clear understanding of, and

therefore would be familiar with the terms and the characters of the story. While this would have been a new take on it for them, they would have understood the point. They were being encouraged not to fall back, but to move forward.

Have you ever stopped your forward progression on something?

How can you get back on track?

Have you ever been rebuked, but understood you needed to be?

How did that feel?

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

Have you ever had to “prove” your worth or value to someone? What was that like for you?

Head

- Read together Galatians 3:1- 4:31, and share anything that stands out to you or any questions/comments that immediately pop-up.
- Paul begins chapter 3 with some strong language. Why is he so fired up about this issue? Where have the Galatians gone wrong?
- Again and again Paul emphasizes the gift of the Holy Spirit and highlights its importance. When it really comes down to it, what does this gift enable us to do?
- What did the law do for us before Christ? How did our relation to it change after Christ came? (3:23-29)
- As chapter 4 begins, Paul highlights how we’re changed from slaves to sons/daughters and heirs when we receive the gospel. Sadly, the Galatians kept falling back into bondage. How does Paul stress the importance of their freedom?

Heart

- How can a vivid understanding of Christ’s crucifixion guard us from thinking we have to earn God’s favor?
- Have you ever struggled with legalism? How did that impact you and your relationships? How does confidence in Jesus elevate your thinking and change your behaviors?
- Have you ever been tempted to fall back into old patterns of sinful behavior (bondage)? How do the words in 4:1-10 strengthen your resolve and give courage to remain in that freedom?

Hands

- What “gods” do we turn to instead of the freedom of the gospel? Where do we live in slavery instead of sonship/daughtership? How can you make efforts to break free from those chains this week?
- How can the fact that our salvation lies in Christ alone, nothing else, change the way you live this week?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

**“So if the son sets you
free, you are truly free.”
John 8:36**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

WEEK 05

Galatians 5:1-15

¹ So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

² Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole law of Moses. ⁴ For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

This is one of my favorite verses in scripture. And we have done some interesting things to it in our understanding over the years. Paul is really leaning into the idea of freedom and what that entails in contrast to the bondage that the law gives us. He doesn't want us to be burdened again, but rather, would have us live in the freedom of Christ. Remember, truth and freedom are very important to Paul, and they should be for us. There is no reason for us to fall back into the slavery that the law allows for.

Of course, there is a little voice in your head that is telling you to "be careful" because Jesus came to fulfill the law, not abolish it.

I understand that sentiment, but don't let it confuse you. The law's function is to point out sin, not to make you sin less, and especially not to make you sinless. So we put the law in its appropriate place, in order that we can live lives of true freedom and

righteousness, one that comes from Jesus.

Paul says it, but let me say it again: to be a perfectionist is to tell Jesus that you don't need him, his sacrifice, and his grace. It is to look God in the face and let him know that you have found a better way to be saved. That is a pretty bold statement to make, and one that I never would!

**Have you ever thought you
could be perfect enough to
be saved?**

**What has the law taught you
about your sin?**

**What does it mean to live a
life where we understand the
law, but live by God's grace?**

Galatians 5:5-9

⁵ But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. ⁶ For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. ⁷ You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? ⁸ It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. ⁹ This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough!

So the righteousness that we seek is something that comes by faith, from God, and not from our own works. Seems simple enough!

Why then, is it so hard to live this way?

Shouldn't this be good news? Joy? Grace? Compassion? We have been freed to live in a way that we never could before, without the burden of sin, and with the victory that only Christ can give to us. In fact, Paul reminds them that they were doing this so well, that it is a travesty that they moved away from freedom, and that little lie has been creating a mess of everything else.

And let's take a moment to see this phrase and its importance: "What is important is faith expressing itself in love." This is a

powerful reminder that we have a greater responsibility to others than to simply exist, but we must show them a greater and more important love than they have ever seen or experienced before. To do that is to truly fulfill the law.

**How do you show your faith
by love?**

**Has there been a time when you
were running the race well, and
then fell back into old habits of
living for the law?**

**Has there ever been a lie in
your life that spread chaos?**

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why am I still being persecuted? If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended. ¹² I just wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

These texts are kind of funny, and really sad. Paul is frustrated that he is still being misrepresented and he is pushing back on that. As well, he is making the argument that he has been consistent in his messaging of what is important from the very beginning. He is also clear that he is offending people by what he is preaching.

In Verse 12, he lets some frustration fly. While this would not be seen as appropriate if your pastor said it, it does show the human emotion that Paul is expressing. We all get frustrated and we all find ourselves needing to vent at times. Especially when there is so much at stake.

While we try to be faithful and careful in the way we live our lives, I think it is fair to say that we sometimes feel like Paul, wanting retribution for those that subvert the gospel. We must remember that God is the ultimate author-

ity and judge, so we don't need to do that. However, feel free to bring your frustrations to God, they won't surprise or frighten him.

need to do that. However, feel free to bring your frustrations to God, they won't surprise or frighten him.

**Have you ever said
something you shouldn't in
an email or text? How was it
taken?**

**How do you come back from
being so frustrated?**

**Do you think Paul was
justified in his remarks?**

¹³ For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

Even through his frustration, you can see Paul clearly trying to make sure that others remember that this freedom we have in Christ is to love and serve one another in a more powerful and palpable way. This is always an outcome of understanding the gospel in the way that Paul did. Even through frustration and anger we can have an attitude that says we will serve others in the best way possible.

I love that it says: "We have been called to live in freedom. . ." And I can't overstate how important that is. But freedom is not just freedom FROM things, but it is freedom FOR things as well, and perhaps even more so. Freedom for compassion, for advocacy, for care and for creation. It is freedom to love better than we have before and to create a greater sense of well-being in the people around us that we serve.

What if your community was happy you were there because they felt the love and grace that emanates from you and your small

group or your church? Are you of benefit to the community where you play, pray, work and live? This is the call of every Christian community.

**When was the last time you
felt called to live in freedom?**

**What does freedom from sin
look like to you?**

**How can you better serve
one another in love?**

Galatians 5:14

**¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command:
“Love your neighbor as yourself.”**

And there it is my friends. The whole of the law summed up in one phrase. Can you believe it can be that simple? Can you believe that it can be that powerful? Can you believe it is that hard and that easy, all at the same time?

This text is one you should mark in your bible, copy and paste to your notes on your phone, and remember. It changes the game, it makes us realize that much of what we have done over our faith journey is secondary to what we are asked to do in scripture.

Now, can all of the law really be summed up in this? Can everything, all the keeping and not doing, all the “thou shalts” and “thou shalt nots” really be completely wrapped up in this saying that comes from Paul, but inspired by God.

The answer is yes. And in fact, this is often where freedom is really found. Take just today, and do nothing but try to love those around you as you would like to be loved, and

see what you have time left to do. Everything is fulfilled by keeping our focus on what true love really is.

How would you like to be loved?

Can you spend some time trying this today?

What is the first thing you will do? Make a list and carry on from there.

Galatians 5:15

¹⁵ But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

This is the opposite of what we have been asked to do, but this is exactly what was happening in the churches in Galatia. They were destroying each other with back-biting and trying to destroy one another. This often happens when someone is trying to control another person or group of people. They were putting in place hoops that they said needed to be jumped through in order to receive the blessing of God.

But the truth is that some things don't change. Some things are incredibly consistent throughout history, even the history of the church. Now, this sounds pretty dramatic, I know, but it is sort of true. We have been destroying one another for a long time, and we don't seem to want to stop.

If only, like we discussed yesterday, we could spend our time learning to love others so well that we wouldn't have time for anything else. I have always thought this is probably the hope of Jesus. That is why we have so many encouraging words,

telling us that love is really important, and that we should get really good at it!

**When was the last time you
tried to love?**

**Have you ever been the
back-biter? Have you ever
been bitten?**

**What can you do, today, to
stop your community from
devouring one another?**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.

Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

- Share with the group one change that has come into your life as a result of accepting the gift of salvation from Jesus Christ. It may be a way of thinking, acting, behaving, or being.

Head

- Read as a group Galatians 5: 1-15 and share any thoughts, insights, or impressions you had as you read through the passage.
- What does it look like for a person to be “tied up in slavery to the law”?
- Why is it so overwhelming to try and find favor with God by complete obedience to the law? (see verse 3)
- According to verse 6, what does a life of trusting in Christ’s sacrifice look like?
- In verse 11, Paul says he is offending people by preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. Why was this so offensive?
- Paul concludes this passage by saying that we are to use our freedom not to indulge in sin, but to do what? How can we keep focused on loving others over earning God’s favor?

Heart

- What was the purpose of the law?
- What is the “yoke of slavery” for those trying to live by obeying all of the law? What does a person’s life look like who is always trying to win God’s favor?
- Paul says that we are no longer bound to the law, but does this mean we are free to sin? Explain.
- Why do you think it’s so much easier to try and earn our own salvation as opposed to simply trusting in the cross of Christ?
- Do you think it’s our job, those of us who have accepted Christ’s sacrifice and are thus free, to point out other people’s sin? If not, what is our job?
- How can you and I regularly encourage one another to live freely and lightly in the unforced rhythms of God’s grace?

Hands

- Consider and pray over some tangible way to show love to a neighbor, coworker, or someone that you know could use some love this week and then act on your idea.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13: 34-35

[illegible]

WEEK 06

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

There is an interesting contrast that is shown between being led by the Law or being led by the Spirit. Paul wants you to understand that being led by the Holy Spirit is a much better and more free way to live; as opposed to living and being led by the law. He recognizes that there is a constant battle inside of each of us, that contrast between doing what the Holy Spirit wants and doing what we find ourselves doing too often. The constant push and pull of the flesh and the spirit will always be something that we have to deal with.

And I guess a good question is "Why"? Why should we have to deal with this, why doesn't Jesus just take this away from us, so that we don't have to deal with this battle? Wouldn't that be easier for all of us, and for him. To not have to worry about forgiveness, to not have to worry about sinning any more, and to not have to worry about our basest desires sure would feel like a holiday.

I suppose the reason he is not taking this all away from

us is that freedom in Christ is a continual choice that we need to be making in our lives, each and every day. The Freedom that comes from Christ is an ongoing relationship that we have with his goodness, his grace, and his love for us.

I would say that the idea we need to follow in this text is how we follow the Spirit, who is guiding us, each and every day. I think that it becomes easier and easier the closer we are to Christ to see his Spirit at work and guiding us in our lives. That is my prayer for you today!

**Have you ever wanted a
Sherpa to help you along the
way?**

**How does the Holy Spirit lead
in your life?**

**Can you tell when you are
not following the Holy Spirit?**

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

This list is the result of not following the Holy Spirit. I think sometimes we think it is the cause of us not following the Spirit, but the opposite is true. We fall into these things as a result of not hearing the words of the Spirit in our lives. Even in sin, our behavior takes a backseat to who we are following.

What I mean by that is we have a tendency to try and fix the behavior of others, when we should be thinking about who they are following and how we are sharing how amazing the grace of Jesus really is in our lives. Rather than raging against their sins, perhaps we should be holding Jesus up more in front of them. When has pointing someone else's sin out to them ever done anything? Perhaps, when the relationship is there with accountability and trust; but I have heard pastors rage against sin from their pulpits but have rarely seen change in the people who hear that rage.

It is easy to take this text as its own proof. But remember, it comes in the discussion of following the Spirit or the law, and who we hold as authority

to guide us through our lives. I may be naive, but I believe when a person really begins to see the real Jesus, the one who died for us and lives for us, there is a transformation that can only have come from the power of God.

When you find yourself following your sinful nature, is it helpful to have someone point that out to you?

Or would you rather hear from someone about the grace and forgiveness of God?

Do you see forgiveness from God as weakness or as strength?

**When was the last time you
saw kindness as strength?**

**How good is God's
faithfulness to you?**

**What is the greatest gift of
the Spirit God can give you?**

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

May we not underestimate the power of the cross, both metaphorically and in real life as well. If we have given our sins to Christ, and he has given them up on the Cross, how can they be ours anymore? Do we really understand the totality of what Jesus did for us on that cross? Is there a way to delve even more deeply into it?

I love the book "The Cross of Christ" by John Stott. He, and I'm paraphrasing here, says that all we believe in must stand in the shadow of the cross, as this was the apex of His love for us. And I believe that to be true.

We can easily diminish the cross by simply forgetting how powerful it really is for us. We can ignore the sacrifice, we can take it for granted, we can simply not think of it as the highpoint of scripture, and therefore we undervalue and undermine its importance. When we do this, we are not following the Spirit, but rather, we are trying to work out our own salvation.

Following the Cross of Christ reminds us that all that we are has been nailed to that tree along with Jesus, and that is truly good news, because it is Christ living in me now that makes all the difference!

Have you ever diminished to the cross in your spiritual life?

How can we remember the cross more powerfully each day?

Can you take five minutes to think of nothing but the cross?

²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

This text is about total surrender to the Holy Spirit. It is a no-hold-barred kind of surrender. The kind that you can lose yourself in day after day, hour after hour. There is a powerful sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in that surrender. But mind you, it is a daily surrender, a daily choice to fall under the auspices of the Spirit.

It can easily be taken for granted, or given in part but not the whole. The hard part of surrender is to remember that you are surrendering. It is so easy for us to try and take control back from the Spirit, and when we do that we undermine the Spirit's authority in our lives. This is especially true of those who are good at being pretty competent in their lives. But we must remember, there is very little that we are better at than God, in fact, there is probably nothing!

Are you living by the Spirit?

**What does total surrender
look like to you?**

**What is the difference
between partial and total
surrender?**

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

This last little sentence that Paul includes is just to help us to remember that life in the Spirit doesn't need to lead us to conceit, to think that we have done a better job at following God than anyone else. As well, it is not something that should lend itself to provoking one another or to become jealous.

Why would we be jealous if we were living in the Spirit? Simply because it is easy for us to become jealous of anything, as that is what human nature really does. For us to stay away from jealousy means that we have to be able to steer clear of comparing ourselves to others. And in today's world, that is very difficult.

So turn off the social media for a moment, take a Sabbath, and rest into Jesus, rather than comparing ourselves with others, even if we do come up a little ahead of them!

**Do you struggle with
conceit?**

**Have you been known to
start a fight or to provoke
someone else? Why?**

**How can you stop any
jealousy in your heart?**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.

Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

- When you imagine the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - what or how do you picture each of them? Is there an image, a metaphor you use to relate to them?

- Read Luke 9: 23-24. How does Jesus' instructions compare to Paul's in Galatians 5?
- What is the good news related to receiving help from the Holy Spirit? (read Luke 11: 11-13)

Head

- Read as a group Galatians 5: 16-26 and share any thoughts, insights, or impressions you had as you read through the passage.
- How does one let the Holy Spirit "guide your life"?
- How does this passage compare to Paul's description of his own struggle with sin in Romans 7: 14-25? How are Paul's suggested solutions to this constant struggle similar in both passages?
- How do you slip into the "desires of your sinful nature" over living a life guided by the Spirit?
- Do the items in the list found in verses 19-21 have anything in common?
- Why can't a life filled with these things inherit, or live into, the kingdom of God?
- How do we let the Spirit produce His fruit in our lives? Can we force this process?

Heart

- How can you and I cultivate the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives? How do we help others do the same?
- Do you think we'll ever be free, on this side of heaven, between the struggle of the sinful desires and that of the fruit of the Spirit?
- In verse 24 it says that those who belong to Jesus have "nailed" (past tense) the passions and desires of the sinful nature to His cross. Is this a once and done process or ongoing?

Hands

- What is one action you could do today to nail, or surrender, your sinful nature with its passions to the cross of Christ, and then what is one action you can do to live more in-step today with the Holy Spirit? Practice those steps this week.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

“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.”

Galatians 2: 20, NLT

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 01

Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians 6:1, 2

¹ Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. ² Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

There are a few details here that should be worth mentioning. 1) A better translation than those who are "godly" would be those who are "spiritual". 2) There is an assumption of intimate knowledge of one's sins. This was a community where people know one another, not a mega church where many people are strangers. We should always be careful before we step into discipline someone to make sure we have invested enough in that person to earn the right to speak into their lives.

It is also interesting to point out that there is wisdom to both the corporate body and to the individual, it is broken up like this:

1. corporate: restore him gently
2. individual: watch yourself
3. corporate: carry each other's burdens
4. individual: each one should test his own actions ... each one should carry his own load
5. corporate: share all good things with his instructor
6. individual: do not be deceived ... a man reaps what he sows
7. corporate: do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers

What we see here is that you cannot restore someone without watching yourself, taking responsibility for a brother or sister who has fallen, and work to restore them.

**Have you ever been involved
in helping someone who
has fallen off the path God
has for them? Was it a good
experience?**

**When you go to help
someone, do you take stock
of what you need help with
as well?**

**How can we, as a church,
become more and more
committed to one another?**

Galatians 6:3

³ If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

This is a warning against self-deception. And we can deceive ourselves pretty easily if we are not careful, and if we don't have those voices of reason in our lives that can help us work through some of that self-deception. We need people in our lives who are not so impressed with us that they can see who we really are, and how we can keep our heads from getting too big.

Paul takes a moment to remind us that we are not as great as we might think we are, and that we are never too great to help those around us, especially those in our community that need the help we have to offer. What good is being in a community if you can't connect your passion to your ability to give toward it?

Listen, you are wonderful, God thinks so, and so do I! But let's not get crazy, let's make sure we can always keep an eye out for becoming too infatuated with ourselves to forget to help out a brother or sister in need.

[illegible]

**Have you ever thought of
yourself too much?**

**What are the greatest things
about you that allow you to
be able to help others?**

**What do you find the most
joy in doing?**

⁴ Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. ⁵ For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

Wow, these are powerful words for us in today's world. This is a deep call for us to make sure that we have a careful examination of our lives to see where we are showing the love of Christ to others, and for that we can be proud. Paul is not interested in someone boasting about themselves, but about Christ in them, and what that allows them to do.

The idea that we are not to compare ourselves to others is important to remember. We are not living someone else's life, but the life that we have been given. And this life is one that should be dedicated to service, to grace, to love, and to Christ. IN this way, we are expressing who God is to the world through the way that we live our lives, everyday.

[illegible]

**What can you do to show
others God's love for you
today?**

**Have you ever caught
yourself comparing yourself
to someone else? How did
you stack up?**

**How can we live lives that
are not of comparison, but of
grace?**

⁶ Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

Paul's challenge to fulfill the mission that God has given you in life, is balanced by a recognition that some who are working for God need to be supported in order to continue the teaching they are doing. Of course, your tithes and offerings go to this in our system, but many have sacrificed a great deal in order to continue to be teachers of the word of God.

How are you supporting those pastors and teachers in your life? Are you being faithful in the way you give to the church? Are you empowering them by your support, both through prayer and even finances? How can you continue the work of God through them?

**Have you been faithful in
your giving to the church?**

**What do you think people
who work for the church
have sacrificed, if anything
at all?**

**What can you do to continue
to support them?**

Galatians 6:7, 8

⁷ Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

Paul has been moving toward these statements throughout the whole book. It is now time to make a decision about how you are going to live your life and how you are going to move forward in faith and freedom. Without this call, the church in Galatia may not have understood his teaching was leading somewhere; to a decision. Paul uses an agricultural term of reaping and harvest. We should listen

Yet there is a common tendency to think that there is one exception to this universal principle: "Though it proves true for everyone else, it is not true for me. I will not have to reap a harvest from the seeds I sow. I can sow whatever seed I want and still expect a good harvest." This common line of thought only proves the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jer 17:9). Our capacity for self-deception is frightening, and it continues if unabated.

[illegible]

What have you sown?

**What do you think you will
harvest?**

**How can you make sure you
are moving in the way God
would want you to?**

Galatians 6:9, 10

⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Growth in our relationship with God and with others does not happen overnight or automatically; it takes effort and hard work. Paul is encouraging his audience to keep on working at building those relationships and to continue to do good. To say that Paul's emphasis on faith means that it is against good works is obviously inaccurate. Although he knows works don't save us, he is keenly interested in the continuation of doing good work in order to express how good God really is.

[illegible]

**How have you continued
good works in your life?**

**Knowing the good works
can't save you, do you still
think they are important?**

**What can you do to make sure you can
continue to grow those relationships
in your life that will help you harvest
the grace of God in the world?**

**The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the
conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.**

Open

- We're all familiar with the statement: "You reap what you sow." Share a time when you reaped love and love was sown back to you. Have there been other times when something else was reaped? What were the outcomes?

Head

- Read together Galatians 6:1-10, and share anything that stands out to you or any questions/comments that immediately pop-up.
- Why is it important to approach a brother or sister who is "in sin" with gentleness? How else should we be careful to approach these situations?
- Bearing another's burdens isn't always easy. Why does Paul put this in the context of "obeying the law?"
- What does "living to please the Spirit" and "harvesting everlasting life" look like in your life?
- Do you ever get tired of doing good? What hope can you cling to when you're worn out and want to throw in the towel?

Heart

- The sins or burdens of others can often lead us to feel superior. How can proper thinking and self-examination help correct this attitude?
- How does loving like Christ look different from the way the world loves?
- Paul argues that when we boast and rely upon our own strength/wisdom we are deceiving ourselves. In what ways do you see this happening in your life?

Hands

- How can you reflect the image of Christ to your community in bigger and better ways this week?
- What are some practical ways you can "share each other's burdens" this week?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

“But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”

Galatians 6:8-9

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. On the left side, there is a vertical margin line, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled document.

WEEK 08

Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹ Notice what large letters I use as I write these closing words in my own handwriting.

Most texts have this part in all capital letters to show that the handwriting had changed and was, clearly, in Paul's own handwriting. Many have suggested that these letters were big because he had such bad eyesight or that he had the hands of a worker who were clumsy when it came to writing. Perhaps, but it is also simply possible that he was writing in bigger letters because he wanted them to understand what it was that he was trying to say, and emphasize it visually as well.

The main points that he is about to make is that he is different from those false teachers, and he is interested in them knowing that, so he is writing to them in his own hand so that they might listen.

**Have you ever wanted to
emphasize something so
much you put it in all caps?**

**Did people take notice that
you were emphasizing it?**

**Why should we listen more
carefully now that Paul is
writing in his own hand?**

Galatians 6:12-13

¹² Those who are trying to force you to be circumcised want to look good to others. They don't want to be persecuted for teaching that the cross of Christ alone can save. ¹³ And even those who advocate circumcision don't keep the whole law themselves. They only want you to be circumcised so they can boast about it and claim you as their disciples.

This is the crux of what Paul has been saying. There is a deep contrast between those who are leading them astray and those who don't want to do that, mainly Paul. He continually wants us to find the freedom of the gospel rather than the bondage of the law, that even those who teach it don't keep.

Which is interesting. How many times have we found out that those who have been preaching and teaching against certain types of sins are those that are involved in those very types of sin? It seems to be a common theme in many stories we hear about spiritual leaders. It is a shame, but it is reality that Paul calls out here in the text.

[illegible]

**Have you ever followed
a spiritual leader who fell
into the sin that he was
constantly calling out?**

**How did you feel when you
realized that they were falling
into the same traps they
were calling out?**

**How can you be sure never
to be that person?**

Galatians 6:14

¹⁴ As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.

In stark contrast to the other teachers, Paul quickly reaffirms his commitment to the Cross of Christ and to nothing else. All boasting is excluded due to the Cross of Christ. For Paul, this was the pinnacle of his faith, and what it was simply all about. Because of this, the conversations about circumcision and other traditions were held as almost laughable; for to be held back again by traditions and laws that did not give life would have been anathema to Paul.

What is it that you think is the most important part of your faith. What is the object of that faith, and what defines it? Knowing this can stop all kinds of troubles in your faith life, as you will know what you should be focusing on and will be freed to continue the work that God has called you to do.

**What is the most important
part of your faith?**

**How can you focus on that
more succinctly?**

**How can you share that most
important part?**

¹⁵ It doesn't matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation.

Boom!

I love it when Paul is this bold. He just finally says it like he means it, that those old traditions have no power over the gospel, and they are not needed for salvation. While they still have some benefit when it comes to expressing a life of faith, they are not necessary.

People often get nervous when things are said with this clarity, because they always want to hedge their bets, just in case those traditions are still important, they are still keeping them. However, Paul is not so interested in that. He is convinced that they hold no sway over him, and that all that has been done for his salvation has been done by Jesus on the cross.

We should live with such clarity.

How are you saved?

Did you do it yourself?

How can you be sure?

Galatians 6:16

¹⁶ May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God.

Let this be our identifying factor. We are new creations and that identity is the one that we should now carry. Everything that has gone on before and defined us pales in comparison to the greatest gift that we have been given as new citizens of heaven. Why in the world would we want to have something else define us?

It is not that what we were before was horrible, it might have been great. But what we have been given and how we have been re-created is simply better, more profound, and deeper than anything we have ever been before. To go back is to deny the power of God to be able to re-create that which he created in the first place. He has the power to change, to give us victory and to save.

We are so blessed!

**How can you let others
know you are a new creation
today?**

**What does it mean to be a
new creation?**

**Do you find joy in this
statement?**

¹⁷ From now on, don't let anyone trouble me with these things.

For I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus.

¹⁸ Dear brothers and sisters, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

For Paul, the case is closed. He doesn't need to speak about this anymore, as he has made his argument and has shown us a better way. He knows that there is no argument against what he has proposed. He is sure, and we need to be as well.

It must be nice to live with such clarity. It would certainly change the way we interact with people who are trying to get us to focus on something other than the gospel. I need to remember this when it comes to the way we interact in church here at Crosswalk! Let nothing dissuade us from the Gospel of Jesus, so that we might be sure and solid in the salvation that has been given to us by Jesus Christ.

AMEN!

**How can you let others
know you are a new creation
today?**

**What does it mean to be a
new creation?**

**Do you find joy in this
statement?**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

- Share a personal story about one of your greatest triumphs.

Head

- Read Gal 6:11. Thinking about everything that we've learned Paul has shared, taught, and argued for during our Contrast series, why do you think Paul wanted to emphasize his authorship in this letter?
- Read Gal 6:12-13. What are the two primary motives Paul gives to the false teachers?
- Read Gal 6:13-14. Notice the clever play on words that Paul engages in. Even though Paul is a teacher/apostle, he doesn't attach his value to the number of disciples he has.
- Read Gal 6:14-16. What is the principle that the new people of God live by?
- Read Gal 6:17-18. How would you describe Paul's tone in this passage?
- You don't have to name names, but have you ever fallen prey to preachers who only cared about their power over you and not whether they were teaching the gospel? How were you able to escape and recover from their influence?
- CONTRAST has been designed to establish clear principles about the gospel, Jesus, and the new people of God. What are three principles that you've discovered (or re-discovered) throughout our time in Galatians?

Hands

- Have you ever (intentionally or unintentionally) steered anyone towards relying on "circumcision"? Did you ever apologize to them?
- How can you model to others, without being annoying, the peace that comes from trusting the cross of Christ?
- Spend a few minutes in prayer, whether alone or with your small group. Ask God who you might pray for that isn't living in God's peace today.
- How would you summarize the message of Paul to the Galatians?
- Have you ever diminished the gospel because you were afraid to believe that "the cross of Christ alone can save"?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.

(Gal 6:14)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.