

HOW TO USE THIS BIBLE STUDY

It's always exciting to get more than you expect. And that's what you'll find in this Bible study guide—much more than you expect. Our goal was to write thoughtful, practical, dependable, and application-oriented studies of God's word.

This study guide contains the complete text of the selected Bible book. The commentary is accurate, complete, and loaded with unique charts, maps, and profiles of Bible people.

With the Bible text, extensive notes and helps, and questions to guide discussion, these Life Application Bible Studies have everything you need in one place.

The lessons in this Bible study guide will work for large classes as well as small-group studies. To get everyone involved in your discussions, encourage participants to answer the questions before each meeting.

Each lesson is divided into five easy-to-lead sections. The section called "Reflect" introduces you and the members of your group to a specific area of life touched by the lesson. "Read" shows which chapters to read and which notes and other features to use. Additional questions help you understand the passage. "Realize" brings into focus the biblical principle to be learned with questions, a special insight, or both. "Respond" helps you make connections with your own situation and personal needs. The questions are designed to help you find areas in your life where you can apply the biblical truths. "Resolve" helps you map out action plans for that day.

Begin and end each lesson with prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance, direction, and wisdom.

Recommended time allotments for each section of a lesson are as follows:

Segment	60 minutes	90 minutes
<i>Reflect on your life</i>	5 minutes	10 minutes
<i>Read the passage</i>	10 minutes	15 minutes
<i>Realize the principle</i>	15 minutes	20 minutes
<i>Respond to the message</i>	20 minutes	30 minutes
<i>Resolve to take action</i>	10 minutes	15 minutes

All five sections work together to help a person learn the lessons, live out the principles, and obey the commands taught in the Bible.

Also, at the end of each lesson, there is a section entitled "More for studying other themes in this section." These questions will help you lead the group in studying other parts of each section not covered in depth by the main lesson.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it (James 1:22-25).

LESSON 1
RUNNING FROM FREEDOM
GALATIANS 1:1-10



1 Finish this sentence: "Freedom is _____"

2 People talk a lot about freedom, but when can freedom be frightening?



Read the two-page introduction to Galatians, the chart "The Marks of the True Gospel and of False Gospels," Galatians 1:1-10, and the following notes:

1:1 1:2 1:3-5 1:6 1:7 1:10

3 Who were the Galatians? Who were the Judaizers?

4 For what reasons did Paul write this book? What is the central message of Galatians?

5 What was the problem that Paul was confronting? Why did he react so harshly to this particular problem?

6 In what ways were the Judaizers also guilty of distorting the nature and purpose of the law?

7 According to the opening verses, what are the essential elements of the gospel?

8 What might have motivated the Judaizers to teach what they did?

9 What danger is there in trying to combine the law and the gospel in this way?

10 Why would the Galatian believers, many of whom were Gentiles, be willing to live by the restrictions of the law when their salvation had come solely by grace?

REALIZE
the principle

RESPOND
to the message

The gospel gives u
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REALIZE
the principle

The gospel gives us freedom on two levels: (1) We are free from sin's hold on us and its eternal consequences in our lives; and (2) we are free to serve God and others out of gratitude for God's grace. But sometimes our freedom makes us feel uncomfortable. Freedom can be frightening if it seems that we no longer have firm boundaries for our actions. And freedom to serve is of little comfort if we don't feel confident that we are doing what God wants. In the face of such uncertainties, we may be tempted to trade away our Christ-bought freedom for a set of rules and regulations. We should be on guard against those who would have us live according to a checklist of dos and don'ts.

11 Why is it so difficult for us to remember that we have freedom in Christ?

12 What rules do Christians today try to add to the gospel? What is dangerous about these rules?

13 How might these rules pervert the true message of the gospel?

14 Look at the chart "The Marks of the True Gospel and of False Gospels." In what ways does your church exemplify the marks of the true gospel?

RESPOND
to the message

GALATIANS

VITAL STATISTICS

PURPOSE:

To refute the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved), and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ

AUTHOR:

Paul

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:

The churches in southern Galatia, founded on Paul's first missionary journey (including Iconium, Lystra, Derbe)

DATE WRITTEN:

Approximately A.D. 49, from Antioch, prior to the Jerusalem council (A.D. 50)

SETTING:

The most pressing controversy in the early church was the relationship of new believers, particularly Gentiles, to the Jewish laws. This was especially a problem for the converts and for the young churches that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Paul wrote to correct this problem. Later, at the council in Jerusalem, the conflict was officially resolved by the church leaders.

KEY VERSE:

"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" (5:1).

KEY PEOPLE:

Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Titus, Abraham, false teachers

KEY PLACES:

Galatia, Jerusalem

SPECIAL FEATURES:

This letter is not addressed to any specific body of believers and was probably circulated to several churches in Galatia.



A FAMILY, executing their carefully planned escape at midnight, dashing for the border . . . a man standing outside prison walls, gulping fresh air, awash in the new sun . . . a young woman with every trace of the ravaging drug gone from her system . . . they are FREE! With fresh anticipation, they can begin life anew.

Whether fleeing oppression, stepping out of prison, or breaking a strangling habit, freedom means life. There is nothing so exhilarating as

knowing that the past is forgotten and that new options await. People yearn to be free.

The book of Galatians is the charter of Christian freedom. In this profound letter, Paul proclaims the reality of our liberty in Christ—freedom from the law and the power of sin, and freedom to serve our living Lord.

Most of the first converts and early leaders in the church were Jewish Christians who proclaimed Jesus as their Messiah. As Jewish Christians, they struggled with a dual identity: Their Jewishness constrained them to be strict followers of the law; their newfound faith in Christ invited them to celebrate a holy liberty. They wondered how Gentiles (non-Jews) could be part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This controversy tore the early church. Judaizers—an extremist Jewish faction within the church—taught that Gentile Christians had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions *in addition to* believing in Christ. As a missionary to the Gentiles, Paul had to confront this issue many times.

Galatians was written, therefore, to refute the Judaizers and to call believers back to the pure gospel. The Good News is for all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. Salvation is by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus *and nothing else*. Faith in Christ means true freedom.

After a brief introduction (1:1–5), Paul addresses those who were accepting the Judaizers' perverted gospel (1:6–9). He summarizes the controversy, including his personal confrontation with Peter and other church leaders (1:10–2:16). He then demonstrates that salvation is by faith alone by alluding to his conversion (2:17–21), appealing to his readers' own experience of the gospel (3:1–5), and showing how the Old Testament teaches about grace (3:6–20). Next, he explains the purpose of God's laws and the relationship between law, God's promises, and Christ (3:21–4:31).

Having laid the foundation, Paul builds his case for Christian liberty. We are saved by faith, not by keeping the law (5:1–12); our freedom means that we are free to love and serve one another, not to do wrong (5:13–26); and Christians should carry each other's burdens and be kind to each other (6:1–10). In 6:11–18, Paul takes the pen into his own hand and shares his final thoughts.

As you read Galatians, try to understand this first-century conflict between grace and law, or faith and deeds, but also be aware of modern parallels. Like Paul, defend the truth of the gospel and reject all those who would add to or twist this truth. You are *free* in Christ—step into the light and celebrate!

THE BLUEPRINT

1. Authenticity of the gospel (1:1–2:21)
2. Superiority of the gospel (3:1–4:31)
3. Freedom of the gospel (5:1–6:18)

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION
<i>Law</i>	A group of Jewish believers traditional rules, saved by following emphasis on circ covenant), in add opposed them by save anyone.
<i>Faith</i>	We are saved from alty for sin by Go receive salvation not in anything el in no way based t or good character only by believing
<i>Freedom</i>	Galatians is our c We are not under laws and tradition of Jerusalem. Faith freedom from sin to be right with G
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	We become Chris Holy Spirit. He bri to believe is a gift instructs, guides, He ends our bond creates in us love wonderful change

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t, dashing for the border . . .
outside prison walls, gulping
the new sun . . . a young
trace of the ravaging drug
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THE BLUEPRINT

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2. Superiority of the gospel (3:1—4:31)
3. Freedom of the gospel (5:1—6:18)

In response to attacks from false teachers, Paul wrote to defend his apostleship and the authority of the gospel. The Galatians were beginning to turn from faith to legalism. The struggle between the gospel and legalism is still a relevant issue. Many today would have us return to trying to earn God's favor through following rituals or obeying a set of rules. As Christians, we are not boxed in but set free. To preserve our freedom, we must stay close to Christ and resist any who promote subtle ways for us to earn our salvation.

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
<i>Law</i>	A group of Jewish teachers insisted that non-Jewish believers must obey Jewish law and traditional rules. They believed a person was saved by following the law of Moses (with emphasis on circumcision, the sign of the covenant), in addition to faith in Christ. Paul opposed them by showing that the law can't save anyone.	We can't be saved by keeping the Old Testament law, even the Ten Commandments. The law served as a guide to point out our need to be forgiven. Christ fulfilled the obligations of the law for us. We must turn to him to be saved. He alone can make us right with God.
<i>Faith</i>	We are saved from God's judgment and penalty for sin by God's gracious gift to us. We receive salvation by faith—trusting in him—not in anything else. Becoming a Christian is in no way based on our initiative, wise choice, or good character. We can be right with God only by believing in him.	Your acceptance with God comes by believing in Christ alone. You must never add to or twist this truth. We are saved by faith, not by the good that we do. Have you placed your whole trust and confidence in Christ? He alone can forgive you and bring you into a relationship with God.
<i>Freedom</i>	Galatians is our charter of Christian freedom. We are not under the jurisdiction of Jewish laws and traditions nor under the authority of Jerusalem. Faith in Christ brings true freedom from sin and from the futile attempt to be right with God by keeping the law.	We are free in Christ, and yet freedom is a privilege. We are not free to disobey Christ or practice immorality, but we are free to serve the risen Christ. Let us use our freedom to love and to serve, not to do wrong.
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	We become Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit. He brings new life; even our faith to believe is a gift from him. The Holy Spirit instructs, guides, leads, and gives us power. He ends our bondage to evil desires, and he creates in us love, joy, peace, and many other wonderful changes.	When the Holy Spirit leads us, he produces his fruit in us. Just as we are saved by faith, not deeds, we also grow by faith. By believing, we can have the Holy Spirit within us, helping us live for Christ. Obey Christ by following the Holy Spirit's leading.

1. Authenticity of the gospel

Greetings from Paul

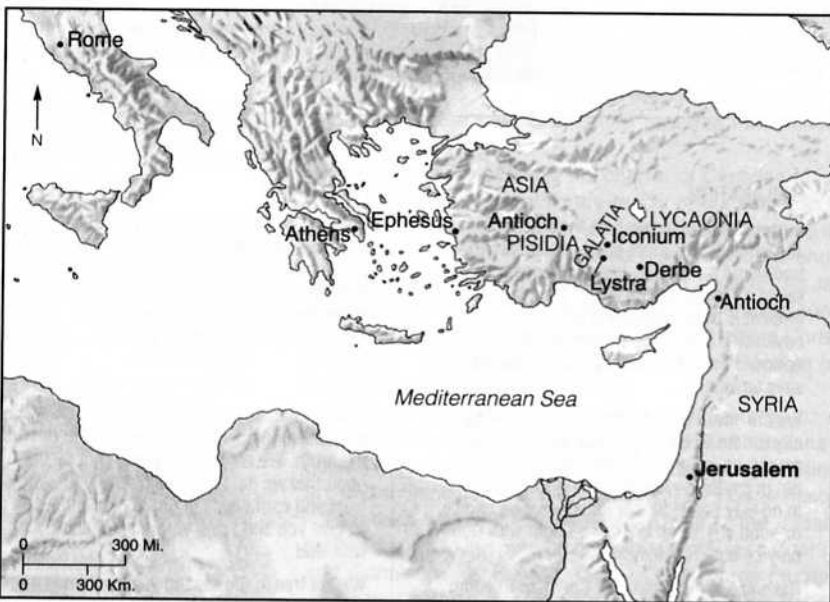
1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

²All the brothers and sisters* here join me in sending this letter to the churches of Galatia.

³May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* give you grace and peace. ⁴Jesus 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. ⁵All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

1:2 Greek *brothers*; also in 1:11. 1:3 Some manuscripts read *God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ*.

1:1 Acts 20:24
 1:3 Rom 1:7
 Phil 1:2
 Phlm 1:3
 1:4 Rom 4:25
 Gal 2:20
 1 Tim 2:6
 Titus 2:14
 1:5 Rom 11:36



CITIES IN GALATIA

Paul visited several cities in Galatia on each of his three missionary journeys. On his first journey he went through Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, and then retraced his steps; on his second journey he went by land from Antioch of Syria through the four cities in Galatia; on his third journey he also went through those cities on the main route to Ephesus.

1:1 Paul and Barnabas had just completed their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2–14:28). They had visited Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities in the Roman province of Galatia (present-day Turkey). Upon returning to Antioch, Paul was accused by some Jewish Christians of diluting Christianity to make it more appealing to Gentiles. These Jewish Christians disagreed with Paul's statements that Gentiles did not have to follow many of the religious laws that the Jews had obeyed for centuries. Some of Paul's accusers had even followed him to those Galatian cities and had told the Gentile converts they had to be circumcised and follow all the Jewish laws and customs in order to be saved. According to these people, Gentiles had to first become Jews in order to become Christians.

In response to this threat, Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian churches. In it, he explains that following the Old Testament laws, or the Jewish laws, will not bring salvation. A person is saved by grace through faith. Paul wrote this letter about A.D. 49, shortly before the meeting of the Jerusalem council, which settled the law-versus-grace controversy (Acts 15).

1:1 Paul explained his apostleship in these words, not to separate himself from the original Twelve, but to show that his apostleship rested on the same basis as theirs. If the believers in Galatia questioned Paul's apostleship, then they also should question the apostleship of Peter, John, James, and all the others—and such questioning would be absurd. All the apostles were called by Jesus Christ and God the Father, and they answered to God as their final authority.

1:1 For more information about Paul's life, see his Profile in Acts 9, p. 1837. Paul had been a Christian for about 15 years at this time.

1:2 In Paul's time, Galatia was the Roman province located in the center section of present-day Turkey. Much of the region rests on a large and fertile plateau, and large numbers of people had moved to the region because of its favorable agriculture. One of Paul's goals during his missionary journeys was to visit regions with large population centers in order to reach as many people as possible.

1:3-5 God's plan all along was to save us by Jesus' death. We have been rescued from the power of this present evil world—a world ruled by Satan and full of cruelty, tragedy, temptation, and deception. Being rescued from this evil world doesn't mean that we are taken out of it but that we are no longer enslaved to it. You were saved to live for God. Does your life reflect your gratitude for being rescued? Have you transferred your loyalty from this world to Christ?

1:6 2 Cor 11:4
 1:7 Acts 15:1, 24
 Gal 5:10
 1:8 2 Cor 11:14
 1:9 Deut 4:2; 12:32
 1 Cor 16:22
 Rev 22:18

There Is One
6I am shocked through the law the Good News is completely twisted the way it is being taught. **8**Let God's grace be a different kind than the grace I said before: If a person be cured by the law, then he will boast in his works. **1:6** Some manuscripts read "I am shocked through the law the Good News is completely twisted the way it is being taught."

THE MARKS OF THE TRUE GOSPEL AND OF FALSE GOSPELS

Marks of a false gospel
 2:21 T
 3:12 S
 4:10 T
 5:4 C

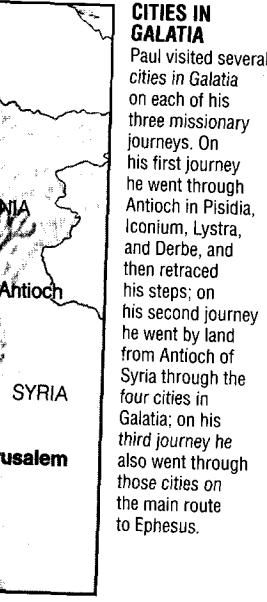
1:6 Some people were preaching "a different gospel" that taught that to be saved, Gentile believers had to follow Jewish laws and customs, especially the rite of circumcision. Paul taught that Christ was not enough. This message of salvation is a gift, not a reward for certain works. This gift was made available to all people, not just to those who say that we need more than Christ to be saved. When people set up additional requirements, they deny the power of Christ's death on the cross.

1:7 The Bible says there is only one way to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. No method, or ritual can give eternal life. At the same time, God is a merciful and tolerant God, and some people assert that there are many equally valid paths to God. In a free society, people have the right to their religious opinions, but their ideas are not right. God does not accept any other way as a substitute for faith in Jesus Christ. There is only one way—Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

1:7 Those who had confused the Galatians were the Jewish Christians who had converted to the Good News. These Jewish Christians believed that the Old Testament practices and dietary restrictions, which were required of the Jewish people, were also required of the Gentile converts. These teachers were called "Judaizers."

Most of the Galatian Christians were Gentiles who had converted to the Good News without the burden of Jewish laws and customs. The Judaizers were Jewish Christians. Both groups had different life-styles. The Judaizers may have traveled no small distance to turn the Gentile converts to the new Christian faith, motivated by (1) a sincere wish to integrate the new Christian faith, (2) a sincere love for the converts, or (3) a jealous desire to destroy Paul's authority.

1:1 Acts 20:24
 1:3 Rom 1:7 Phil 1:2 Phlm 1:3
 1:4 Rom 4:25 Gal 2:20 1 Tim 2:6 Titus 2:14
 1:5 Rom 11:36



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1:6 2 Cor 11:4
 1:7 Acts 15:1, 24 Gal 5:10
 1:8 2 Cor 11:14
 1:9 Deut 4:2; 12:32 1 Cor 16:22 Rev 22:18

There Is Only One Good News

⁶I 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 ⁷but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

⁸Let 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. ⁹I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

1:6 Some manuscripts read *through loving mercy*.

THE MARKS OF THE TRUE GOSPEL AND OF FALSE GOSPELS

Marks of a false gospel

- 2:21 Treats Christ's death as meaningless
- 3:12 Says people must obey the law in order to be saved
- 4:10 Tries to find favor with God by observing certain rituals
- 5:4 Counts on keeping laws to be right with God

Marks of the true gospel

- 1:11, 12 Teaches that the source of the gospel is God
- 2:20 Knows that life is obtained through death; we trust in the Son of God who loved us and died for us so that we might die to sin and live for him
- 3:14 Explains that all believers have the Holy Spirit through faith
- 3:21, 22 Declares that we cannot be saved by keeping laws; the only way of salvation is through faith in Christ, which is available to all
- 3:26-28 Says that all believers are one in Christ, so there is no basis for discrimination of any kind
- 5:24, 25 Proclaims that we are free from the grip of sin and that the Holy Spirit's power fills and guides us

- **1:6** Some people were preaching "a different way." They were teaching that to be saved, Gentile believers had to follow Jewish laws and customs, especially the rite of circumcision. Faith in Christ was not enough. This message undermined the truth that salvation is a gift, not a reward for certain deeds. Jesus Christ has made this gift available to all people, not just to Jews. Beware of people who say that we need more than simple faith in Christ to be saved. When people set up additional requirements for salvation, they deny the power of Christ's death on the cross (see 3:1-5).
- **1:7** The Bible says there is only one way to be forgiven of sin: by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. No other person, method, or ritual can give eternal life. Attempting to be open-minded and tolerant, some people assert that all religions are equally valid paths to God. In a free society, people have the right to their religious opinions, but this doesn't guarantee that their ideas are right. God does not accept man-made religion as a substitute for faith in Jesus Christ. He has provided just one way—Jesus Christ (John 14:6).
- **1:7** Those who had confused the Galatian believers and perverted the Good News were zealous Jewish Christians who believed that the Old Testament practices, such as circumcision and dietary restrictions, were required of all believers. Because these teachers wanted to turn the Gentile Christians into Jews, they were called "Judaizers."

not these Judaizers were sincere, their teaching threatened these new churches and had to be countered. When Paul said that their teaching twisted and changed the Good News, he was not rejecting everything Jewish. He himself was a Jew who worshiped in the Temple and attended the religious festivals. But he was concerned that *nothing* get in the way of the simple truth of his message—that salvation, for Jews and Gentiles alike, is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Some time after the letter to the Galatians was sent, Paul met with the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss this matter further (see Acts 15).

• **1:7** A twisting of the truth is more difficult to spot than an outright lie. The Judaizers were twisting the truth about Christ. They claimed to follow him, but they denied that Jesus' work on the cross was sufficient for salvation. There will always be people who twist the Good News. Either they do not understand what the Bible teaches, or they are uncomfortable with the truth as it stands. How can we tell when people are twisting the truth? Before accepting the teachings of any group, find out what the group teaches about Jesus Christ. If their teaching does not match the truth in God's Word, then it is not true.

1:8, 9 Paul strongly denounced the Judaizers' twisting of the Good News of Christ. He said that God's curse should fall on anyone, even an angel from heaven, who came preaching a different kind of Good News. If an angel came preaching another message, he would not be from heaven, no matter how he looked. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15, Paul warned that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Here he invoked a curse on any angel who spreads a false teaching—a fitting response to an emissary of hell. Paul extended that curse to include himself if he should twist the Good News. His message must never change, for the truth of the Good News never changes. Paul used strong language because he was dealing with a life-and-death issue.

Most of the Galatian Christians were Greeks who were unfamiliar with Jewish laws and customs. The Judaizers were an extreme faction of Jewish Christians. Both groups believed in Christ, but their life-styles differed considerably. We do not know why the Judaizers may have traveled no small distance to teach their mistaken notions to the new Gentile converts. They may have been motivated by (1) a sincere wish to integrate Judaism with the new Christian faith, (2) a sincere love for their Jewish heritage, or (3) a jealous desire to destroy Paul's authority. Whether or

¹⁰Obviously, 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.

Paul's Message Comes from Christ

¹¹Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. ¹²I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.*

¹³You 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. ¹⁴I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

¹⁵But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶to 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.* ¹⁷Nor 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.

¹⁸Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter,* and I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

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

1:12 Or by the revelation of Jesus Christ. **1:16a** Or in me. **1:16b** Greek with flesh and blood.
1:18 Greek Cephas.

1:10
1 Thes 2:4

1:12
1 Cor 2:10
Gal 1:1, 15-16
Eph 3:3

1:13
Acts 8:3; 9:21;
22:4-5; 26:4-11

1:14
Acts 22:3

1:15
Acts 9:15

1:16
Rom 1:17; 8:3, 10
Gal 2:9, 20
Col 1:27

1:18
Acts 9:22-23, 26-27

1:19
Matt 13:55
Acts 15:13
Gal 2:9, 12

1:23
Acts 9:20

2:1
Acts 15:2

2:2
Gal 1:6

2:3
Acts 16:3

2:4
Gal 1:7; 5:1, 13

The Apostles At

2 Then fourteen Titus came along with me. I met with them to discuss the message agreement, for fear that they would not support it. ³And they supported it, though he was a Greek. ⁴Even that question was decided by the apostles, elders, and the whole church. They decided that we should continue to study, learn, and grow.

2:3 Greek a Greek.

JUDAIZERS VERSUS PAUL

What the Judaizers said he was doing was wrong.

They said he was against Jewish faith.

They said he compromised his message.

They said he was against the law of Moses.

As the debate raged, Paul was determined to write to the authority, and they and the truth of his message finally resolved at that time.

1:10 Do you spend your life trying to please everybody? Paul had to speak harshly to the Christians in Galatia because they were in serious danger. He did not apologize for his straightforward words, knowing that he could not serve Christ faithfully if he allowed the Galatian Christians to remain on the wrong track. Whose approval are you seeking—others' or God's? Pray for the courage to seek God's approval above anyone else's.

1:11ff Why should the Galatians have listened to Paul instead of the Judaizers? Paul answered this implicit question by furnishing his credentials: His message was received directly from Christ (1:12); he had been an exemplary Jew (1:13, 14); he had had a special conversion experience (1:15, 16; see also Acts 9:1-9); he had been confirmed and accepted in his ministry by the other apostles (1:18, 19; 2:1-9). Paul also presented his credentials to the Corinthian and Philippian churches (2 Corinthians 11-12; Philippians 3:4-9).

1:12 There are two possible meanings consistent with the grammar of the phrase, "direct revelation from Jesus Christ." (1) This was a revelation by Christ to Paul that spelled out the gospel message, or (2) it was a personal revelation by Christ of his true identity that suddenly confirmed the gospel message against which Paul had been in bitter conflict. Within each meaning the fact remains that God provided the revelation and its content was the gospel.

1:13, 14 Paul had been one of the most religious Jews of his day, scrupulously keeping the law and relentlessly persecuting Christians (see Acts 9:1, 2). Before his conversion Paul had been even more zealous for the law than the Judaizers. He had surpassed his contemporaries in religious knowledge and practice. Paul had been sincere in his zeal—but wrong. When he met Jesus Christ, his life changed. He then directed all his energies toward building up the Christian church.

1:14 To be fully Jewish, a person must have descended from Abraham. In addition, a faithful Jew adhered to the Jewish laws and traditions. Gentiles (1:16) are non-Jews, whether in nationality or religion. In Paul's day, Jews thought of all Gentiles as pagans. Jews avoided Gentiles, believing that contact with Gentiles brought spiritual corruption. Although Gentiles could become Jews in reli-

gion by undergoing circumcision and by following Jewish laws and customs, they were never fully accepted.

Many Jews had difficulty understanding that God's message is for Jews and Gentiles alike. Some Jews thought that Gentiles had to become Jews before they could become Christians. But God planned to save both Jews and Gentiles. He had revealed this plan through Old Testament prophets (see, for example, Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 42:6; 66:19), and he had fulfilled it through Jesus Christ; he was proclaiming it to the Gentiles through Paul.

1:15, 16 Because God was guiding his ministry, Paul wasn't doing anything that God hadn't already planned and given him power to do. Similarly, God appointed Jeremiah to be his spokesman even before Jeremiah was born (Jeremiah 1:5). God knows you intimately as well, and he chose you to be his even before you were born (see Psalm 139). He wants you to draw close to him and to fulfill the purpose he has for your life.

1:15-24 Paul tells of his conversion to show that his message came directly from God. God commissioned him to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. After his call, Paul did not consult with anyone; instead, he spent three years in Arabia. Then he spoke with Peter and James, but he had no other contact with Jewish Christians for several more years. During those years, Paul preached to the Gentiles the message God had given him. His message did not come from human insight; it came from God.

1:18 This was Paul's first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian, as recorded in Acts 9:26-30.

1:21 Because of opposition in Jerusalem (see Acts 9:29, 30), Paul had gone to Syria and Cilicia. In those remote areas, he had no opportunity to receive instruction from the apostles.

1:23 Paul was making the point that his authority and ministry were recognized by people who had never even seen him; yet the Galatians had met him, listened to him, and believed his message, only to turn around and doubt him! The Judean Christians only knew what people were saying: that the one who had persecuted believers was now preaching the faith he had tried to destroy. Instead of doubting Paul's credibility, the churches in Judea had believed and glorified God.

1:24 Paul's changed life had brought praise from those who saw

had praised God because only God could have converted Paul. Paul's persecutor of Christians into a Christian himself had as dramatic a change as Paul, but still to honor God in every way. When people look at the changes in you, do you know that God has made changes in you? If not, live as you should.

2:1 Paul was converted around A.D. 35. The dates are probably calculated from the time of his first trip to Jerusalem around A.D. 30; Galatians 2:1-10, A.D. 49/50 (Acts 15), and A.D. 57 (Acts 21:15ff). Paul probably visited Jerusalem on several other occasions as well.

2:1 Barnabas and Titus were two of Paul's closest friends and Paul visited Galatia together on their journey. Paul wrote a personal letter to Titus and church leader serving on the island of Crete (Titus). For more information on Barnabas, see Acts 13, p. 1849. For more information on Titus, see Acts 16, p. 1855.

2:1 After his conversion, Paul spent many years in the ministry to which God had called him. This included time alone with God (1:16, 17), as well as with other Christians. Often new Christians, begin a full-time ministry without investing time in studying the Bible and learning from qualified teachers. Do not wait to share Christ with our friends, but prepare before embarking on a special ministry. While we wait for God's time to continue to study, learn, and grow.