

Message Discussion Guide

FREED BY GRACE

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

November 30, 2008

Galatians 1

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Ask learners if they have ever played a game with a child (or adult) who made up rules of the game as they went along. Explain that sometimes we treat Christianity as a game with changing rules. We intentionally or inadvertently say things like, "You can follow Christ as long as you come to church every time it's open, pray at every meal, and read your Bible enough so that it doesn't get dusty."

Encourage a few learners to share experiences when they believed that they had to follow unbiblical "rules" in order to be a Christian. Ask the following questions:

- How did these unbiblical rules affect your relationship with Christ? With others?
- How did these unbiblical rules affect the way you viewed God's character?
- In what ways did the gospel or Christianity seem more of a burden than a gift to you?

Option 2

Though we were created for God's glory and His pleasure it is impossible for us to glorify God or give Him pleasure in our own strength. Since our greatest responsibility is to love God our efforts to please him should reflect that end. The mistake we often make, however, is thinking that we have the ability to love God in ourselves and that we must please God in order to gain His favor. The tough reality, that is for our pride, is that we cannot love God or do anything to please Him or gain His favor. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- Do we want to demonstrate love for God by seeking to please Him?
- How do we try to please God in our own strength? Why do we try to please Him?
- How would our lives be different if we knew that we didn't have to please God to gain His favor?

Explain that today we'll look at how God's grace is not based on how we try to please Him but solely on His character and His work in Christ.

Review the Message . . .

Legalism Defined . . .

- Working in our own power.
- Working according to our own rules.
- Working to earn God's favor.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read or rotate reading through Galatians 1 with the group.
- Direct learners to count the number of times that Paul uses the word "grace" or makes reference to grace. Why does Paul seem to be focusing on the idea of grace?
- Remind learners about the background of the book of Galatians: Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia to affirm their security in God's grace. Judaizers had been telling the new Gentile Christians that they could not truly follow the Truth of the Gospel without trusting in Christ AND following Old Testament laws, particularly the commandment of circumcision. Circumcision was to be the physical sign of God's people (Israelites) and was first commanded to Abraham in Genesis.
- According to the Judaizers, was Christ's death on the cross sufficient for salvation?
- How does the message of the Judaizers negate the message of salvation by faith through grace alone?
- In whose hands did salvation rest according to the Judaizers?

Application . . .

- What is the danger of adding requirements to salvation?
- How do we in contemporary culture add requirements to salvation? What do we tell new believers that it takes to be a "good Christian?"
- What is the difference between obedience to Christ's commands in Scripture and creating false requirements for salvation?
- Name some ways we substitute our own rules in place of Jesus' commands. What is at stake when we do this?

Legalism Destroyed . . .

- The Gospel is free.
 - God the Father has initiated our salvation.
 - The Gospel is not invented by man.
 - The Gospel is revealed by God.
 - God the Son has accomplished our salvation.
 - We malign the Gospel when we add to grace.

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- We misunderstand the Gospel when we cheapen grace.
- We marvel at the Gospel when we trust in grace.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist three volunteers to read Galatians 1:4, 1:13-15, and Ephesians 1:3. What do these verses indicate about God's desire and calling for our salvation? Who initiates salvation?
- Read Galatians 1:11-12? According to this passage, what is the truth about the source of salvation?
- According to Galatians 1:6-7, preaching anything different than the gospel of Christ by grace is distorting the gospel. How does a distortion of the gospel affect the way that unbelievers and believers view God's grace?
- Invite a volunteer to read Galatians 1:4. Emphasize that salvation was made free by Christ's sacrifice. How should we distinguish between God offering His grace to us freely and the great cost of that grace?

Application . . .

- If God initiates our salvation and reveals it to us freely, what effort do we have to make in order to receive it? Can we do anything to earn it?
- How can we hinder people from coming to Christ by making up rules for salvation and for following Him?
- Why do we often feel like God loves us based on our performance? How does this thinking damage our relationship with Him?
- How can we balance the truth of the great cost of grace through Christ and the freedom that accompanies it? How do we maintain the integrity of God's grace?

- The Gospel is freeing.
 - By His grace, we are free from sin in this world.
 - By His grace, we are free to share with this world.

Discussion Questions

- In Galatians 1:4, what does Paul say that Christ rescues us from? Obviously Paul doesn't mean that God takes us from the earth the minute we trust in Christ. What does this kind of rescue mean?
- Enlist two volunteers to read Ephesians 2:8-9 and Galatians 1:15-16. Paul indicates that there's more to God's grace than our salvation. For what purpose does Paul say that he received God's grace?
- How does God's grace enable believers to share the word of the gospel with the world?

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- How does our obedience to Christ's commands demonstrate God's grace to the world?

Application . . .

- How can sin enslave us? How can sin keep us from living the free life that God has provided for us and called us to?
- Who gets the benefit from us cowering behind sin instead of living abundantly for Christ?
- How does our freedom in God's grace call us to obedience?
- How are we responding to God's grace when we do not share Christ with the world? What does our disobedience to Christ's commands illustrate about our view of God's grace?