

Message Discussion Guide FREE TO RUN

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

January 4, 2009

Galatians 5:1-15

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

Two enemies of Christian freedom are legalism (working to gain God's favor) and license (living however we want in light of God's favor on us through Christ). In Galatians 5, Paul uses the Jewish rite of circumcision as an example of legalism with which the churches in Galatia were struggling.

- Discuss some ways that today's church struggles with legalism. What do you think are the three most common works that people try to accomplish to gain God's favor?

Paul also exhorts the Galatian churches not to use their freedom "as an opportunity for the flesh" in Galatians 5:13.

- Discuss some ways that today's church struggles with abusing freedom in Christ. What do you think are the three most common abuses of the freedom we have in Christ?

Option 2

Some interpret Galatians 5:4 to mean that it is possible to be "unjustified" once a person has been justified before God in Christ. They make the bold claim that people can lose their salvation.

- Read Galatians 5:1-6. Based on this text, especially vv. 5-6, discuss how you could respond to someone making the claim that a person could lose their salvation.

Review the Message . . .

Two Enemies of Christian Freedom...

- Legalism
 - The example of legalism... circumcision.
 - The effect of legalism... contamination.

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- The end of legalism... condemnation.
- License
 - Gospel truth is never intended only to be believed...
 - Gospel truth is always intended to be obeyed.
 - Gospel truth is never intended only to be accepted in our heads...
 - Gospel truth is always intended to be applied in our lives.

Discussion Questions

- Read Galatians 5:9. How does legalism have a contaminating effect in the church? When legalism creeps in, what does the church begin to lose?
- Paul's words in Galatians 5:12 seem remarkably harsh especially in light of his reminder in vs. 14 to "love your neighbor as yourself". Paul was suffering for the gospel and the false teachers who prescribed circumcision were undercutting his ministry and the message of the gospel. What do Paul's words in vs. 12 indicate about the seriousness of "removing the offense" of the cross in vs. 11?
[Note: the offense of the cross is that human pride in human effort for salvation has been removed. Humanity cannot boast in works for salvation, but must boast in Christ]
- Discuss how Galatians 5:6 helps explain the relationship between faith and works.

Application

- In what ways are you still attempting to gain God's favor by working to please Him? Is your working motivated by love for Christ or something else? Guilt? Duty? Tradition?
- If you still feel bound to a pattern of legalism, how might you begin to embrace the freedom you have in Christ? Is it a matter of truly believing the gospel? That God loves you? That God's grace in Christ is really enough to make you righteous before Him?
- How can we "run well" and obey God while avoiding being legalistic?

Four Essentials of Christian Freedom...

- We live by faith.
 - We are not working for God.
 - We will lose the benefits of Christ.
 - We will gain the burden of the law.
 - We will miss the grace of God.
 - We are trusting in God.

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Application

- How does knowing that we, as Christ-followers, will reach the goal of attaining His righteousness, change the way we “run the race” / live our lives?
- What are some goals that Christians set for themselves? What should be the vision / goal for a Christ-follower’s life?
- Paul specifies in Galatians 5:5 that his own hope for the coming righteousness – the day when Christ returns to judge the world – is an eager hope. What does an eager hope for the day when Christ returns to judge the world indicate about one’s love for Him? What might reluctance about that day indicate about one’s love for Christ?
- We live with love .
 - We are free from slavery to the law .
 - We are free to the slavery of love .
 - We no longer indulge ourselves in selfish sin.
 - We now serve each other with selfless love.

Discussion Questions

- Paul makes it clear in Galatians 5:6 that faith is active along with love in the believer’s life. It is the only “work” that counts for anything in God’s kingdom. How might we define a Christ-like love based on Mark 10:45?
- In what ways does the “slavery of love” fulfill God’s law without being bound or oppressed by it? (Galatians 5:13-14)

Application

- What difficulties might a person have recognizing that freedom in Christ from the bondage of the Law is actually “slavery” of a different kind?
- How might a person slip back into legalism when trying to obey the mandate to love others selflessly?

So What Does It Mean To Be Free?

Christian freedom means to live by faith through the Spirit
in hope with love .

At the end of the message, David asked everyone to write out a prayer as a response to the truth of God’s word that was proclaimed. If time permits, ask individuals in your group to share their prayers. You might consider setting aside a time of prayer to give individuals opportunity to pray their written prayers out loud with the group.