

The background of the cover features a woman's back and shoulder in a white top with a small floral pattern. A monarch butterfly is shown in flight against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

FINDING FREEDOM
IN CHRIST

Breakthrough

A STUDY IN GALATIANS

BARB ROOSE

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IN CHRIST

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Abingdon Women/Nashville

Breakthrough
Finding Freedom in Christ

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About the Author



Barb Roose is a popular speaker and author who is passionate about teaching women to live beautifully strong and courageous in spite of their fears so that they can experience God's great adventure of faith and purpose for their lives. Barb enjoys teaching and encouraging women at conferences and events across the country, as well as internationally. She is the author of the Bible studies *Breakthrough: Finding Freedom in Christ*, *Surrendered: Letting Go and Living Like Jesus*, *I'm Waiting God: Finding Blessing in God's Delays*, *Joshua: Winning the Worry Battle*, and *Beautiful Already: Reclaiming God's Perspective on Beauty* and the books *Surrendered: 40 Devotions to Help You Let Go and Live Like Jesus*, *Winning the Worry Battle: Life Lessons from the Book of Joshua*, and *Enough Already: Winning Your Ugly Struggle with Beauty*. She also writes a regular blog at BarbRoose.com and hosts the *Better Together* podcast. Previously Barb was executive director of ministry at CedarCreek Church in Perrysburg, Ohio, where she served on staff for fourteen years and co-led the annual Fabulous Women's Conference that reached more than ten thousand women over five years. Barb is the proud mother of three adult daughters and lives in Northwest Ohio.

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Introduction

Have you ever felt like there's a long list of rules you have to follow in order to be a "good Christian," and you always seem to be breaking one of them? Perhaps you feel like you're just one mistake or sin away from God sending you a big "whammy." Or maybe you're just tired of trying to measure up. Whether you grew up in church and were there every time the doors were open, attended church only on Christmas and Easter, or never darkened the door of a church until recently, you might be able to relate to one or more of those feelings. The truth is, many of us have been shaped by the idea that in order to please God, we've got to jump through religious hoops—what I call the To-Do, Do-More, and Do-Better hoops. So if that's you, you're not alone!

I grew up in church. My grandfather sat in the front row of our little black Baptist church, and as a deacon, he prayed with a low, booming voice every week. My grandmother played piano for the choir while my mom and aunts clapped and sang. In the early 80's, men still wore suits and hats to church while my grandmother and her friends wore fancy two-piece dress suits and fabulous hats. Back then, my grandmother and her friends anchored those fancy embellished hats with a legion of bobby pins in case they felt like jumping up and down as the gospel music started "getting good." Later I learned an important secret: My grandma and her friends didn't style their hair underneath their hats! In time, those hats became a symbol for the kind of Christianity I witnessed and lived much of my life: *Your life might be a mess on the inside, but as long as you look good on the outside, that's all people care about.*

From my earliest memories, I learned the "do's" and "don't's" each week at church. Don't run. Sit still and don't draw in the hymnbook. One rule still perplexes me today: If you need to leave the service to go to the restroom, signal that you're leaving and plan to come back by pointing your index finger in the air as you slip out of the sanctuary quietly. No doubt you can name your own perplexing rules.

As a kid, I was taught that God sent Jesus to die for my sins so that I could go to heaven. I loved the idea of heaven. Yet, at the same time, I worried that God might strike me dead for making a mistake. For many years, I followed Jesus more out of fear than faith. The result was that I cared more about aligning my beliefs and behaviors with the rules I learned by watching people on Sunday rather than concentrating on God's Word and learning what it means to have a relationship with God.

For a long time, I thought that following my rules-driven Christianity is why I had a good family, didn't get sick often, and did well in school. But when I went away to college, the day came when I tired of following the rules. I didn't want to jump through religious hoops anymore; I wanted to run wild and free. So, I abandoned the rules, which for me felt like abandoning what I called my faith.

When I eventually messed up my life so badly that there was nothing I could do to fix it, I experienced an ah-ha moment that changed my life: *God's love for me is based on His perfect promises, not my performance.* Whether that's a new concept for you or you've known it for years yet still struggle to live by it, this study will help you to stop jumping through hoops and embrace the life-changing freedom of the gospel of grace.

In his letter to a church that was overrun with people who wanted to be the rules-police, a pastor named Paul poured out his heart and faith to set the people straight. His letter to the Galatians touches on so many of the same questions, tensions, and problems that we still face today:

- What is freedom in Christ? (Galatians 2:4)
- Who has led us to believe that we have to keep the law to be right with God? (Galatians 2:21; 3:1)
- Why do we think we have to try to be perfect for God? (Galatians 3:3)
- Do we have to follow rules to earn God's favor and blessing? (Galatians 3:5)
- Why were the rules given in the first place? (Galatians 3:19)
- How do we live as one in Christ when we're all so different? (Galatians 3:26)
- How do we stay free in Christ? (Galatians 5:1)
- How do we use our freedom to make a difference? (Galatians 6:9)

If you've ever struggled with any of these questions or felt trapped by rules or religion, this study will provide a path for you to discover your freedom in Christ.

Getting Started

Each week there are five lessons combining study of Scripture with reflection and application. In addition to the study content, you'll find a daily Big Idea, Extra Insights, a weekly Memory Verse, and a weekly Breakthrough Reflection Exercise.

Much of the *Breakthrough* study experience will come with your commitment to make space and quiet time to let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Breakthroughs cannot be planned or forced, but they can be experienced by regular, intentional time with God.

In this six-week study, you'll be encouraged to embrace the following six Freedom Principles:

FREEDOM PRINCIPLES

- 1. The gospel is based on God's perfect promises, not our performance.**
- 2. A relationship with God means that we receive *from* Him rather than follow rules *for* Him.**
- 3. Your freedom in Christ cannot be shaken or taken away by anyone who chooses not to live like Christ.**
- 4. Freedom in Christ is living free from fear and fully alive with joy and purpose.**
- 5. Spiritual breakthrough is an ah-ha moment when we recognize that God is at work within us, receive what He's doing, and respond to it.**
- 6. You are God's beautiful, lovable, capable daughter. You are confident in Christ and worthy of God's best.**

Each daily lesson should take about twenty to thirty minutes. You'll need a Bible, a pen, and an open heart that is ready to receive whatever God might speak or reveal—which could be the first step, next step, or even the breakthrough step for you. These lessons will prepare you for the discussion and activities of your weekly session, if you're meeting in a group.

Though you can do the study on your own and reap benefits, *Breakthrough* is designed to be done with a group for encouragement, support, and accountability. As you gather together in person or virtually to watch the *Breakthrough* videos, you will have the opportunity to share what you are learning and to pray together. Each video message is designed to follow and complement the content that you have studied during the week. Whether or not your group watches the video, it's so helpful to share your struggles and victories with each other. As you do, you'll encourage one another and find strength to complete the study and put into practice everything that you're learning.

A Final Word

Can I tell you just how happy that I am that you're taking this *Breakthrough* journey with me? It doesn't matter where you come from or what you've been through, you can know and trust that God is with you and for you. Wherever you need a breakthrough, God has already promised freedom and desires to give it to you. Finding freedom in Christ will not only bless and transform your own life; you'll be a shining light of God's hope and glory to the world around you!

Blessings,

Barb



Week 1

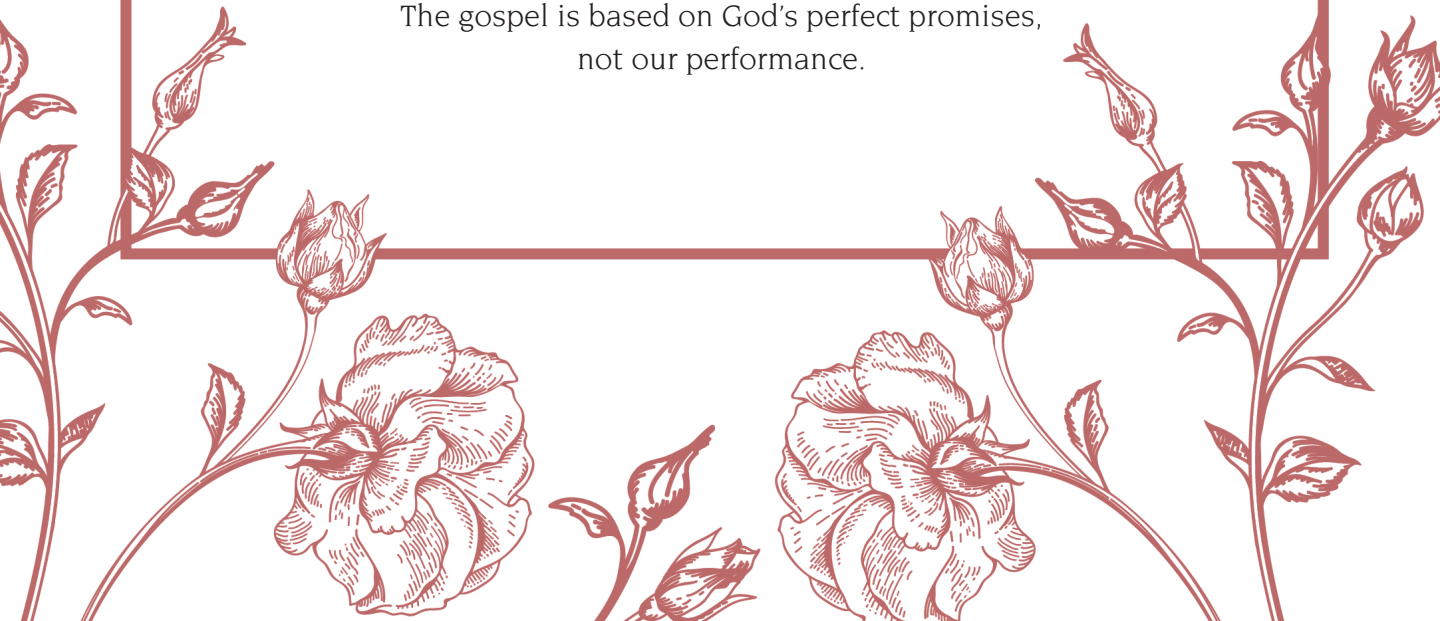
Untwisting the Truth

Memory Verse

*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.
(Galatians 1:4)*

Freedom Principle

The gospel is based on God's perfect promises,
not our performance.



Paul begins his letter to the Galatians by saying that Jesus has the power to rescue or free us from this evil world (Galatians 1:4). This was the “leading news” about Jesus after His resurrection. But even during Jesus’s ministry, there was much talk among the people about His amazing power.

Imagine the whispers among Jesus’s old friends and neighbors when He arrived back in his hometown of Nazareth after beginning His ministry. He used to be a carpenter or builder, but something had changed. The people heard rumors from Galilee about Jesus (Luke 4:14-15), and now that He was back for a visit, they no doubt were curious.

I recall a time years ago when someone I knew won a popular reality television show. When this person arrived at a class reunion the next year, there were a lot of behind-the-hand whispers. People wondered if this person had changed and, if so, what was different. This kind of curiosity is part of our human nature.

On the Sabbath, Jesus entered His hometown synagogue along with the others in the community. The service opened as usual with several blessings and various readings from the Torah and the prophets, followed by a short sermon or message.¹

As the men sat in the front and the women sat separately in the back, Jesus stood before the people who had watched him grow up and began to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah that was handed to Him:

¹⁸*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has **anointed me to bring Good News** to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim **that captives will be released,**
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
¹⁹*and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”*
(Luke 4:18-19, *emphasis added*)*

This prophetic passage written centuries earlier told of the Messiah who would bring salvation to the Jews. As the audience heard phrases such as “bring Good News,” “captives . . . released,” and “the oppressed . . . set free,” perhaps their thoughts focused on freedom from Roman rule and restoration to full sovereignty as a nation.

At first, the audience seemed to be proud of their hometown son, even though they were puzzled by Jesus’s proclamation: “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!” (Luke 4:21). As they were questioning with amazement all that they had heard, Jesus continued speaking, saying that no prophet is accepted in his own hometown and suggesting that perhaps that was why Elijah and Elisha ministered to foreigners instead of their own people (Luke 4:23-27).



Wait...what? Jaws would have dropped. Furious whispers would have flown around the room. In one breath, Jesus suggested that He had the power to set them free, and in another He basically implied that their unbelief would not allow Him to do so. No doubt the crowd began grumbling, "Who does Jesus think He is?" In fact, they mobbed Him and tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29).

Regardless of what the people believed about Jesus, He *did* have the power to set them free—and that's exactly what He came to do. A short time later, Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we all could be free. Jesus conquered sin and death, delivering us from their power, so we might live in freedom and experience God's great adventure of faith and purpose for our lives.

This is the gospel that Paul writes about in his letter to the Galatians. We begin our study this week by defining this gospel and how it brings freedom into our lives. Then I will continue to illuminate the specific ways we've been set free in Christ and how we can live in that freedom.

If you're questioning whether or not the gospel's power is strong enough to set you free, let me assure you that it is! If you're afraid that the gospel can't deliver you from the fear that you aren't good enough for God on your own, I'm confident it can! I believe it because I have experienced it. Jesus came, died, and rose again to rescue you and me from *whatever* it is that keeps us from experiencing freedom. So, let's begin!



Day 1: The Gospel: God's Rescue and Our Release

Big Idea

The gospel is for *all* of us, no matter where we've come from or what we've done.

There was some confusion among the Galatian believers over some important matters, and the apostle Paul wrote a letter to bring clarification and understanding. At the core of the confusion simmered this question: *What is the gospel?*

As the founding pastor of the churches in Galatia, Paul had preached the gospel and established the churches in that area. He had told them all about how Jesus came to set them free from the penalty of sin and death. And as the Holy Spirit had moved in the hearts of the people, they had said "yes" to God's offer of forgiveness.

Then came troubling news. Paul heard reports that the Galatian believers were saying and doing things in conflict with the truth of the gospel. Not only that, but a group of people in the church championed a different version

of the gospel than what Paul taught. Unfortunately, that group was gaining influence, and their message was beginning to distract and divide the church.

Even today there are times when personal agendas or false versions of the gospel distract or divide the church. When this happens, people get hurt. In fact, there's a term called "church hurt," which refers to the emotional, spiritual, or abusive wounds that someone experiences within a Christian community. If this has ever happened to you, let me say that your "church hurt" hurts the heart of God. Tomorrow, we're going to examine the gospel in more depth, but I want to say this right now: though it requires sacrifice and surrender, the true gospel never hurts or manipulates anyone.

At the beginning of his letter, Paul establishes his credibility with the Galatian church. As a leader, he is mission-driven by the gospel message and nothing else. (This is an excellent example for all of us to follow wherever we have influence in our churches. It's easy to allow other agendas to distract and divide the church, so we must center ourselves around the gospel and nothing else.) Take a look for yourself.

Read Galatians 1:1. How does Paul identify himself?

Who appointed Paul as an apostle?

Paul has credibility and a powerful source of authority in his role as apostle because Jesus Himself divinely appointed Paul for the job. According to tradition, Paul authored thirteen of the books in the New Testament, although some scholars today debate his authorship of several books.² As he wrote to various churches throughout his ministry, Paul began most of his letters by establishing his credibility as an apostle of Christ (Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1). Perhaps he knew that people would talk about his past and question his right to lead and teach them.

Read Galatians 1:2. To whom is Paul's letter addressed?

a single church multiple churches in Galatia

In the Biblical Background on Galatians (pages 9-12), we read about the ongoing scholarly debate regarding when Paul wrote this letter and where it was directed—to the churches in Northern or Southern Galatia. Much of the research leans toward the perspective that Paul wrote to the believers



Extra Insight

An apostle is "a special messenger of Jesus Christ; a person to whom Jesus delegated authority for certain tasks...The word 'apostle' has a wider meaning in the letters of the apostle Paul. It includes people who, like himself, were not included in the Twelve but who saw the risen Christ and were specially commissioned by Him."³ (See Acts 1:21-22; 2:32; and 3:15.)

in Southern Galatia, having planted a number of churches in various cities there. In Acts 16, we learn that Paul and Barnabas traveled throughout the area, not only sharing the gospel but also establishing local churches in cities such as Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. However, evangelism ain't easy! In his travels, Paul encountered some pretty dramatic events such as being mistaken for a deity, having the crowd throw stones at him, being confronted by angry religious people, and more (see Act 14:8-20).

Once we read about everything that Paul and Barnabas escaped, endured, or suffered, we understand more about why Paul cared so deeply about writing to the Galatians. He had a personal stake in sharing and clarifying the gospel because he had already sacrificed his health and welfare for them in the name of Christ. Though he had spent many years of his life punishing people for their faith in Christ, Paul willingly allowed punishment in his own life in order for Jesus's name to be proclaimed.

Read Galatians 1:11-14.

Who revealed the gospel to Paul?

What did Paul do before encountering Christ?

Once upon a time, Paul hunted down people who believed in Jesus, also known as followers of The Way. In verses 13-14, Paul describes how he violently persecuted the church. Other Scripture references detail Paul, also known as Saul, entering homes and “dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison” (Acts 8:3). One day, Paul encountered Jesus while traveling on the road (Acts 9). It was during Jesus's confrontation with Saul that Jesus cast a new vision for his life. In Galatians 1:17-19, Paul explains that after his encounter with Christ, he traveled to Arabia and Damascus before eventually going to Jerusalem to meet with Peter.

However, Paul's past and his qualifications would be brought into question over and over again. Paul's enemies argued that he couldn't be an apostle because he wasn't a part of the original group of disciples. Yet, Paul didn't allow the accusations and doubt of others to keep him from living out Jesus's commands. “He was commissioned and taught *directly by the risen Jesus Himself*.”⁴



Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. How does Paul describe himself in relation to the other apostles?



In verse 9, what does Paul reveal about his past?



In verse 10 (NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV), Paul uses the same phrase twice. Fill in the blanks:

By the _____ of _____.

Paul's confidence to teach and preach boldly was fueled by living in God's grace for his life. As a powerful influence in the church, Paul stayed singularly focused on the gospel, which is a sharp contrast to the agenda of the troublemakers that we'll learn about later. Even though Paul heard about the voices of opposition that were planting doubt in the minds of the people, he remained faithful to what God had called him to do.

As in Paul's day, people throughout the centuries have tried to use the gospel for their personal agenda or gain. Paul's example provides a filter that we can use to discern whether or not someone is gospel-driven or agenda-driven. And like Paul, we too, can choose to remain faithful to the gospel despite what others do or say—including about us.

Paul didn't hide from or behind his past. He could have been ashamed of who he was, but instead he allowed the power of the gospel to rescue, restore, and redeem where he'd come from and what he'd done. This is the power of the gospel that is promised for all of us.

Jesus proclaimed that He had the power to set people free. Where do you feel like you've been stuck or struggling in your Christian life? Are there any places where you feel guilty or afraid you are disappointing God? Explain.

Are there any reasons you feel unqualified to be used by God? If so, list them here:

Do you have “church hurt” or a bad church experience from your past that is keeping you from trusting other Christians or participating in a local church? If so, describe it below:

It’s okay if you couldn’t answer some of those questions because they made you feel a little vulnerable. We’re making this journey together, but we all bring our own experiences, needs, and desires. You have the freedom and grace to do what you can along the way, though I encourage you to circle back and fill in any unanswered questions at a later date. I’m thankful to be on the journey with you!

Prayer

God, I want to experience freedom in every area of my life. I choose to believe that if You can transform Paul’s life, You can transform mine; too, in Jesus’s name. Amen.

Day 2: The Gospel of Grace

Big Idea

The gospel changes everything about our lives every single day!

Have you ever heard about the *curse of knowledge*? This is when someone wrongly assumes that his or her audience knows the background or basic information to understand a situation or concept.⁵ When my girls were in middle school and high school, I’d call or text them while I was at work and ask them to make a certain dish for dinner. I figured that since I’d made the dish at least fifty times while they watched, then they would know how to make it themselves. Except they didn’t. I hadn’t specifically trained or instructed them sufficiently for them to know what to do.

When it comes to understanding the gospel, the apostle Paul was careful to avoid the curse of knowledge with his audience. While there might have been believers who would have said, “Com’on Paul, I’ve heard all of this before,” Paul still started from square one in his letter to the Galatians because the gospel is so often misinterpreted, misused, or misunderstood.

We’re going to start from square one with the gospel today. God can bring fresh insight into our lives even through a verse or concept that we’ve studied many times before. Even if we’ve heard the gospel 1,000 times, we still need to hear it 1,000 times more, because the gospel changes everything about our lives every single day!



In Galatians 1:3, what does Paul pray that God gives the people?

Fill in the blanks:

G _____ **and P** _____

Paul uses the phrase “grace and peace” several times in his letters to different audiences (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2). This beautiful phrase captures his dream for the believers in Galatia: for them to live in God’s grace and peace as they faced various areas of stress and strain, including adjusting to a new faith and withstanding the pressure applied by troublemakers. We’ll consider the specifics of their circumstances later.

GRACE QUOTES

“These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity.”

—Martin Luther⁸

“Grace does not depend on what we have done for God but rather what God has done for us. Ask people what they must do to get to heaven and most reply, “Be good.” Jesus’s stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry, “Help!”

—Philip Yancey⁹

“Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the *reach* of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the *need* of God’s grace.”

—Jerry Bridges¹⁰

Paul writes a brief summary of the gospel in Galatians 1:4.

Write that verse in the space below:

In exchange for giving His life, what did Jesus’s sacrifice do for us?

Galatians 1:3-4 captures an essential element of the gospel, which one scholar summarizes this way:

The good news [gospel] is that God became man and lived a perfect life that He might die on the cross for our sins and be raised from the dead in victory over sin so that all who believe

Extra Insight

Grace (*charis*) –

God’s kindness or favor⁶

Peace (*eirene*) –

Quietness of mind, wholeness⁷



in Him will be saved, not based on anything they have done, but based solely on what He has done.¹¹

In the space below, write the gospel of grace message in your own words:

Extra Insight

“Only one-third of American adults (35 %) continue to embrace the traditional biblical view that salvation comes through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”¹³

Gospel comes from the Greek word *euaggelion*, meaning “good news.”¹² The gospel is God’s rescue of humanity as we willingly surrender our lives to Him so that He can renew us, redeem our mistakes, and restore us to wholeness. At the core of the gospel is God’s desire to give and our willingness to receive.

When I consider the message of the good news, I see that we receive God’s grace, which means His kindness and favor. So throughout our study, I will periodically refer to the gospel as the *gospel of grace*.

Read the Scriptures and summarize in the space provided the main message of each verse:

“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.”

(John 3:16)

Summarize the verse:

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

(Romans 3:23)

Summarize the verse:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 6:23)

Summarize the verse:



This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Summarize the verse:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

(Ephesians 2:10)

Summarize the verse:

As we allow God to love us, save us, change us, and give us purpose, the gospel positions us to experience God's great adventure for our lives. In one of Jesus's final messages to His disciples, He commanded them to go into the world and share the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20). This command also applies to us today. In my own life, God's great adventure of faith and purpose has included making ten overseas missions trips where I helped build homes and spoke at women's conferences through an interpreter. Other adventures have included leaving not one but two successful careers to take risks in ministry. Not every adventure has been easy. By definition, adventure also can include the unknown, like the years that our family sought help to navigate a difficult addiction crisis. All of these adventures, good and bad, came in response to the impact of the gospel on my life.

What situations in your life (past or present) demonstrate the adventures that the gospel has brought into your life?

The image on the following page conveys a picture of the gospel message. The verses that you looked up earlier align with this gospel message.



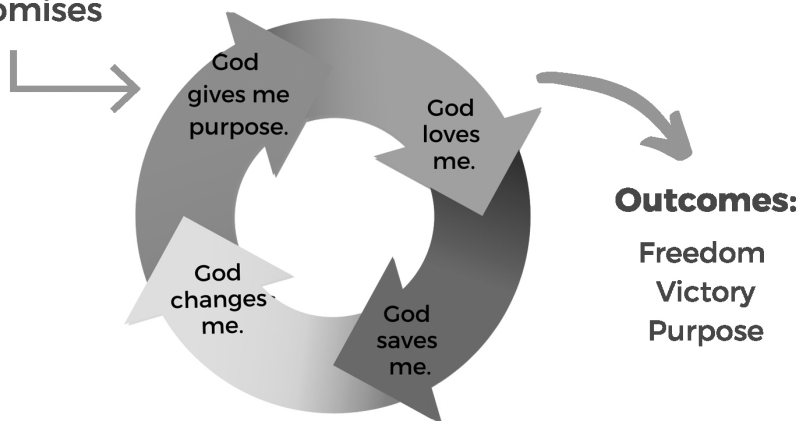
Extra Insight

Adventure:

an undertaking usually involving danger and unknown risks; the encountering of risks; an exciting or remarkable experience.¹⁴

Motivation:
Believing God's
Promises

The Gospel Wheel



Outcomes:
Freedom
Victory
Purpose

Notice that our part is to accept the gospel message and believe God's promises for our lives, but it is God's activity that drives the Gospel Wheel. He gives and He asks us to receive. As we dig into Paul's teaching to the Galatians, we will see that confusion erupted when the people stopped believing that receiving God's grace was enough to make them right with God, and they essentially created a to-do list in order to assure their salvation.

There are three essential elements for us to understand about the gospel. Let's review them together.

1. The gospel is based on God's perfect promises, not your performance.

At some point, we're all confronted with the uncomfortable feeling that the gospel is too good to be true for us. After all, we've seen our sin and shortcomings.

In Paul's letter to the believers in Galatia, you'll see his wholehearted embrace of God's grace and mercy. I love how one author describes God's heart toward us: "We do not deserve mercy, nor do we even know how to seek it. It seeks us. And it finds us. Mercy comes running, and by His grace, God pursues you with His love. His pleasure in you is not dependent on your pursuit of Him, but His pursuit of you."¹⁵

When you look at the Gospel Wheel, which aspect of God's activity is hardest for you to receive? Why?



2. You need the gospel each day of your life.

The gospel is just as true when you're screaming at another driver at a stop light or you've disconnected from your church because something painful happened to you there as it is the day you first accepted Jesus Christ into your life.

As you walk out your faith, you're still human. This is why we can't treat the gospel like the curse of knowledge in our lives, because each day we're still realizing the fullness of what it means to confront our sinful nature, acknowledge the price of our sin, and surrender our lives to Christ. If you've got this down, let me know!

Why do you need to remember the power of the gospel in your life each day?



3. Watch out for anything that will poison your understanding of the gospel.

Authors David Platt and Tony Merida share the following analogy: "If you were about to drink a glass of clean water, and then someone added a drop of poison to it, would you still drink it? It's close to pure, right? No, it's totally contaminated and undrinkable as that drop of poison hits the water. It's the same way with the gospel."¹⁶

As the water illustration suggests, it takes very little to poison something pure. The gospel is pure, so once you start trying to do anything to earn or keep your salvation, it's no longer the gospel.

Is there anything you feel (or have felt) you must do to earn or keep your salvation? Explain.

Our memory verse this week is Galatians 1:4. Read the verse through two times (page 12), and then fill in the blanks below:

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

Throughout our study, we're going to keep coming back to the gospel because that's the theme that Paul focuses on in his letter to the Galatians. Wherever we are in our understanding of the gospel, it's likely that at one time or another we've thought that we *must* earn our salvation or that we *can* earn our salvation. It is my prayer that by the end of our study, each of us will be sure that neither is true and will experience true freedom in Christ!

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for the gospel that saved my life! I am so grateful that You loved me enough to send Jesus to die for my sins. I couldn't save myself. In fact, I still can't save myself! Open my eyes and reveal any blind spots where I'm struggling to receive from You. I want to live each day in the beautiful fullness and freedom of what You've done for me; in Jesus's name. Amen.

Day 3: Untwisting the Truth

Big Idea

God wants more *for* you than *from* you.

Recently, I spoke with a young believer who feared that God would eventually tire of loving her. When I gently asked why she felt that way, she replied, "Well, because I still smoke, sometimes I forget to read my Bible, and when I look at other Christians, they seem to be doing everything better than me."

Oh, my heart hurt for this precious young woman! I sat in silence for a few beats and prayed. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, I whispered to her: *You can't mess up God's love for you.*

I don't know if you needed to hear that today, but I hope that you know deep in the innermost part of your soul that God loves you because of who He is and not because of anything that you've done. It is God's powerful love demonstrated through Christ that releases us from the feeling that we aren't enough for God, or from the people who make us believe that God wants more from us before He will fully love us.

Today's lesson is titled "Untwisting the Truth." The phrase "twist the truth" comes directly from Galatians 1:7, which is part of the Scripture passage we're studying today. We'll see within the first few words of Paul's next statements that he's fully loaded with questions and challenges. He's furious about the lies the Galatian Christians have believed, but his heart is motivated by love for them. As we'll discover, Paul's not condemning or judging them; rather, he wants them to experience the kind of freedom that he has found in Christ. He wants to warn them about becoming twisted like the mistruths they're hearing.



What's twisted in your beliefs about God? The best way to know God's truth is to focus on His word rather than to fixate on the lies that are distracting you from the truth. As you look at Paul's teaching today, you'll be challenged to discover the distorted or perhaps even straight up wrong beliefs that you've been carrying around about God and how He sees you.

Read Galatians 1:6-9.

In verse 6, Paul expresses strong language about what the churches in Galatia are doing.

The people are turning away from _____.

They are following _____.

In verse 7, Paul tells the believers that they are being

_____.

Based on what you've read in this passage, what do you think Paul means in verse 7 when he uses the phrase "twist the truth"?

In verses 8-9, Paul declares a curse two times. Who will be cursed?

Paul's distress is that the believers have turned away from the gospel. Rather than embrace the hope in Christ, the forgiveness of their sins, and the promise of eternal life, some Galatian believers dropped their connection to what they once believed. I've seen this happen over the years as various former Christian authors or artists have issued press releases proclaiming that after a time of enlightened self-reflection, they no longer consider themselves Christians or no longer believe the Bible to be the Word of God. As a long-time staff member at my church, I also watched people come to church fired up in their new faith only to fade away over time for a variety of reasons. It's not for me to say what happened, but the end results seem to indicate that the gospel message had become twisted in some way.

It's important to note that there have been and always will be people who "stir the pot" in the church. Sometimes, it's a strong-willed individual who



Extra Insight

Cursed is the Greek word *anathema*, which means "dedicated to destruction."¹⁷

Extra Insight

Council of Jerusalem

"A number of law-observant Jews are wondering why Paul and the church at Antioch are not insisting that the Gentile converts keep the law. The issue becomes divisive and threatens to split the movement. The wisest course of action is to convene a meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church and reach a mutual understanding that will govern the movement as more and more Gentiles put their faith in Christ."¹⁹

loves Jesus and also likes to tell the pastor how to do his or her job. Other times, it's a person or group of believers who express dissension regarding various church or denominational traditions. But sometimes it's a group of people like the one we are studying today—dangerous troublemakers with unholy agendas who cause confusion and distraction from the gospel.

After Paul and Barnabas came back to Antioch, which is located in southern Galatia, a group of people showed up and started teaching what Paul calls "a different kind of Good News" (Galatians 1:8). These people were known as Judaizers, or "early converts to Christianity who tried to force believers from non-Jewish backgrounds to adopt Jewish customs as a condition of salvation."¹⁸ Paul not only says that these people were preaching a different kind of Good News; he says that their different Good News was not actually the Good News at all (Galatians 1:6-7).

Read Acts 15:1. What did the Judaizers tell the believers?

Read Philippians 3:2. According to this verse, how did Paul feel about them? What did he call them?

Acts 15 records the meeting of the Jerusalem Council held to discuss the Judaizers' argument, which was gaining traction. (For more about the Jerusalem Council, see the Extra Insight in the margin.) In Acts 15:5, it is revealed that the Judaizers were also Pharisees who were upset about how the Gentiles were being accepted into the church. The Judaizers wanted to add requirements to salvation, saying that "to be saved . . . one had to believe in Jesus and be circumcised."²⁰ Though we might think that Paul and the other Christians should have been able to simply say "no" to this and move on, the Judaizers gained tremendous influence.

According to one commentator, some of the motivation behind the Judaizers' insistence and the effectiveness of their message was that the law observers wanted to avoid persecution. He writes, "Their motivation for advocating circumcision was to escape persecution from Zealot radicals who were terrorizing Palestine. These Zealot revolutionaries were hostile to Christian Jews who tolerated fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles."²¹ There's some irony here because Paul used to be a Zealot, and now the Judaizers were



preaching against this former Zealot who now wouldn't hurt them in order to avoid punishment from those who could. Yet Paul contended with his audience to hold on to the gospel message regardless of what others said.



What's an issue within your church or denomination that has created conflict?



How does this conflict impact how you feel when you're at church or trying to stay engaged in your faith?

If you've been a part of church for more than a few years, chances are you've seen some human-related shortcomings that hurt not only others but also the heart of God. However, the power of the gospel is and always will be greater than our human failings, which is exactly why we need the gospel!

The only way to "untwist the truth" about the gospel in our lives is to strategically and ruthlessly focus on the truth. Look up each verse, and write the truth(s) revealed about who God is and how He sees you.

Psalm 34:18-19

Jeremiah 31:3

Zephaniah 3:17

John 14:6

Romans 8:1

When you look at these truths that you've identified, which one or two stand out to you today? Why?

What aspects of who God is have you allowed to get twisted, either through your life experience or the influence of others?

What lies about yourself have you believed, either through your life experience or the influence of others?

Though we do not have control over how others behave, we always have control over who and what we choose to believe. Above all, we are to follow the message of the gospel and Christ's vision for the kingdom of God in our world. We can be honest about the people, problems, and pain that we've experienced in the church, but we must never use that to justify our disobedience to God or our failure to trust in His promises for our lives.

It's so easy for us to believe the lies instead of God's truth, but I pray that you allow the power of the verses you read today to untwist any lies that you've believed. God loves *you*.

Prayer

O, God, let me cling only to what is true! God, reveal to me any twisted truths I'm harboring in my head or heart about who You are or how You see me.

I've been holding on to a twisted truth that _____.

But the real truth is _____.

In light of Your real truth, I now choose to believe _____.



God, whenever I think that the gospel isn't enough for my faults and failures, remind me that, in fact, it is more than enough. Thank You for the gift of grace, which I cannot earn but need each day; in Jesus's name. Amen.

Day 4: The To-Do, Do-More, and Do-Better Hoops

Whether we were brought up in a religious environment or we've never darkened the doorstep of a church, many of us want to know what we need to do to make God happy so that we can get what we want from Him. Sometimes, those rules are given to us by religious authority figures, and other times we create our own list of rules that we think will fast-track us to God's blessing—or at least keep us out of God's hammer strike zone.

Yesterday, we were introduced to a group of people in the Galatian church who wanted to add requirements to salvation. These Judaizers gained enough influence to plant doubt into the minds of the believers. As a result, many Galatian Christians shifted from the posture of receiving from God to thinking that they needed to do something for God in order to be worthy of salvation. As a result, they unintentionally trapped themselves in a cycle of religious rules and robbed themselves of God's power, peace, and provision in their lives. The word that describes our human effort to gain God's favor is *legalism*.²²

Legalism is when we focus on what we're doing for God rather than on what we're receiving from Him. This "doing" looks like religious rules we follow in hopes of earning God's favor. Legalism isn't always about tradition. It's not legalistic to go to church, but it is legalism to go to church if you think that church attendance earns you points with God. I make sure that I do my Bible study each day. This would be legalistic if I did my Bible study because I felt like it made me a better Christian. However, I do my Bible study because I want to stay as close to God as I can each day! That's definitely not legalism.

As we will continue to discover throughout this study, we have a lot in common with the Galatians. Today we'll learn about the three religious hoops of legalism and, most important, we'll learn a helpful filtering tool that we can use to determine whether our motives are driven by rules or by a desire to lean into our relationship with God.

Before Paul confronted the legalistic Judaizers, Jesus challenged the Pharisees, who also prioritized following rules over receiving from a relationship God.



Big Idea

A relationship with God means that you receive from Him rather than follow a bunch of rules.

Extra Insight

"U.S. adults today adopt a 'salvation-can-be-earned' perspective, with a near-majority (48%) believing that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things during their life, they will 'earn' a place in Heaven."²³

Read Matthew 12:1-2, and fill in the blanks below.

Jesus and the disciples were walking in a grain field on the _____.

The disciples were hungry, so they broke off some heads of grain to _____ them.

The Pharisees protested because they felt that the disciples violated the religious _____ about harvesting grain on the Sabbath.

And when you enter your neighbor's field of grain, you may pluck the heads of grain with your hand, but you must not harvest it with a sickle.

(Deuteronomy 23:25)

In next week's lessons, we will learn about the religious laws that the Pharisees and Judaizers wanted to enforce upon the Galatian believers. In this section of Scripture, Jesus's disciples were hungry, so they broke off some heads of grain from a farmer's field. This was an acceptable practice at the time (see Deuteronomy 23:25 in the margin)—though I can't resist saying that it is unacceptable to do this with grapes at the grocery store!

The Pharisees, who served as the moral and religious authority for the Jewish people, saw the disciples break off the grain. While they knew that it wasn't unlawful to pick grain by hand, they protested about doing it on the Sabbath. Like the Judaizers who would follow in their legalistic footsteps later, the Pharisees focused on following rules in order to be right with God. In their defense, these legalists thought that they were defending God.

Legalism leads us to believe that rules are the only way we can be assured we are right with God. When we believe there are rules that define what makes someone a good Christian versus a bad Christian, that's legalism. Some examples include rules about what we can or cannot eat, what music is good or bad for us to listen to, or what Bible translations we should read—all of which have nothing to do with receiving from God or enjoying a life-giving relationship with Him.

What are some religious rules that some Christians unintentionally pressure other Christians to follow?



What are some legalistic rules you've thought you had to live by—in the past or present?

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

(Ephesians 2:9)

Read Ephesians 2:9 in the margin, and summarize the message of this verse below:

While some legalism is motivated by not feeling we're enough for God, there's another kind of legalism that is driven by pride. When we think that God loves us because we've earned it, we're prone to boast or brag. A good example of this is the Pharisees, who felt that because they followed the law, they were better than other Jews. This kind of legalism assumes a *quid pro quo* with God. *Quid pro quo* means we carry the expectation that if we do our part, then the other party should hold up their end of the bargain.

Again, the gospel is based on God's perfect promises, not our performance. Our relationship with God is about receiving from Him, not following a bunch of rules for Him. All rules do is discourage us and make us tired!

Legalism's rules tend to fall into three categories I've defined with three hoops labeled To Do, Do More, and Do Better.



To Do
An attempt to gain God's forgiveness or save one's self from sin or struggle

Do More
An effort to compel God to act or gain favor (like a *quid pro quo*)

Do Better
A determination to fix one's self or to tamp down guilt and shame

Have you ever thought you had to do one or more things in order to stay on God's good side? If so, what?

Are there times when you make an effort to do more so that God will be more likely to give you what you want or answer your prayers? If so, explain.

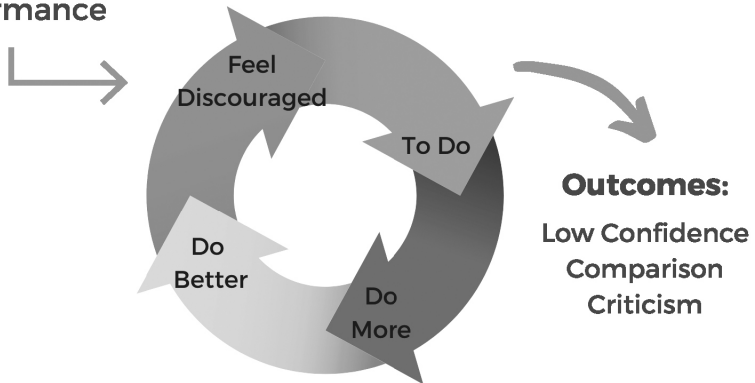
When you make a mistake or feel like you're not a "good Christian," how do you attempt to "fix" yourself or do better?

Once we begin jumping through these three religious hoops, we get stuck in a draining and discouraging cycle.

Earlier this week, I introduced the Gospel Wheel, which demonstrates God's actions and our opportunity to receive. In contrast, I've also created a Legalism Wheel. As you look at the Legalism Wheel below, take note of the outcomes associated with these actions—low confidence, comparison, criticism, and feeling "caught." This wheel illustrates the negative outcomes of the pressure to perform—whether self-induced or encouraged by others.

Motivation:
Believing in Personal
Performance

The Legalism Wheel



The Judaizers in the Galatian church put pressure on the believers to ignore the gospel Paul had taught them in favor of jumping through religious hoops. While it's easy to judge them for swaying people from the gospel, we can unintentionally transfer our rules to others, too. Often, well-meaning Christians and churches create sacred cows, which are practices or processes



they fall in love with and then promote with the same zest (or more) as they do the gospel. One author writes: “Even today we find Christian groups sending the message to new believers, ‘Great! Now that you believe in Christ and are saved, here’s a list of things that you need to start doing to make God (and us) happy. And here’s another list of things that you need to stop doing in order to be acceptable in our fellowship.’”²⁴

If you’ve ever felt like you’ve been jumping through religious hoops, whether it’s because you felt like you had to or because you were afraid not to, the following verse reminds us to shift our focus from others to God.

Write Galatians 1:10 in the space below:

Paul made this strong statement in response to specific allegations made against him by the Judaizers. One commentator points out that the Judaizers characterized Paul as someone who went along to get along with whomever he was with at the time. The argument of these Judaizers sounded like this: “When Paul is with the Jews, he lives like the Jews; but when he is with the Gentiles, he lives like the Gentiles. He is a man-pleaser, and therefore you cannot trust him.”²⁵

Did Paul go along to get along, compromising himself so that he could get an audience? Not at all! While Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:22 about finding common ground with everyone so that he can share the gospel with them, finding common ground isn’t the same as compromise.

As I’ve mentioned, I worked on the staff of my local church for many years. Our founding senior pastor envisioned a place where unchurched or spiritually restless individuals could come and feel welcome, especially if they’d never been to church before. Over the years, he took lots of criticism for things such as playing secular songs with a theme that matched the sermon, serving free pop and coffee, as well as advertising heavily on radio and television before that became a regular thing for churches to do. Even though his focus remained on making connections with unchurched people and thousands of people heard the gospel message at our church each year, it was other Christians who criticized him the most.



Extra Insight

“These Judaizers... were cowardly compromisers who mixed law and grace, hoping to please both Jews and Gentiles, but never asking whether or not they were pleasing God.”²⁶

What’s the difference between finding common ground in order to share the gospel and compromising? (There are no wrong answers here.)

Why do you think that some Christians confuse establishing common ground with compromising?

When do you feel the people-pleasing tug in your life?

For me, the tug to people-please isn’t very strong, but it’s still there. In the past, I jumped through the To-Do hoop because I saw other women at church doing it and I wanted to be in their “inner circle.” I thought that if I looked like them on the outside then I would be accepted. To be clear, those women weren’t asking me to jump through that To-Do hoop; that was on me. Even when I’ve been in church events where I felt pressure to act or conform to whatever everyone else was doing, I still had the opportunity to choose whether I was acting because my focus was on God or because I was afraid of looking less Christian to others.

Can you relate? Paul teaches us that when it comes to the most important matters, such as the gospel, there’s no place for people-pleasing. Our goal is to live for the God who loves us, saves us, changes us, and gives us purpose. God doesn’t want you to jump through human hoops because He wants to give you so much more!

Prayer

God, help me to remember that my relationship with You is based on what You want me to receive from You, and that I don’t need to follow a bunch of rules. Open my eyes to the To-Do, Do-More, and Do-Better hoops in my life. I want to trust in Your perfect promises, not find salvation in my performance; in Jesus’s name. Amen.



Day 5: Spiritual Breakthrough

At the beginning of this week's study, we read about Jesus standing in the synagogue before His hometown crowd and declaring that He had come to bring good news and to set the captives free. The audience marveled at Jesus's teaching that He came to set the captives free but then turned against Him when He implied that He would not be able to do this work in His own hometown because of their unbelief. They didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah, nor did they believe that He had the power to free them.

Sometimes, we question whether God can really free us from the prisons in which we feel trapped. We know that if we can just break free, then we would fly and live our dreams. However, the prisons of our past, our problems, and our pain feel like walls closing in around us, keeping us from realizing our hopes and dreams.

On the cover of this study is a picture of a butterfly. Before a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, it wraps itself into a hard shell, or chrysalis. In my opinion, there's nothing attractive or interesting about a chrysalis. It looks like a prison that has trapped a caterpillar inside. Yet, it's not a prison, but rather a staging ground for transformation. Inside the caterpillar are groups of cells called imaginal discs, which are the building blocks for the new structure of the caterpillar.²⁷

That little caterpillar's insides and outsides are reformed into a new body with new abilities and a new purpose. However, it's still the same creature. Those changes aren't always apparent to the naked eye, even though scientists have found a way to study them. It's not until the butterfly emerges from its shell that the final transformation can be seen.

How does a butterfly break out of its chrysalis? It pushes its wings against the wall of the chrysalis until the enclosure weakens and gives way. One of the side effects of the butterfly pushing with its wings is that they become stronger so that it is prepared to fly.

Perhaps the journey of change or metamorphosis of the butterfly can cast a vision for you, especially if you feel trapped in any prison of your past, pain, or problems—perhaps afraid that you aren't good enough for God. What if you changed your perspective from seeing yourself imprisoned to seeing those experiences as preparation?

The Gospel Wheel reminds us that it is God at work within us—loving us, saving us, changing us, and giving us purpose. Our role is to receive and

Big Idea

Spiritual breakthrough is an ah-ha moment when we recognize that God is at work within us, receive what He's doing, and respond to it.



"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

(Philippians 1:6)

"It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies."

(Zechariah 4:6)

allow God to work so that we can experience the power of the gospel in our lives and the freedom that comes with it. The gospel recuses and releases us to discover God's great adventure of faith and purpose. Then we're free like that butterfly to be sent and used by God to make a difference in our world.

Yet sometimes, just like the chrysalis shields the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly, we don't always see where God's hand is shaping and remolding us so that we can live and love as He does. When we can't see God at work, we might question if He is working. So, how do we know that God is at work?

God Is Always at Work in Us

The apostle Paul encourages us that God is always at work, even when we can't see it.

Read Philippians 1:6 in the margin. Where is God's work taking place, and how long will God be at work?

Now read Zachariah 4:6 in the margin. How does God work in us?

God never gives up on us! As we learned earlier this week, the gospel is based on God's perfect promises, not our performance. While we might feel like that caterpillar trapped inside of a chrysalis, all messed up and disorganized on the inside, God is at work. Like the imaginal discs that God created for the caterpillar, God's power never stops working in our lives.

One of the enticements of legalism is the temptation to judge our spiritual growth or transformation according to our actions. Just because someone reads her Bible every day of the year doesn't mean that she has allowed God to reshape or transform her heart. But, what if we took the focus off of what *we* are doing and shifted to noticing where *God* is working in us?

Sometimes, we get distracted or discouraged, so we don't see where God is working in our lives. At other times, we don't see where God is working until we share our story with others. It's in our story that we see God's power working through us, not for our glory but for God's alone.



Read Galatians 1:13-24, and complete the following statements with T or F.

- 1. When Paul followed the Jewish religion, he did not persecute God's church. (v. 13)
- 2. Paul was very committed to the traditions of his religion. (v. 13)
- 3. Paul recognized that God had saved him by grace in spite of everything he had done. (v. 15)
- 4. Paul went to Arabia instead of going to Jerusalem. (v. 17)
- 5. Ten years later, Paul came back and visited Barnabas. (v. 18)
- 6. Paul stayed with Peter and also met Jesus's brother, James. (vv. 18-19)
- 7. Paul visited churches in Syria and Cilicia. (v. 21)
- 8. The church in Judea didn't know Paul personally. (v. 22)
- 9. Paul reports that those churches gave God glory because of him. (v. 24)



As you read through Paul's story, you can see two of the main themes that we've discussed this week. First, Paul received the gospel, and second, Paul's relationship with God through Christ wasn't about rules or seeking the approval of others.

Why did Paul give his entire story in his letter to the Galatians? There's something about hearing a person's story of life change that draws us in and helps us understand how spiritual concepts like the gospel look "with skin on" and in action.

Throughout the New Testament as Jesus meets people, we see the gospel rescue them from their sin and release them from the prison of their pain, past, or problems. Many of those people were condemned by the Pharisees for breaking the rules. Yet, Jesus moved toward them in relationship and released them from religious hoops, judgment, and shame.

In Luke 19, Jesus travels through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. As He walks through town, Jesus seeks out a man. This encounter paints a beautiful picture of the power of the gospel as a gift we're to receive so that we can be released.

Read Luke 19:1-10 below.

¹Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ²There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

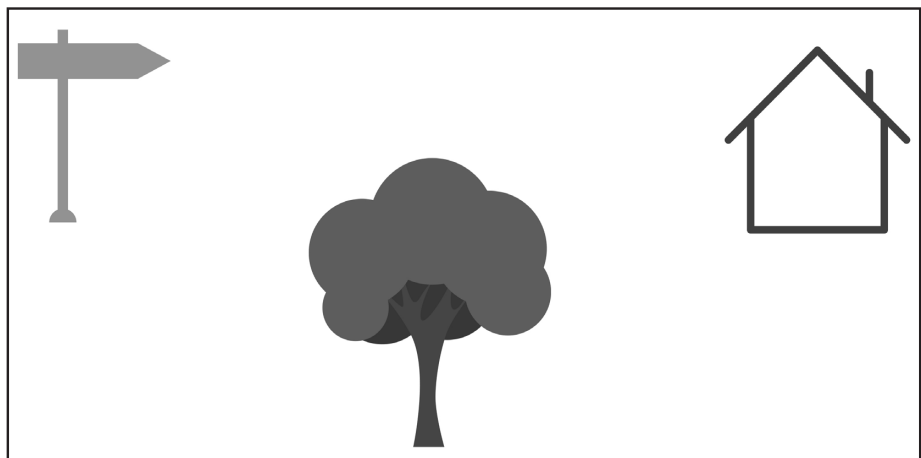
⁵When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

⁶Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

⁸Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

⁹Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

Complete this picture by drawing and labeling the actions from the story. Or, if you prefer, summarize the story in writing in the space on the following page.



Story Summary:

Zacchaeus's name means "pure" or "righteous one,"²⁸ but that's not the reputation that he has. His job as a tax collector means that he works for the government oppressing the people and cheating his fellow Jews. So, when Jesus comes to town specifically looking for the man whom everyone despises, that surely draws a lot of attention.

While there isn't a moment where we see Zacchaeus come to the altar, take the pastor's hands, and pray the sinner's prayer, God was clearly at work in his life!

What are three ways you can see God at work in Zacchaeus's life even though it's not spelled out in the story? Look at verses 3, 6, and 8.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Your ideas may be different than mine, but here are a few things to consider. First, Zacchaeus goes looking for Jesus. The Scriptures tell us that God loves us, and in His love He draws us to Him (Jeremiah 31:3). Then, Zacchaeus responds to Jesus's desire to visit Zacchaeus's home with great joy. Zacchaeus says "yes" to Jesus visiting his physical home, but Zacchaeus also seems to accept the invitation for Jesus to make His home in Zacchaeus's heart, too (see Ephesians 3:17 in the margin). Finally, Zacchaeus's heart is changed and he freely offers to restore others by returning what he has overcharged them—and more.

Many in the crowd are upset that Jesus is visiting the home of a dishonest man who breaks the religious and social rules. However, Jesus rescues Zacchaeus rather than asking him to do more or do better, and Zacchaeus receives the gift of salvation.

Zacchaeus's story is a reminder to me that we can't always see the details of what or how God is working in someone's life, but we can be assured that God is always at work. The same goes for you. Even if you don't always feel



Extra Insight

"Zacchaeus was not saved because he promised to do good works. He was saved because he responded by faith to Christ's gracious word to him."²⁹

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

(Ephesians 3:17)

like God is at work, as long as you are praying for Him to lead you to freedom, you can be confident that He is doing exactly that!

While your journey toward freedom is a process, you can train yourself to see where God is working in you.

Spiritual Breakthrough: Identifying Where God Is Working in Your Life

The term *spiritual breakthrough* is not in the Bible, and people define it in different ways. This is the definition I am using in our study: A spiritual breakthrough is an ah-ha moment when we recognize that God is at work within us, receive what He's doing, and respond to it.

Breakthrough = Recognize + Receive + Respond

Just as a caterpillar's transformation inside a chrysalis is not readily seen with the naked eye, so we cannot always see where God is at work in our hearts, minds, and lives. Rather than using our ability to follow rules as a measuring stick for our faith, we can practice noticing where God is at work in us. Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God is always at work in us. This means that when we practice recognizing where God is transforming us, we're less likely to try to force changes in ourselves.

I have identified six kinds of ah-ha moments that capture various ways God can be at work in our lives. Beginning next week, I'll insert a reminder at the end of each day's lesson, prompting you to reflect on your study and life experience and look for any ah-ha moments when you've seen God at work. A spiritual breakthrough does not have to be a Fourth of July fireworks moment, though sometimes it can be. Most often, however, it is an observation similar to watching a caterpillar transform into a butterfly—a moment when you recognize a small way that God is transforming you from the inside out!

Prayer

God, I want to experience Your spiritual breakthrough in my life. I want to believe that Jesus came to set me free from the fears that are keeping me from experiencing the great adventure of joy and purpose that You have for my life. Help me to develop Your spiritual vision so that I can recognize where You are at work within me, receive what You're doing, and respond to Your work in my life; in Jesus's name. Amen.



Weekly Breakthrough Reflection Exercise

To close out our week of study and help you become familiar with the six kinds of ah-ha moments, spend some time reflecting on them and recording any examples *from your past* that come to mind—or examples you've observed in someone else's life. You might think of an example for only one or two of them, or you might be able to identify an example for each one. (We will be looking for *current* examples throughout the rest of our study.)

Lightbulb

You gain new understanding about God or yourself.



Describe the moment:

Butterfly

You surrender or let go of a struggle, sin, or stronghold from your past.



Describe the moment:

Rainbow

You find new or renewed hope based on God's promises for your life.



Describe the moment:

Busted Brick Wall

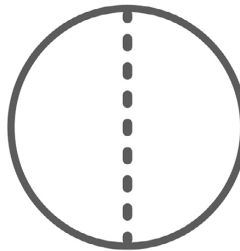
You confront and face up to any kind of fear or worry.



Describe the moment:

Line in the Sand

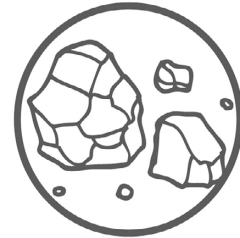
You realize that a sin, struggle, or stronghold is no longer acceptable.



Describe the moment:

Split-the-Rock

You have a supernatural shift in your faith or circumstances after faithfully praying and letting God lead.



Describe the moment:



Video Viewer Guide

WEEK 1

Scriptures: Luke 4:18-19, Romans 5:16, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8, Galatians 1:6-7,
Ephesians 2:9

The gospel set us free from the prisons of our _____, our _____, and
our _____.

The gospel is about _____ from God rather than following _____.

Hoops We Jump Through in Order to Earn God's Favor:

1. _____ — Attempting to gain forgiveness or save ourselves
2. _____ — Trying to please God and stack up "points"
3. _____ — Working harder after we've made a mistake

Spiritual breakthrough is an ah-ha moment when we _____ that God is at work
within us, _____ what He's doing, and _____ to it.

Freedom Principle #1

The gospel is based on God's perfect _____,
not our _____.

