

**SOLID  
TRUTH**  
*for Slippery Times*

*An Inductive Journey Through Galatians*

by

*pam gillaspie*

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Times**

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## Dedicated to . . .

Mom and Dad Gillaspie. Thank you for your constant love and unceasing prayers. They mean the world to me!

## Acknowledgements

Although this is the first paragraph of the book, it is always the last paragraph that I write as I look back and consider the way God works in using so many different people to bring a study together. I'm just one of the tools in His hand. This study—and all of my studies so far—began with a patient group of women piloting a class with me at my local church. Thanks to each of my classmates for walking the road and enduring the vertical white board and the unedited product with me.

Rick and Pete, thank you for your consistent editing, teaching, and coaching as we've worked through so many manuscripts together over the years. I learn and am sharpened with every project and I am grateful. Cress, thanks for your availability and speed in proofreading. Dave, as always, thank you for the cover design and for putting up with me in the press-readying process. Finally, thanks so much to Staci, BJ, David, Brian, John, Scott, and Paula for all of your work in design, marketing, and getting the message out. You have no idea how grateful I am to be part of such a talented team!

# Galatians: **SOLID TRUTH** for *Slippery Times*

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even be possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*<sup>®</sup> flexible studies are designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing those assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

**Enjoy!**

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# How to use this study

*Sweeter than Chocolate!*<sup>®</sup> studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

**1. WEEKLY STUDY:** The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

**2. FYI boxes:** For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

## FYI:

### Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

**3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes:** Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

**4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes:** If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

## Digging Deeper

### What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

# Week One

## A Misplaced Zeal and a Twisted Gospel

*As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

—Galatians 1:9

Relativism. Tolerance. Living your own truth. We live in slippery times, in times where truth has stumbled, where everyone does what is right in his or her own eyes. Absolutes have been shown the door not only in the public square but often in the Church as well. Experience rules the day in many hearts and minds and the pure truth of the Gospel has all too often been shelved in favor of man's programs and procedures, rules and ways. Man in his zeal likes to control. But man's ways are not God's ways.

The letter to the Galatians overflows with examples of man's ways colliding with God's ways. This week, we'll overview the entire letter and then focus our attention on Galatians 1 as we see the apostle Paul ground his authority in his call, not from fallen man but from Almighty God.

### FYI:

#### If You're in a Class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

## **CONSIDER the WAY you THINK**

As we begin our study together, we're going to look at the whole letter of Galatians reading it through several times before we go back and examine it more thoroughly chapter by chapter. We'll start by simply reading through Galatians at least three times this week. If possible use an NAS or ESV Bible for one of your readings. Also (trust me here), select a paraphrase to read. All versions should be easily accessible online if you don't have extra Bibles around the house. Try to do each read-through in a single sitting.

### **FYI:**

#### **NASB and ESV**

The NASB and ESV are two of the most reliable word-for-word translations from the original languages. While the KJV and NKJV are also translated word for word, they do not include consideration of earlier-dated original-language manuscripts discovered more recently.

### **WEEKLY READ-THROUGH #1**

Version I read:

Main observations:

Big questions:

**WEEKLY READ-THROUGH #2**

Version I read:

Main observations:

Big questions:

**WEEKLY READ-THROUGH #3**

Version I read:

Main observations:

Big questions:

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**

**What are you bringing to the text?**

Presuppositions. We all have them and it's important for us to acknowledge them as we start out. Do you believe the Bible is God's Word? Do you believe it is binding on your life? Do you have doubts about all or part of it? What views are you bringing to the text that may color your opinions or discoveries? Record any you can think of below.

**FYI:**

**Start with Prayer**

You've probably heard it before and if we study together in the future, you're sure to hear it again. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide. Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

As you read, were you aware of any presuppositions you brought to the text? Do you have views that predisposed you toward a particular interpretation? If so, jot them down.

### **FYI:**

#### **A Region, Not a City**

Galatians is written not to one church in a single city but to the churches in the region of Galatia. Because Paul wrote other epistles to cities it's easy to assume there is a city of Galatia. To my simple mind it's kind of like baseball, most teams—like the Chicago Cubs and the Seattle Mariners—are associated with a single city, but others like the Minnesota Twins are associated with a region, in this case a state.

What differences did you notice between the translations?

What differences did you notice between the translations and the paraphrase?

Was the paraphrase easier to understand? Did it differ substantially from the word-for-word translations?

## **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW**

Who wrote Galatians? Who was he writing to? (author and recipients)

What kind of writing is this? (genre)

When was Galatians written? What timing clues are we given in the text? (This one is disputed.)

Where was the author writing from? Can we know for certain? Why/why not? (origin)

Where were the recipients located? (destination)

Why did Paul write Galatians? (occasion)

How does the Galatian account (2:1-10) of the Jerusalem Council square with Luke's account in Acts 15? What questions do the two accounts raise?

## FYI:

### **Northern/Southern Galatian Theories**

Answering the question *Who are the recipients of this letter?* is often a slam-dunk. Paul wrote the Corinthian letters to the church in the city of Corinth, Philippians to the church in the city of Philippi, Colossians to the church at the city of Colossae. He addresses Galatians, however, to the churches of Galatia. The letter is often referred to as a circular letter, meaning that it was intended to be read by one church and then passed along to the next one.

The Galatian theories hinge on how Paul used the term "Galatians." Was he referring to people in the northern section of the land or to the Roman province in the south?

If he is writing to churches in the Roman province of Galatia they include those that Paul and Barnabas planted on their first missionary journey—Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch (Acts 18:23).

While commentaries often address this as a "major" question, the answer does not affect the theology of the Galatian letter.

If you have the time and the interest, check out a good commentary to see what the scholars say about who the Galatians were and when the letter was written. While the answers don't affect the message of Galatians, the information may help you relate the writing to what you read in Acts.

## Digging Deeper

### Comparing Translations and Paraphrases

This is not for the faint of heart. Pick one verse from Galatians where you find a significant difference between two translations or between a translation and a paraphrased verse and compare it against the Greek text to see where the variations come from. For those who wonder why the translations differ so much, take the time to work through this assignment. If you have access to Logos or are comfortable in the original languages, have at it. If not, here is some direction to help you on your way.

**Website:** [www.interlinearbible.org](http://www.interlinearbible.org)

**Select:** Greek/English Interlinear

**Operating Instructions:**

At the top of the page, type in Galatians 1 (or whatever verse you're looking for). The page will return the Greek text of your search verse along with the Greek part of speech and English translation. For each word, you'll see something like this:

Strong Number and Englishman's occurrences . . . . 4957 [e]  
 Transliterated Greek word . . . . . synestauromai  
 Actual Greek text . . . . . **συνεσταυρωμαι**  
 Translated text . . . . . I have been crucified with  
 Verb Parsing Information . . . . . V-RIM/P-1S  
 (In this case: Verb—Perfect, Indicative, Middle or Passive—1st person singular)

**Website:** [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com)

**Select:** Parallel Bible

**Operating Instructions:**

In the search window entitled "Search Online Parallel Bible," type the verse you're comparing. You can opt to compare specific versions side by side or compare all the versions available on the site.

**FYI:**

**Early or Late Date?**

The recipients Paul addressed (northern or southern Galatia) impacts the letter's dating. Those who believe the letter is addressed to ethnic Galatians further north place a late date on Galatians based on Luke's account in the book of Acts.

If Paul's audience was the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, however, a much earlier date is possible. Many scholars think Galatians is Paul's earliest existing letter and date it cAD48 or 49.

While the dating of Galatians is a hot topic among scholars, it doesn't impact the message of the letter. As a student it's important to know that while we can't answer every inductive question we raise, God's Word is clear even when we can't fill in all the blanks.

**Questions to Consider:**

Where do the translations/paraphrases stick closely to the original language?

Where do they diverge?

Do the different translations and paraphrases contradict each other's propositions (e.g., "God is holy" versus "God is not holy") or do they offer shades of meaning to each other's terms (e.g., "In the beginning was the Word" versus "In the beginning the Word already existed")?

What else have you observed?

**FYI:**

**The Churches in Galatia**

We can often remember more easily when we tie new information into a familiar format—old information in modern packaging if you will. For recall, let's think of our Galatian cities in a "city, state" format:

Pisidian Antioch, Galatia

Iconium, Galatia

Lystra, Galatia

Derbe, Galatia

*Others you might want to remember . . .*

Philippi, Macedonia

Thessalonica, Macedonia

Berea, Macedonia

Ephesus, Asia

Colossae, Asia

Pergamum, Asia

Smyrna, Asia

**GALATIANS 1**

In Galatians 1 Paul establishes his apostleship, coolly greets the Galatians, and quickly jumps to the bottom line of his purpose for writing.

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** Galatians 1 and **MARK** key, repeated words in a distinctive fashion.

**Galatians 1**

- 1 *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*
- 2 *and all the brethren who are with me,*  
*To the churches of Galatia:*
- 3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*
- 4 *who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*
- 5 *to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*
- 6 *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;*
- 7 *which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*
- 8 *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*
- 9 *As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*
- 10 *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*
- 11 *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.*
- 12 *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- 13 *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;*
- 14 *and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*
- 15 *But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased*
- 16 *to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,*
- 17 *nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*

**FYI:****Charis and Shalom**

"Grace (*charis*) and peace (*eirene/shalom*)" merge together a typical Greek greeting with a common Jewish one.

**FYI:****Marking the Text**

You'll find some key words to mark on the next page, but it's better for everyone—and loads more fun for you!—if you can begin identifying them for yourself.

- 18 *Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.*
- 19 *But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*
- 20 *(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)*
- 21 *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*
- 22 *I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;*
- 23 *but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."*
- 24 *And they were glorifying God because of me.*

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What did you initially observe from the text?

What key words did you notice?

What did you learn about Paul? How does he describe his changed life?

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**

**Check Out Paul's History in Acts**

If you have some extra time this week, learn more about Paul by reading or listening to Luke's account in the Acts of the Apostles. The unconverted Paul, then known as Saul, first enters the biblical scene in Acts 7:58 when those martyring Stephen lay their coats at his feet. Subsequent chapters recount his persecution of believers, his conversion, and eventually his life of ministry. Record below your Saul/Paul observations from the book of Acts.

**FYI:**

**Don't Be Afraid to Ask Questions**

He can answer. You won't undo Him.

## INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

### Important Words/Word Groups in Galatians 1

Here are some words and word groups to pay attention to in Galatians 1.

"God" words (*God, Father, Jesus Christ, Lord, etc.*)

"Will" words (*will, want* – watch for a recurring Greek word)

"Man" words

"Zeal" words (*seek, strive, zealous, try, etc.*)

"Favor" words (*please, favor*)

"Gospel" / "false gospel" words

"Revelation" words

Places

Time phrases

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Who are "the brethren" with Paul?

If you have some extra time this week, see if you can identify the "brethren" in verse 2. What are the possibilities? Who do you think they are based on evidence in Galatians and Acts? Explain your reasoning below.

## LOOKING CLOSER . . .

### OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

**READ** Galatians 1:1-5 and **MARK** references to *Paul, God, and men*.

#### Galatians 1

1 *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*

2 *and all the brethren who are with me,*

*To the churches of Galatia:*

3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*

4 *who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*

5 *to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

How did Paul become an apostle? What had nothing to do with his apostleship?

What theological points does Paul drive home in these opening verses particularly with regard to Jesus? To God the Father?

Why did Jesus give Himself over for our sins?

What does this tell us about the seriousness of our situation apart from Him?

Do you typically hear the Gospel presented against the backdrop of coming judgment? Explain.

How specifically does Paul describe the “age” he’s in? How does this compare with our age?

How big a deal is the true Gospel based on God’s investment in it?

## FYI:

### **It’s Not Going to Get Better**

If you run into teaching that suggests things are going to get dramatically better on earth before Jesus returns, go back and compare the teaching with Scripture.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **What will the last days look like?**

The author of Hebrews tells us that “in these last days” God has spoken to us in His Son. Writing in the first century AD, he includes his generation in last days. As we move toward the end of the last days, the Word tells us what we can expect both from human nature in general and, more specifically, from the generations between the appearances of Christ. It is not butterflies and rainbows. This week, if you have some extra time, examine what God’s Word says we can expect to see before the return of Jesus. Here are a few passages to get you started, but don’t feel limited to these:

2 Timothy 3

2 Peter 3

1 John 2

Jude

Revelation 1-3

## Digging Deeper

### The Other Greetings

Paul's displeasure with the Galatian churches is apparent in what he says in his letter. If you have some time this week, compare Paul's curt address "to the churches of Galatia" with his greetings in other letters.

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: Apostle

If you have some extra time this week, examine the Greek word translated *apostle*. What is the general meaning of this word and how is it used specifically in reference to the apostles of Jesus and to Paul? What significance does this title have and does it have any bearing on how we handle Scripture and revelation today? Record your observations and conclusions below.

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** Galatians 1:6-10 and **MARK** references to *Paul, God, men, and gospel/ another gospel.*

- 6 *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;*
- 7 *which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*
- 8 *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*
- 9 *As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*
- 10 *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What has Paul already established about the true Gospel according to Galatians 1:1-5?

How does Paul open this section? What amazes him?

In distorting the true Gospel, what are these people actually doing? Is it more than just confusing the facts? Explain.

**ONE STEP FURTHER:**

**Word Study: Persecution**

If you have time this week, see if you can find the Greek word group for *persecute/persecution*. How does it relate to Paul in Galatians 1 and how does it relate to what Christians can expect if they live godly in Christ Jesus? Record your findings below.

**FYI:**

**Too open-ended?**

My goal with open-ended questions—particularly in **Digging Deeper** sections—is to challenge you to think for yourself without depending on prompts. Over time this will help you reason through the text more and more for yourself. I believe you'll discover more if you're given more room to ask questions and explore. If you only have to fill in a blank, that's about how much you'll learn . . . but if you're given a page, oh my, the possibilities are endless!

Week One: **A Misplaced Zeal and a Twisted Gospel**

How does Paul consistently refer to the false teaching? What does he contrast it with? What does this suggest about what they had already received?

How open are people today to “a gospel contrary” to the one the Apostles preached? Do our churches recognize a “gospel contrary”? Do you? How?

What repeated phrase does Paul use to say what should happen to those who distort the Gospel?

What is precluded in being a bond-servant of Christ? Applications?

How does the tension between pleasing men and God reveal itself in your life? In your church?

## Mid-Week Review . . .

Summarize the basics of Paul's words so far in Galatians 1:1-10.

What is his main point in Galatians 1:1-10?

## OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

Paul writes a lengthy autobiographical section in his letter that runs from Galatians 1:11 to the middle of Galatians 2. His status as a true apostle of Jesus Christ is critical to his argument that the Gospel he proclaims is authoritative.

**READ** Galatians 1:11-14. Continue to **MARK** *gospel, man*, and their synonyms. Also mark every negative reference you see (*not, neither, nor*).

- 11 *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.*
- 12 *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- 13 *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;*
- 14 *and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.*

## INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

### Questioning the Text

The key to exegesis (the fancy word meaning to draw meaning out of Scripture) is questioning the text. The basic investigative questions *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* are your framework. Not every question can be addressed to every verse, and most verses require several variations on the same question. As we study God's Word together, realize that not every question that can be asked will be asked, but don't let that stop you from asking other questions and exploring further on your own. We will never run out of questions to ask and answers to glean from God's Word!

If you're at a loss for what questions to ask, pay attention to the words that you've marked. Go to your key words and start there with your questions! Marking helps you see the main idea and frame questions.

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What additional information do these verses tell us about the Gospel Paul preaches? Where did this gospel come from? Where did it *not* come from?

### **ONE STEP FURTHER:**

#### **First Century Judaism**

In Galatians 1 Paul talks about his rapid advancement in Judaism. You'll learn quite a bit about first century Judaism simply by reading Galatians. If you have time this week, though, and want to do some additional research, see what you can find out about what Paul's life as a first century Jew was. Biblical cross-references and Bible dictionaries are a couple of good places to start. Record your findings below.

How does this compare with the source of Paul's apostleship? What implications can we draw from this?

Based on the witness of the rest of Scripture, did Paul's Gospel "match" what the original apostles taught? Explain.

### **FYI:**

#### **The Triple Negative**

Paul's use of the triple negative cocktail—*not, neither, nor*—in verses 11 and 12 adds emphasis to the statement that his Gospel was not human in origin.

Are Paul's words authoritative? Why? How do they compare with those of the people who are bringing a different gospel?

What does Paul reveal about his “former manner of life in Judaism”? How did he treat the church?

What characterized his behavior? What words or phrases does he use to describe that time in his life?

Have you ever exhibited misplaced zeal? (Not sure how to ask this one gently!) How and what did you sow? What did you reap?

How do you know if your zeal is on track? How can you measure or evaluate it?

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **Word Study: Revelation**

If you have some extra time this week, find the Greek word translated *revelation* in Galatians 1:12. Where else does the word group appear in Galatians 1? How does Paul use this word? How is it used elsewhere in the New Testament? Record your findings below.

## FYI:

### **Priests Who Turned to the Faith**

*The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.*

—Acts 6:7

## Digging Deeper

### What is the Gospel?

Paul goes to the mat in Galatians over the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the Gospel message? How is the Gospel defined in God's Word? This week, if you're up for a challenge, scour the pages of Scripture to see how the Gospel is defined, described, and explained.

What glimpses of the Gospel do we see in the Old Testament?

How is the Gospel message proclaimed in the synoptic Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke?

How does this compare with the proclamation in John's Gospel?

## INDUCTIVE FOCUS:

### What is a Key Word?

A key word or key phrase unlocks the meaning of a text. Key words are sometimes repeated and are critical to the message of the passage.

In Galatians 1 *gospel* is clearly a key word but there are others. Did you notice any of them? If so, record them below as well as what you learned.

If not, read back through the text watching for words that cluster within a few verses and are key to making sense of the text. If you don't see them right away, don't worry. I'll help by pointing out some as we go.

Identifying key words is a skill that develops over time, but you practice by observing carefully—so keep your eyes open. You will get it! Keep praying and keep looking.

What do we learn about the Gospel in Paul's writing?

What do other New Testament writers say about the Gospel?

What is the Gospel?

How would you explain the Gospel to a friend?

**CONTEXT**

In the next section of Galatians 1, verses 15-24, Paul talks about God revealing His Son in him. To put us in context, let's look at the account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Note that the text refers to him by his Hebrew name, Saul.

**INDUCTIVE  
FOCUS:****Make a List**

Using key words to make a list will help make sure you're paying close attention to the text. Use the space below to make a list of everything you learned about Saul from Acts 9:1-16. Be sure to include references. Here's the first one to get you started.

Saul was breathing threats against the disciples (v. 1)

**OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** Acts 9:1-16 and **MARK** every reference to *Saul* (i.e., Paul) including pronouns.

- 1 *Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,*
- 2 *and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*
- 3 *As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;*
- 4 *and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"*
- 5 *And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,*
- 6 *but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."*
- 7 *The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.*
- 8 *Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.*
- 9 *And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*
- 10 *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."*
- 11 *And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,*
- 12 *and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."*
- 13 *But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;*
- 14 *and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."*
- 15 *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;*
- 16 *for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."*

**DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What does Luke tell his readers about Saul's pre-conversion behavior?

What does he quote Ananias saying about Saul?

What is Saul up to at the beginning of Acts 9?

Where has he been and where is he going? For what purpose?

What happens to him on the road? What does he see? What does he hear?

How do his companions perceive the event?

**ONE STEP  
FURTHER:**

**Set Apart from the Womb**

If you have some extra time this week, see if you can find other biblical characters who were called and set apart before they were born. Record your findings below.

Week One: **A Misplaced Zeal and a Twisted Gospel**

What does Jesus say to Saul?

## FYI:

### Authentication

A key principle we see throughout Acts is authentication. Over and over again when one person hears a supernatural message, another person hears a corresponding message that authenticates the veracity of both.

What happens to Saul physically as a result of his encounter on the road?

What does the Lord tell Ananias in a vision?

## FYI:

### Unless the Father Draws

*"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."*

—Jesus, John 6:44

How does Ananias respond? What are his concerns?

How does God answer? What are His plans for Saul?

Describe Saul's conversion. Did Saul seek God or did God seek Saul? What do you make of this? Does this make you rethink anything regarding man's approach to God or the church's approach to evangelism? Explain your reasoning.

## Digging Deeper

### And you will be My witnesses . . .

We've already spent time this week looking at what the Gospel is. This **Digging Deeper** section is a follow-up. What are we to do with the message? The Bible is clear that Jesus' followers are to be witnesses. In fact, Jesus' final words before returning to heaven—recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:7-8—command His followers to do just that.

#### **Matthew 28:18b-20**

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

#### **Acts 1:7b-8**

*"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

If you have some extra time this week, examine these questions from a biblical perspective using whatever study resources you have at your disposal.

What is a witness?

What does a witness do? Is there anything a witness can't do? Explain.

## FYI:

### Cephas and James

Cephas is Aramaic for "Peter." Peter comes from the Greek term *petros*, rock, Cephas from the Aramaic *kepa*, rock. James, the half-brother of Jesus and the son of Mary and Joseph, was a leader of the Jerusalem church. He is also the likely author of the epistle of James.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Syria

If you have some extra time this week, find out what significant New Testament city was located in Syria. Record it below along with why it was so important.

## OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

**READ** Galatians 1:15-24 and **MARK** every reference to Paul and to God.

- 15 *But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased*
- 16 *to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,*
- 17 *nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*
- 18 *Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.*
- 19 *But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*
- 20 *(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)*
- 21 *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*
- 22 *I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;*
- 23 *but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."*
- 24 *And they were glorifying God because of me.*

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

At what point did Paul belong to God? Explain your reasoning.

What does Paul say about God's role in his salvation?

How does this square with your view of how people come into relationship with Christ? Explain.

What does Paul *not* do immediately after his conversion?

What does he do? Where does he go?

Where are the leaders of the early church primarily located?

When does Paul finally consult with other Christian leaders? Who are they?

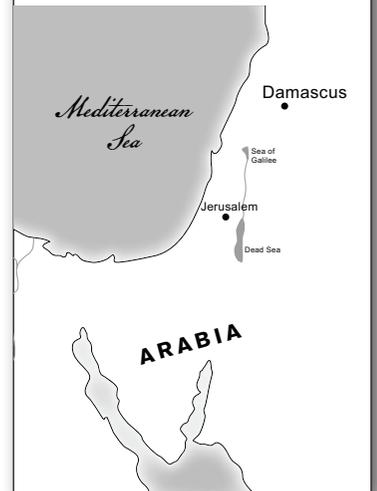
Did the church at large accept Paul? Explain.

Is it significant that he hadn't spent a lot of time in Judea, the region where Jerusalem is located? Why or why not?

**FYI:**

**Arabia . . . Damascus**

Acts 9 tells us that Paul (then called Saul) was on his way to Damascus (northeast of Israel) when he met Jesus. Paul says that after his conversion, he didn't immediately go to the Christian epicenter in Jerusalem, but rather went south to Arabia. Here's a simple map showing the relative locations.



Week One: **A Misplaced Zeal and a Twisted Gospel**

Who received glory from Paul's work? (Remember this for future reference!)

Does your life cause people to glorify God? Why/why not?

## **@THE END OF THE DAY . . .**

Take some extended time to review what you've learned this week in Galatians 1. Then, write a one-phrase chapter title followed by a one- to two-sentence chapter recap. Finally, spend some time asking God what application you need to take from this chapter for your life. Write that down, too, before you call it a day.

Galatians 1

Title:

Recap:

My Application(s):