
Study 7

Galatians 4:8-31 | Whose child are you?

Get Talking

1. Strict religions and cults often make incredibly high demands on their members. Why do you think they still attract so many? What does this tell us about human nature?

READ Galatians 4:8-20

2. How would you describe Paul's tone in this section? What is causing him such heartache?
3. What is life like for those who don't know God (v8)? What word is used?
4. In turning back to the law, what does Paul say the Galatians are doing (v9-10)? Why is this so tragic?
5. How does Paul's relationship with the Galatians contrast with the false teachers' relationship (v11-20)? How should this affect who they listen to?
6. What is Paul's great desire for these Galatians (see v19)? Is this our desire for one another?

7. Often, when we see a fellow Christian behaving inappropriately, we resort to “rules” in the way we rebuke them. (Can you think of examples of this?) How is Paul’s approach in v19-20 different? What can we learn from him?

READ Galatians 4:21-31

NOTE: Paul sees parallels between the Old Testament story of Abraham (see Genesis 16) and the situation in Galatia. To cut a long story short, Abraham and his wife Sarah had been unable to conceive, so Sarah gave her husband a slave girl, Hagar, to bear him a son. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, but God’s promise to give Abraham a family wasn’t intended to be fulfilled that way. In due course, Sarah did give birth to Isaac, the child of promise.

8. How does Paul use this story in a figurative way to describe the Galatian problem? Who represents whom? Why would this have been so shocking?
9. How does our identification with Sarah, the mother of the promise, bring freedom in Christ?
10. How should knowing that we’re part of the “Jerusalem that is above” (v26) shape the way we live? How might it safeguard against people-pleasing?
11. How is Ishmael’s treatment of Isaac a warning about what Christians should expect from those who are slaves to law (v29)? Why do you think this is?
12. What instances of “slavery” should we be mindful of today? How can we guard against falling into legalism and embrace the freedom we have in Christ?