



“Under New Management”

Galatians 4

— Small Group Plan —

The gap between who I am now and who God wants me to be can only be bridged by the transformational work of the Spirit. He will build the bridge and make it available to me, but he won't walk across it for me. That will always be my choice.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What kind of “joy” is so fragile that it can easily be taken away?
- Why are bad habits difficult to break?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

“I’LL JUST TRY HARDER”

Galatians 4:8-11

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

- Three times Paul mentions knowing God or being known by God.
- How does really knowing God differ from simply collecting and having information about God?
- When Paul adds the phrase, “known by God,” what is he highlighting? What is he pointing out? How does being known make the relationship more personal?
- How do you think God might feel when we approach him on the basis of rules rather than relationship?
- Some will observe a “special day” or “season” (v. 10) to gain some points with God. Others will observe the same occasions as an expression of love and gratitude for God's grace and forgiveness. How would you explain the difference?
- What are the signs of spiritual regression — “turning back” (v. 9)?

“GOD JUST WANTS ME HAPPY”

Galatians 4:12-16

¹² I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. ¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. ¹⁴ Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

- Why does Paul become so personal? What do you sense his mood to be as he writes this part of the letter?
- Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-23. How did Paul “become like” the Galatians (v. 12)? What heart and attitude did Paul want the Galatians to imitate from him?
- What happens to our joy if obtaining that joy becomes the goal of our life?
- Why is it true that a Christian who is aware of God’s amazing grace will develop a joy that can’t be taken away by life’s challenges and difficulties?
- How does a “performance” or “rule-keeping” style take the joy out of faith?
- How can a “God just wants me to be happy” conclusion eat away at morals?
- What might have happened that caused the Galatian’s relationship with Paul shift from close (vs. 13-14), to adversarial (v. 16)?

“GRACE SAVED ME / THE SPIRIT SHAPES ME”

Galatians 4:17-20

¹⁷ Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you [from us], so that you may be zealous for them. ¹⁸ It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. ¹⁹ My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

- Who are “those people” (v. 17) and how does their mission differ from Paul’s?
- Paul mentions the adjective “zealous” three times (vs. 17-18). Why does he say that the emotion zeal should be carefully led?
- Paul highlights his own Spiritual Formation ministry (v. 19), “until Christ is formed in you.” What is he trying to communicate by comparing himself to a mother giving birth? What does he mean and how is he feeling when he says I am at the point of childbirth “again” (v. 19)?
- Why does he want to be “with” (v. 20) the Galatians considering all they have put him through?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Why is it so easy to slip back into old patterns and ways of thinking, even those we know to be harmful to us?
- Do relational struggles usually shut down or strengthen your ministry to others?
- What are some “*weak and miserable principles*” (v. 9) that some live by today?
- Why is our personal relationship with God — our knowing God and being “*known by God*” (v. 9) — the foundation of faith and ministry?
- How can true joy bring patience and honesty to Christian relationships?
- What could be a first step toward “spiritual formation” (v. 19)?
- Close in prayer, asking God to personally lead us from where we are to where we need to be.