

LOSING MY RELIGION

"THE NEW YOU" GALATIANS 3:26-4:7

This Week's Core Competency

Identity in Christ – I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God. John 1:12, *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Paul tells the Galatian believers in 3:26, "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith" (NIV2011). The translators have chosen to render the Greek term *huioi* "children" rather than "sons" (cf., NIV1984), its literal translation, to indicate that his words apply to Christian men and women alike. What's important here is the relationship between being "sons" and being "in Christ Jesus." The apostle contends they are "sons" by virtue of being "in Christ Jesus." In other words, they are "sons" by virtue of being joined to Christ or "being clothed" with him. What's more, they are "in Christ Jesus" as a result of being "baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1Co 12:13). On the relationship of Spirit baptism and union with Christ one author writes: "Intimately connected with the fact that baptism by the Spirit brings the believer into the body of Christ is the inseparable truth that baptism also places the believer in Christ Himself. This truth was anticipated by Christ when He pronounced the words, 'In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you' (John 14:20). The 'ye in me' relationship was accomplished through the baptism of the Spirit. The importance

Baptism into Christ is not identification alone; it is also a union of life.

– John F. Walvoord

of this position and the extent of its implications can hardly be overemphasized. Before salvation, the individual was in Adam, partaking of Adam's nature, sin, and destiny. In salvation, the believer is removed from his position in Adam, and he is placed in Christ. *All the details of his salvation spring from this new position.* His justification, sanctification, deliverance, access to God, inheritance [as sons], and glorification are actual and possible because of the believer's position in Christ" (John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 141-42, italics added). Being "in Christ" entails more than intimate fellowship; it entails vital relationship.

While the NIV2011 translators render *huioi* "children" in 3:26 for the reason stated above, they render it "sons" in 4:6 and render *huios* "son" in verse 7. They are not being inconsistent. They do this deliberately because at this point in Paul's argument he is contrasting an heir who is a *child* to an heir who is an *adult* son (4:1-5). On the one hand, a child who is an heir is, practically speaking, no different from a slave (vv. 1-2). He can make no decisions; he has no freedom (James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:471). On the other hand, an adult son is no longer subject to "guardians and trustees" (v. 2); he is no longer "in slavery under the basic principles of the world." One author describes the contrast this way: "Paul contrasted the spiritual immaturity, of those living under the Mosaic Law, with the spiritual maturity of those living by faith in Christ. Now, as then, a very young child is under the direction of others, even though he may be the heir of a vast inheritance. Similarly, people, before their coming to Christ by

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faith, were under 'bondage.' In the case of Jews, their bondage was to the Law. In the case of Gentiles, it was the restraints of pagan religion." (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Galatians," 2015 ed., 50, www.soniclight.com). The "rite of passage" from child to son occurs at "the time set by his father" (v. 2).

With regard to Identity in Christ, the relevant points are: 1) believers are "sons" by virtue of being "in [union with] Christ" (2:26), 2) they are "in [union with] Christ" by virtue of being baptized by the Spirit into one body (1Co 12:13), 3) as *adult* "sons" they are no longer slaves to basic principles of religion including the law (Gal 4:3), and 4) they are heirs "according to the promise" (3:29).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Galatians 3:26-4:7

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Cf., another translation

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:1 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. 4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (NIV2011)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight "sons" in vv. 26, 4:5, 6, 7 ("son").
- * Underline "in Christ Jesus" in v. 26.
- * Bracket "baptized into Christ" in v. 27.
- * Circle "clothed" in v. 27.
- * Bracket "according to the promise" in v. 29.
- * Bracket "guardians and trustees" in 4:2.

- * Box "so also" indicating *comparison* in v. 3.
- * Circle "basic principles" in v. 3.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 4.
- * Circle "redeem" in v. 5.
- * Bracket "Spirit of his Son" in v. 6.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 7.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Identify the *subject* of verses 26-27, i.e., what is Paul talking about? (Cf., the NIV(c)2011)
2. In what *sense* is verse 28 true?
3. Explain the *relationship* of Christians to Abraham.
4. Compare the status of an heir *while a child* (4:1) to the status of Jews and Gentiles *before* "God sent his Son."
5. Give some examples of "basic principles of the world."
6. Does the fact that God sent his Son suggest anything about Christ? Explain.
7. What "rights of *adult* sons" does Paul have in mind? (See vv. 6, 7.)
8. The Spirit "calls out, '*Abba*, Father.'" To what is Paul referring?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what Paul has said in 3:26-4:7 and why the Galatians needed to hear it.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In Galatians 3:26-4:7, Paul brings his argument beginning in 3:19 to a close. Broadly speaking, "The thrust of all that he says in 3:19-4:7, particularly in 4:1-7, is that the believer's life is to be lived not 'under the law' but 'in Christ'—that it is to be lived in the full freedom of mature sonship, and not in slavery to a legal code" (Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, *Galatians*, 176). Speaking more narrowly, in 3:26-4:7 he is saying that those who believe in Christ are Abraham's seed—no longer slaves to the ABCs of religion; having been redeemed by God's son they themselves are adult sons, who have received the Holy Spirit and have become heirs according to the promise.

In 3:26-29 Paul focuses on the implications of the believers' union with Christ. He tells the Galatian believers, "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (vv. 26-27). They are all "children," or better yet "sons," because the Holy Spirit joined them to Christ and his body, the church, when they believed. For when they believed, they were "all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1Co 12:13). And now that they are members of Christ's body, old divisions and inequalities have come to an end. As far as spiritual blessings and privileges are concerned, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female." Differences in race, social status, and gender may still exist in the one body, but they no longer carry the advantages and disadvantages they once did and are no longer divisive like they once were. As far as Paul's choice of these three pairs is concerned, one commentator speculates: "Perhaps their inclusion was a conscious attempt to counter the three *berakat* ('blessings,' 'benedictions') that appear at the beginning of the Jewish cycle of morning prayers: 'Blessed be He [God] that He did not make me a Gentile; blessed be He that He did not make me a boor [i.e., an ignorant peasant or a slave]; blessed be He that He did not make me a woman' . . . Analogous expressions of 'gratitude' appear in Greek writings as well; for example, 'that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian'" (157). In a nutshell, Paul says, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (v. 29).

In 4:1-5 Paul uses an analogy to clarify and substantiate what he means. In it he compares his readers' former situation—prior to the time they became adult "sons" through faith—to that of a minor, who although the heir to an estate is no different from a slave. "He is subject to guardians and trustees" (v. 2), which means he can make no decisions and has no freedom until his "rite of passage" set by his father. While the details of Paul's analogy are debated based on whether it has a Greek, Roman, or hybrid background, the following description assuming a Roman background is helpful: "Under Roman law there was also a time for the coming of age of a son. But the age when this took place may not have been as fixed as is often assumed (cf. Lightfoot), with the result that the father may have had discretion in setting the time of his son's maturity. If this is so, it leads one to think that Paul is referring primarily to the Roman custom as he observed that a child is under guardians and trustees 'until the time set by his father.' A Roman child became an adult at the sacred family festival known as the *Liberalia*, held annually on the seventeenth of March. At this time the child was formally adopted by the father as his acknowledged son and heir and received the *toga virilis* in place of the *toga praetexta* which he had previously worn" (Boice, 471). According to Paul's analogy, unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile, are like disadvantaged minors, in slavery under the ABCs of religion. Fortunately, God sent his Son to purchase their freedom and give them the full rights of adult sons. That being the case, "turning back to those weak and miserable principles" (v. 9) for sanctification, makes no sense whatsoever.

Finally, in 4:6-7 Paul applies the analogy to his readers. They are adult sons with the full rights of sons, and because they are "God sent the Spirit of his Son," i.e., the Holy Spirit to indwell them. He is the one who prompts them to recognize and acknowledge, particularly in prayer, that God is their "Daddy." In the last verse Paul switches from the plural "you" to the singular "you" and from the plural "sons" to the singular "son" to indicate that God has made each one individually a son and an heir.

The Message of the Passage

No longer slaves to the ABCs of religion, believers in Christ, having been redeemed by God's son, are themselves adult sons, who have received the Holy Spirit and have become heirs according to the promise.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 26 **in Christ Jesus** Cf., "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith" (NIV(c)2011; cf., ESV, NRSV); "For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus" (NEB). The phrase "in Christ Jesus" probably modifies "sons of God" rather than "faith." "The two prepositional phrases at the end of the verse are taken together by AV, NASB, and NIV [1984] as forming one unit . . . in RV, RSV, and NEB [and NIV2011] they are separated and understood as modifying 'you are all sons of God' independently of each other. The latter understanding is supported by" a number considerations (Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT, 171). "Believers in Christ are united with him, participate in him, are incorporated into him, and as he is God's Son inherently, so in him they become God's sons and daughters by adoption, anticipating now by the Spirit what is to be fully manifested in the coming glory" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGNT, 184; cf., Longenecker, 152-54).

v. 27 **baptized into Christ** Paul is referring to baptism "by one Spirit into one body" (1Co 12:13), not to baptism in water. "What unites us to Christ is the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that takes place at the moment of salvation (1 Cor. 12:13). Paul's original readers may have taken his reference to baptism as being water baptism, but water baptism illustrated what happened to them when the Spirit baptized them" (Constable, 46).

v. 27 **clothed** "The figurative use of [*enduo*] ('put on' or 'clothe') with a personal object means to take on the characteristics, virtues, and/or intentions of the one referred to, and so to become like that person" (Longenecker, 156). "If Paul is thinking of the theatre, where this word was employed, he means that one is identified with Christ on the world stage" (Boice, 10:468). In this verse, Paul's emphasis may be positional, i.e., on believers' status as sons, rather than ethical, i.e., on believers' moral likeness to Christ (Bruce, 186).

v. 29 **neither/nor . . . one** "Gentiles, slaves, and women did not enjoy the same access to God in Israel's formal worship as did Jews, free men, and males. They could trust God for their personal salvation, however. The priests in Israel had to be Jews, free, and males. Now, in the church, every Christian is a priest (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Paul's emphasis, however, was on believers' unity in Christ, not their equality with one another" (Constable, 48).

v. 29 **according to** The promise spoken to Abraham and to Christ (3:16) contains blessings for Jews and for Gentiles. Jews who believe in Christ receive the blessings stipulated to them in the promise, and Gentiles who believe in Christ receive the blessings stipulated to them in the promise. The emphasis in this context is on the promised blessing of justification (Fung, 177). "Any discussion of the seed of Abraham must first take into account his natural seed, the descendants of Jacob in the 12 tribes. Within this natural seed there is a believing remnant of Jews who will one day inherit the Abrahamic promises directed specifically to them (cf. Rom. 9:6, 8). But there is also the spiritual seed of Abraham who are not Jews. These are the Gentiles who believe and become Abraham's spiritual seed. They inherit the promise of justification by faith as Paul explained earlier (cf. Gal. 3:6-9). To suggest, as amillennarians do, that Gentile believers inherit the national promises given to the believing Jewish remnant—that the church thus supplants Israel or is the 'new Israel'—is to read into these verses what is not there" (Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 600).

4:2 **guardians and trustees** "It is interesting that here Paul drops the term 'pedagogue' he had used earlier, and speaks instead of 'guardians' (*epitropous*) and 'trustees' (*oikonomous*). Too much should not be read into the change, but the fact that these refer to legal functions should not be missed either. It is status that Paul is thinking of" (Boice, 471). "There can be no doubt that they are meant to be synonymous with [*paidagogos*] ('supervisory guardian') [cf., 3:24 ESV]. This is particularly clear for [*epitropos*], which was a frequent term in Greek and became a loan word in Hebrew for the guardian of a minor" (Longenecker, 162). What's more, no one seems to know for sure what legal system Paul had in mind—Roman, Greek, Semitic, or some hybrid type used in the province of Phrygia (see discussion in Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC, 212-215; Longenecker, 162-64).

v. 3 **basic principles** "Some scholars have understood these 'elemental things' as basic philosophical or religious teachings. Others believe Paul was referring to the material components of the universe: earth, water, air, and fire. Still others believe he meant the host of spiritual beings that Satan heads up . . . Another view is that the elemental things are elementary stages of religious experience. It seems to me that the context favors the first of these views . . . For a Gentile, the 'elemental things of the world' would have been the teachings of pagan religion" (Constable, 50-51; cf., Bruce, 189-91; Longenecker, 165-66; Boice, 471-72).

v. 5 **redeem** "Men were slaves either to the law, as Jews, or to the elemental spirits of the universe [or 'basic principles of the world'], as Gentiles. Christ paid the price of their redemption and set them free" (Boice, 473).

Family Time

Parents, our summer series in *PantegoKids* is called **True or False?** Like the adults, we will be studying the book of Galatians to discover how to live out true faith. *Our kids' lessons, however, will not textually align each week with adult teaching. Core competencies will also likely be different. We will be memorizing Galatians 5:22-26.*

In January 2009, researchers Fowler and Christakis published the results of a twenty-year longitudinal study over the viral nature of kindness. Their findings suggest that kindness is, in fact, contagious. According to the study, if you are kind to one person they will be kind to four others who will, in turn, be kind to four others. The study also indicates that kindness exists in geographic pockets. Kind people make the areas where they live better. It seems that kindness multiplies quickly and close to home! That's good news in a world that gives us a lot of bad news. This summer, make a plan as a family to show kindness to others. You might have a free neighborhood car wash or lemonade stand. You might post signs in your front yard that say "Have a good day!" or "You are being prayed for!" As Christ-followers we are uniquely qualified to be kindness-bearers to those around us. Let's be lights this summer and spread some kindness all for His glory!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Lk 10:25-37

1. What was Jesus' answer to the man who asked about inheriting eternal life?
2. Who was the kind man in the story? What makes him kind?
3. How does Matthew 7:12 tell us to treat others?

What Do You Think

The Good Samaritan could have walked past the injured man and not stopped to help him. Instead he chose to treat the man as he would want others to treat him. How can you live out that principle this week? Who needs extra help? Do it!

What R U Going To Do

It's Kindness is Contagious Week! Do something unexpected and kind for someone this week. Write down what you did and bring it to church next Sunday! We will be celebrating them from the stage!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Kindness/Goodness - I treat others better than myself.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:26 - *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.