

LOSING MY RELIGION

"FREE FOR ALL" GALATIANS 2:1-10

This Week's Core Competency

Church – I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today. Ephesians 4:15-16, *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

In Ephesians 4:3-6, Paul tells believers in Ephesus, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." The Spirit produces unity in the body; peace is the bond, the glue, which preserves that unity. While the Spirit produces unity in Christ's diverse body, its members must preserve it and not undermine it. When peace is displaced by conflict fueled by pride, harshness, impatience, and intolerance, unity is undermined. Selfish Christians, who behave out of "personal ambition or vain conceit" (Php 2:3), indifferent Christians, who look out for their own interests and not the interests of others (v. 4), insensitive Christians, who always have a bone to pick with others, short-tempered Christians, who blow up easily, and intolerant Christians who disrespect others all weaken the

There can be differences among true believers, but such differences need not tear us apart.

— Richard N. Longenecker

bond of peace and thereby threaten the unity of the Spirit.

The unity of the body was threatened early on in the history of the church. Paul describes that threat and what became of it in his letter to the churches of Galatia (2:1-10). So-called "Judaizers," a select group of Jews who considered themselves Christians were convinced that Gentiles had to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to be saved. Put differently, Gentiles had to become Jews to be Christians. Needless to say, Paul opposed them and their views; in his mind, their "other" gospel was not "another," but was actually "no gospel at all" (Gal 1:6). On his second visit to Jerusalem, fourteen years or so following his conversion, he faced his opponents head on in a dispute over whether Titus, a Greek believer whom he had brought with him, had to be circumcised. One commentator explains: "The intruders wanted to bring Paul and his party under the regulations of the Mosaic law, not just under their authority. What they desired was to ensure that Gentile Christians lived a nomistic or Torah-centered lifestyle. Paul saw this, however, as a return to life under a 'pedagogue' and enslavement to 'the elements of the world,' as he elaborates later in 3:23-4:11)" (Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, *Galatians*, 52). Although on a later occasion Paul would circumcise Timothy before taking him on his second missionary journey—"because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek"—on this earlier occasion, he refused to circumcise Titus. The integrity of the gospel was at stake. Fortunately, the "reputed pillars" in the mother-church agreed with Paul that Titus did not have to

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become a Jew to be a Christian, and so added nothing to Paul's message (v. 6), recognizing that he had been entrusted with a mission to the Gentiles, *just as* Peter had been entrusted with a mission to the Jews (vv. 7-8). After shaking hands and agreeing to respect each other's mission, all James, Peter, and John asked was that Paul remember the poor saints in Jerusalem (v. 10).

Before you dismiss this dispute as an irrelevant theological kerfuffle, consider what would have happened had it not been rightly resolved and what we can learn from its resolution. On what would have happened, one commentator writes: Paul's "commission was not derived from Jerusalem, but it could not be executed effectively except in fellowship with Jerusalem. A cleavage between his Gentile mission and the mother-church would be disastrous: Christ would be divided, and all the energy which Paul had devoted, and hoped to devote, to the evangelizing of the Gentile world would be frustrated" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGTC, 111). On what we can learn from its resolution, another writes: "There is much in this account of significance for Christians today, living, as we do, in a pluralistic society and amidst many representations of the Christian faith. 'False brothers' and 'Judaizers' of all sorts abound, who, motivated by their own agenda, attempt to conform the gospel to their own vision and purposes. Christians today need to be discerning. Furthermore, we need to appreciate how various practical concerns and speculative ideologies can distort 'the truth of the gospel,' whether they be those of others or ourselves. But Christians today also need to understand that there can be differences among true believers, and that such differences—particularly when involving differing understandings of redemptive logistics or difference of culture—need not tear us apart. Indeed, where there exists basic agreement in the essentials of the gospel, Gal 2:1-10 sets before us a prototype of mutual recognition and concern for one another, despite our differences. It teaches us, in fact, something of how to distinguish between things that really matter and things of lesser importance, where to stand firm and where to concede, and even when to defy people and pressures and when to shake hands and reciprocate with expression of mutual concern" (61-62).

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

Galatians 2:1-10

1 Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. 4 [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

6 As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. 8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

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

- * Bracket "Fourteen years later" in v. 1.
- * Underline "Barnabas" in v. 1.
- * Underline "Titus" in v. 1.
- * Circle "revelation" in v. 2.
- * Circle "in vain" in v. 2.
- * Highlight v. 3.
- * Circle "false brothers" in v. 4.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* or perhaps *result* in v. 5.
- * Box "on the contrary" indicating *contrast* in v. 7.
- * Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 7.
- * Bracket "right hand of fellowship" in v. 9.
- * Circle "the poor" in v. 10.

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. What precipitated Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (see Ac 11:27-30) fourteen years or so after his conversion?
2. Why did he meet privately with leaders there—what was he worried about?
3. What makes Titus, little known at the time, a key player in the story?
4. Either Titus was *not* circumcised or was circumcised but *voluntarily*. Which was it and why?
5. Any chance the "*false* brothers" were *true* Christians? Explain.
6. Explain the *comparison* in verse 7.
7. They all shook hands after meeting together. So what?
8. Put the *gist* of the "famine visit" decision in your own words.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the importance of Paul's meeting with James, Peter, and John.

day 3

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

Paul continues to document his visits to Jerusalem in order to defend the law-free gospel he preached and his authority to preach that gospel to the Gentiles. In the previous chapter he used "alibi-reasoning" to prove that he received neither his gospel, nor his apostolic authority to preach it, from leaders in the church at Jerusalem. How could he? He didn't visit Jerusalem until three years after his conversion, during which time he enjoyed a profitable ministry in Damascus (cf., Ac 9:19b-25). What's more, on that short visit to get acquainted with Peter, he saw none of the other apostles except James (Gal 1:18-19). In Galatians 2:1-10, he continues his defense by documenting what happened on his second visit to the city more than a decade later—fourteen years or so following his conversion.

In this passage Paul emphasizes a number of points. One commentator lists five: "Paul lays emphasis on the following points (1) that there are no gaps in his narration of visit to Jerusalem, contrary to what the Judaizers of Galatia might have claimed; (2) that it was not until fourteen years after his conversion that he met with the body of apostles and leaders at Jerusalem, which hardly supports any claim for his dependence on them; (3) that his going to Jerusalem was in response to a divine revelation, not at the request of the Jerusalem apostles or to submit himself to them; (4) that the Jerusalem apostles accepted the validity of his Gentile mission, viewing it as parallel to their own Jewish mission; and (5) that the Jerusalem apostles asked only that the needs and circumstances of the Jerusalem church be kept in mind in any outreach to Gentiles. As Paul saw it, the 'false brothers' of Jerusalem and the Judaizers of Galatia had the same agenda and a similar program, and so his addressees could learn from how he handled the former as to how they ought to respond to the latter. In both cases, however, their assertions were invalid. For though there were, indeed, differences between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles, principally as to the logistics of their respective missions, they were at one in the essentials of the gospel" (Longenecker, 61).

Luke records that the church in Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas had been ministering for a

whole year, sent a famine relief gift to Jerusalem for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. The church did this in response to a prediction delivered by Agabus through the Spirit (Ac 11:25-29). Paul apparently took advantage of that occasion to meet privately with "those who seemed to be leaders" (Gal 2:2), i.e., James, Peter, and John (v. 9). Barnabas, his coworker, and Titus, a Greek Christian, accompanied him. Paul describes the gist of that visit and his meeting with those "pillars" (v. 9) in Galatians 2:1-10, which is divided into two paragraphs in the NIV.

The point of the first paragraph (vv. 1-5) is captured in verse 3, "Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek." If the apostles agree with the Judaizers, Paul gives them the perfect opportunity to show it. All they have to do is demand that Titus be circumcised, i.e., become a Jew, and obey the law of Moses, to be a Christian. But they do not, even though some of the Judaizers' ilk infiltrate Paul's private meeting to "spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves," i.e., to the law of Moses (v. 4). But Paul will have none of their shameful shenanigans, so the Galatians can be assured the law-free gospel he preached to them is true (v. 5). Jewish Christians may choose to continue in their Jewish way of life, but Gentiles need not be circumcised and required to do so.

The point of the second paragraph (vv. 6-10) is captured in verse 9, "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me." In other words, they pledge their mutual friendship and acknowledge their mutual agreement. But on what did they agree? The *comparison* in verse 7 says it all. Once they recognize that Paul has been entrusted with a mission to the Gentiles "just as" Peter has been entrusted with a mission to the Jews, they agree to respect each other's primary spheres of ministry. All the pillars ask of Paul is that he "continue to remember the poor," which, of course, was the very thing that brought him to Jerusalem in the first place.

The Message of the Passage

Following Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, the church agreed on a two-fold mission to preach the law-free gospel of grace not only to the Jews but especially to the Gentiles.

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 **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **fourteen years** Whether the years should be counted from Paul's conversion (1:15) or from his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18-20) cannot be determined from the language and syntax of 2:1. That determination must take into consideration other pertinent matters related to the epistle and Paul's life (on date and addressees, see Longenecker, lxi-lxxxviii). Hoehner's chronology of the apostolic age implies fourteen years should be counted from Paul's conversion. "The probability is that the three years of 1:18 and the fourteen years of 2:1 are to be understood concurrently, not consecutively—that is, that both are to be measured from Paul's conversion and not that the fourteen years are to be counted from his first Jerusalem visit" (45; contra. see James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:438, 41).

v. 1 **Barnabas** "According to Luke, Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus whose personal name was Joseph. He was an associate of the twelve in the early days of the Jerusalem church, and it was they who gave him the sobriquet Barnabas, explained as meaning 'son of encouragement' (*[huios parakleseos]*, Acts 4:36). When Paul paid his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, it was Barnabas, says Luke, who first introduced him to 'the apostles' (described on p. 101 above as a generalizing plural) and presumably vouched for his bona fides (Acts 9:27). Later, when Gentile evangelization began in Antioch, it was Barnabas who was sent there by the church of Jerusalem to supervise and direct the work; he fetched Paul from Tarsus to join him in this ministry, and he and Paul were sent to Jerusalem by the Antiochene Christians a year or two later with financial aid for the mother-church (Acts 11:22-30)" (Bruce, 107; cf., Longenecker, 45-46).

v. 1 **Titus** "Titus, a Gentile Christian (v 3), evidently from Antioch, had already manifested qualities which prompted Paul to take him along with him and give him some experience in responsible negotiations. These qualities later commended him to Paul as a reliable and acceptable representative in his delicate dealing with the Corinthian church, both in the matter of Paul's personal relationship with that church (2 Cor. 2:12f; 7:5-16) and in that of the Jerusalem relief fund (2 Cor. 8:6-24; 9:3-5; 12:18). Titus later appears as addressee of one of the Pastoral Letters; it is doubtless on the basis of Tit. 1:5 that he is traditionally claimed as the first bishop of the Cretan church . . . Luther suggested that Paul regarded Titus as a test case: 'he took him along then, in order to prove that grace was equally sufficient for Gentiles and Jews, whether in circumcision or without circumcision' (*Vorlesung, ad loc.* quoted by H. Schlier, *Galater*, 65 n. 5)" (107-08).

v. 2 **a revelation** Perhaps Paul is referring to the prophecy of Agabus (Ac 11:27-28), which prompted Christians in Antioch to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem with a contribution for famine relief (vv. 29-30), or perhaps he is referring to a revelation received personally. In either case, "Paul wants to make clear that his visit did not stem from any human motivation, either on his part or that of the Jerusalem leaders, but must be seen in the same way as his call and commission (cf. 1:1, 12, 16)" (Longenecker, 47).

v. 2 **in vain** "What Paul was concerned about was not the validity of his gospel (of which he had divine assurance) but its practicability" (Bruce, 111). "If the Jerusalem leaders insisted on circumcision and other requirements of the Law for Gentile converts, Paul's labor (**running**) among the Gentiles was **in vain**. It was not that the apostle had any doubts or misgivings about the gospel he had preached for 14 years (Gal. 2:1), but that he feared that his past and present ministry might be hindered or rendered of no effect by the Judaizers" (Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 593).

v. 3 **was compelled** "The meaning of the statement might be: (i) Far from their requiring the circumcision of Gentile believers, not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised; or (ii) Not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised; he was circumcised indeed, but on his own initiative (or on Paul's). As the sentence stands, the placing of 'not even' ([oude] before 'Titus' import an emphasis which is more appropriate to the former than to the latter alternative" (Bruce, 112; cf., Longenecker, 50).

v. 4 **false brothers** "Paul implies that their aims and actions were the same as those of the agitators in Galatia who were trying to impose the Mosaic law on Gentile Christians . . . In their eyes—as also in the self evaluation of the Galatian Judaizers, with whom Paul compares them—they were orthodox and conscientious Jewish Christians . . . For Paul, however, they were false brothers, *since they could not accept Gentile Christians as true brothers apart from circumcision and so denied the universality of the gospel*" (51, italics added).

v. 7 **just as** "A remarkable parallel is drawn between Paul's divinely empowered mission to the Gentiles and Peter's to the Jews . . . the demarcation of the Jewish and Gentile mission-fields was based on the recognition that [Paul's] own Gentile mission and Peter's Jewish mission were equally attended by signs of divine power which set the seal of divine approval on the one as on the other" (Bruce, 119).

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.*

One of the things I love about our church is the diversity. It is such a blessing to see people who look different united in Christ. In Galatians 3:28, Paul reminds us that we are all one in Christ regardless of cultural, racial, economic and gender barriers. One of the privileges we have as parents is teaching our kids to value people who are different from us. What a gift it is to a child to live in a family that loves God and loves all people! How can you foster the spirit of unity in community with your family? (1) Model it yourself. Are you friends with people who are different from you? If not, make it a point to reach out and get to know some new people. You will be surprised by the blessing it brings to your life. (2) Be intentional about teaching diversity to your kids. Use the internet or books from the library to introduce new cultures to your kids. We are all one in Christ—let's teach our kids to live and love that way!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Gal 3:26-4:11

1. What does verse 26 call those who have placed their faith in Jesus?
2. According to Galatians 4:8-11, what problem were the Galatians having?
3. How did Paul feel about their turning from the truth?

What Do You Think

1. What do you think it means to "clothe yourselves with Christ"? (3:27)
2. Look up the word "heir". How does it make you feel to know you are an heir with Christ?

What R U Going To Do

Diversity Project. Look up a new country and find out about the people there. What do they eat? What do they do for fun? How do they live? What kinds of jobs/schools do they have? Share what you find with your family and friends. Then pray for the people there!

MEMORY TIME

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

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace – I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:24 – Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

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.