

ECC Growth Groups – Term 2, 2014
Study 1 – Galatians 1:1-10

Big Idea¹: There is only one true Gospel and therefore eternal condemnation for those who preach a different gospel. Paul reacts strongly to the Galatians' situation because of the dangers of accepting this different gospel they are being taught

Study Aim²: That group members will: be reminded of the one true Gospel, grasp the significance of the Gospel, and be struck by the dangers of accepting other gospels

Sharing

Have one/two people share their story of how the Gospel changed their life and how they've been challenged and encouraged in their Christian life to stick with the Gospel.

Discussion Starter³

What are some statements or beliefs that most people today would consider to be politically incorrect?

Bible Reading

Read Galatians 1:1-10.

Passage Questions

In many of Paul's letters he follows his initial greetings by telling his readers that he is praying for them. What is different here?

Strikingly Paul doesn't mention that he is praying for the Galatians. He moves straight from his greeting to the issue at hand. Even his statement, "To the churches in Galatia" (v 2) is abrupt, with the reference to "saints" used in other letters being absent here.⁴

What does that communicate about the situation in these Galatian churches?

Serious. Important. Etc.

¹ Each week a 'big idea' and a 'study aim' for the allocated passage will be provided. These are not to be shared with the group (e.g. "The big idea for our passage this week is ...") but rather the hope is that the group will discover these for themselves. The big idea should help you as the leader to know what the passage is on about and the study aim should help you to keep discussions headed in the right direction.

² Further to the previous footnote, regardless of how closely or not you follow my suggested questions, the time with your group should at least achieve this study aim each week.

³ These headings ('Discussion Starter', 'Passage Questions' etc) are just for you as leaders – you don't need to communicate to your group that you are now moving to a different section in the study!

⁴ These 'answers' are just provided as a guide for you as the leader to know what the questions are aiming at. You don't need to 'check off' every aspect or provide the group with *the* answer at the end of each discussion.

What are some other ways that Paul communicates the importance of this issue?

The language and tone that he uses – e.g. “I am astonished” (v 6); “deserting” (v 6); “pervert” (v 7). Especially the repetition of “eternally condemned” (vv 8, 9).

How would you summarise what has actually happened in these Galatian churches?

Some false teachers have come in and taught the Galatian believers a different gospel – a perverted version of the Gospel of Christ. This has introduced confusion and caused the churches to turn to this different gospel. In effect, they are “deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ” (i.e. God himself)!

Activity⁵

Paul mentions the “Gospel” a number of times in verses 6-9 (5 times in 4 verses!). Hand out a small piece of paper (e.g. A5 size) to each person. Allow time for people to write down their own response to the following question(s) – What is the Gospel? How would you explain it to someone else?⁶

After around 5 minutes, give a few people the opportunity to share their responses. (It’s probably best not to make this compulsory – e.g. directing everybody to share – but certainly encourage people to do so⁷).

Passage Questions cont.

How does the passage itself help us to understand what the Gospel is?

If we take the time to notice what is there Paul does actually give us quite a lot of information in this regard. For example, verse 1 – “... raised him from the dead”; verse 3 – “Grace” and “Peace”. Especially verse 6 – “... grace of Christ” and verse 4 – Jesus Christ “... who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age”.

Application Questions

What is your immediate reaction to Paul’s manner and tone in this passage?

⁵ Each week I will try and include some kind of a break from the ‘Question and Answer’ style of Bible study by including an activity. I’m not at all against the question and answer format but its weakness is that it doesn’t cater for everybody’s learning style (e.g. visual and kinaesthetic learners). This week’s activity helps those who would benefit from some personal space in the study for individual reflection, and also allows for those who may need some assistance in the reflecting stage of the learning process.

⁶ Although this question may seem straight-forward, can there be a more important question for people to understand and live by? Studying the letter to the Galatians will suggest not in the strongest possible terms.

⁷ This sharing time may even help to give you a window into where people in your group are at spiritually. The question is a key one for us to be clear on as Christians and therefore the sharing of these individual responses could be quite enlightening. As leader, you need to strike a balance here between being overly dominating on the one hand (e.g. “everyone must share”) where people could feel threatened and uncomfortable, and being too passive on the other hand (e.g. “you can share if you really want to”) where no-one, or only a couple of the more talkative group members, will share.

What might be underlying that reaction for you personally?

It is worth trying to tease this out with people. If we think Paul is being a bit 'full on' or 'over the top' then perhaps we are not valuing truth (especially God's truth) as much as we ought. Maybe we don't take false teaching/thinking about Jesus as seriously as we should. Have we bought into the 'political correctness/relativism/pluralism' of today's climate more than we realise? If we are in that zone, or drifting in that direction, we are on precarious ground.

What does this passage teach us about the Gospel?

Try and tease out not just the content but what we have seen regarding the importance and seriousness of the Gospel. My guess is that many of our group members will know that the Gospel is important but this question should help the group to think through why it is important as well.

What might tempt us to turn to a different Gospel?

Prayer Points⁸

Praise God for the grace of Christ shown in the Gospel of Christ – the one who “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age”.

Pray for those in leadership positions at our church and denomination – as they encourage us in the Gospel and continue to teach the one true Gospel.

Pray for ourselves – that we would understand the Gospel, grasp its importance and be protected from different gospels.

⁸ These are just suggestions. You, and your group, will no doubt come up with others from the passage and have other group-specific prayer points.