

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › How much red dye would it take to turn a glass of water slightly red? Not much, right? One drop would at least produce a light red tint. Or how about this: How many hairs would you have to find in your meal before you would completely lose your appetite? One? For most people, one would do it. Some things require purity. The gospel is one of those things. When we mix in a little bit of a legalism with the gospel, we no longer have the gospel. Adding performance to God's grace ruins everything. The gospel is so powerful because it is so free. There are no strings attached. We are justified by faith alone. Of course, we do things like attend church and pray because of our faith and to strengthen our faith, but these things are never the basis for our being forgiven and loved.

CONTEXT

- › In Galatians 5, Paul begins to round out his extended argument with false teachers and legalism. In particular, he talks about how the Jewish rite of circumcision no longer applies. In fact, demanding that Gentile men get circumcised amounts to falling away from grace. He argues that you can't just pick parts of the law to obey—it's all or nothing. And since no one can obey the whole law, attempting to obey some of it is worthless. Paul argues that what really matters is faith working through love. Our freedom in Christ is not a license to sin but a desire and ability to love just as we have been freely loved.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

The following are suggested sermon points for each verse or section of verses for a large group setting.

- › Galatians 5:1-6. *Christ set us free so that we might stay free.* The Christian is saved by grace, not a combination of grace and performance. When we start focusing so much on what we're doing for God and how well we're doing it, we've lost sight of the gospel.
- › Galatians 5:7-12. *The cross is offensive to those who are trying to establish their own righteousness apart from Christ.* Even though the gospel is the best news the world has ever heard, it has been and will always be opposed by the proud and self-sufficient. We should expect that. We were all that way at one time, and apart from God's grace, we would still be that way.
- › Galatians 5:13-15. *Our freedom enables us to love and serve others from the heart.* When we understand and experience God's love in the gospel, it produces love in us. We're not required to love and serve in order to please God, but we want to love and serve because He has changed us from the inside-out.

GROUP DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each verse or section of verses for leading a small group session are also useful in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:1-6.

- › **How do you stay free of legalism? What areas are you tempted toward obeying rules in order to gain acceptance from God?**
- › **Paul says we have to obey the whole law or our obedience isn't good enough. Why doesn't God just cut us a little slack? Most of us are trying to do the right thing most of the time, right?**
- › **What really matters, according to Paul? If Christians believed that and lived that how might our culture change? In what ways are we falling short of the ideal?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:7-12.

- › **How did the Galatian churches get off track? Should we be concerned with that happening in our churches today? Why or why not?**



- › Why was Paul being persecuted? Do you think his situation was unusual or is it still common today?
- › What is leaven and why is Paul talking about it?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 5:13-15.

- › How should we use our freedom in Christ? In others words, our justification by faith means we're made right with God entirely by faith, not by good works. Does that mean we should just live any old way we want? What's wrong with that interpretation?
- › According to Paul, what is the essence of the law? Is that true throughout the Bible?
- › Why is church unity so important?

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 10, students read the story of Gideon in Judges 6. Gideon knew God's will, but he had a hard time believing it, so he asked for God to give him a sign. It was his lack of faith, not a lack of clarity, that was holding him back. We're often like that. While there are specifics about God's will that He hasn't revealed to us, He has told us what we need to know in His Word. The Bible says God wants us to love Him with all our hearts and to dedicate our lives to His mission and glory. That mission will always include loving and serving others. We see this same theme in Galatians 5. Paul says that what matters is faith resulting in love for others. Religious practices don't matter if they're not based on love or don't lead to love. That's the big picture: faith working through love is what matters most. So, if we want to grow in love we have to grow in faith. And that happens as we turn to the Bible to hear the gospel again and again (Rom. 10:17).

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › There is a team strategy game in Nashville called The Escape Game. The way the game works is they lock your group in a room with a bunch of clues for how to get the correct combination for the lock so you can "escape" before the hour time limit is up. While you're in the room, you can ask for up to three clues from the employee overseeing your room by video camera. Without those clues, you might not succeed in escaping. Success requires some revelation from the outside. That's similar to the Bible—it's revelation that comes to us from God. We would never know Him had He not chosen to reveal Himself to us. That's especially true with the gospel message. We need God's Word to tell about Jesus and empower us to live for His glory.

The truth of God's Word empowers us to live for His glory.

- › <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/transferable-concepts/love-by-faith.4.html> – Bill Bright shares how faith in Christ produces genuine love for others.
- › <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/biblical-authority-devotional/what-is-unique-about-faith-hope-and-love/> – Tim Chaffey explores the centrality and importance of faith, hope, and love in the life of a Christ-follower.

* These websites are not affiliated with LifeWay. Consult with your church's leadership before including these in your session to be sure that your church's values allow their materials to be referenced in your session time.