

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › In the Bourne series of movies, Jason Bourne is a government agent who has lost large parts of his memory. He doesn't know who he is or what he's capable of. He somehow has all these remarkable abilities—knowing foreign languages, knowing if he's being followed, etc.—that are a part of him, though he doesn't know where they came from. The Bible says every Christian is a new creation with remarkable new abilities to display the fruit of the Spirit. However, not every Christian is fully aware of this and many need help cultivating the new life that is within them. We sometimes forget who we are and how we came to be Christians in the first place—by faith. When that happens, we live far below what God desires for us.

CONTEXT

- › In Galatians 4, Paul returns to the metaphor of Israel being a son under the protective guidance of the law. As such, Israel did not receive all the benefits of sonship until the coming of Christ. His coming freed Israel from slavery to performance-based living based on keeping the law. Through Christ, we are freed from the law's demands and everyone, Jew or Gentile, who puts their faith in Christ is made right before God. Similar to captive Israel, Christians are people who were once enslaved to sin, but have been set free by Christ to enjoy the Father's love as one belonging to the family. The problem with the Galatian churches was that some were reverting back to religious practices as a way to find acceptance with God rather than simply trusting in their sonship.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

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

- › Galatians 4:1-7. *Christians have been adopted into God's family and are indwelt by God's Spirit.* As members of the family, God is our Father and that doesn't change based on our behavior. We are free from the demands of the law and have been promised an eternal inheritance in Christ.
- › Galatians 4:8-11. *The temptation toward legalism never goes away.* The Galatians, like all of us, practiced religious idolatry prior to receiving Christ. Now their legalistic idolatry was coming back in the form of observing special Jewish religious days as a way to obtain righteousness.
- › Galatians 4:12-20. *If you forget about the gospel, you can forget about joy, too.* Paul asked the Galatians what happened to their blessedness. It was gone because they had forgotten the gospel and gotten wrapped up in legalistic religion once again. The gospel and joy go hand-in-hand.

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 4:1-7.

- › **Why does Paul say a child is no better off than a slave when it comes to receiving his inheritance? Are you waiting on God to give you things He already has?**
- › **What are some common idols in our culture? In other words, what do people pursue as their "god" instead of the true God? What are the results of this idolatry?**
- › **What is the significance of the cry "Abba, Father"? How is the Holy Spirit connected to our sonship?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 4:8-11.

- › **Paul said that the Galatians were enslaved to things in the past. What kinds of things do you think they were enslaved to?**



- › Paul says that the Galatians have come to know God and then corrects himself and says that they are known by God. What does that tell us about our relationship with God? Who takes the initiative?
- › How would you describe Paul's tone in this verses?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 4:12-20.

- › Why does legalism cause a Christian to lose his or her joy?
- › Paul speaks some hard truths to the Galatians. They had really drifted from where they were. How can we speak hard truths to others while still loving them?
- › How do we know that Paul loved the people he was writing to?

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 8, students read from Judges 2 and saw the Israelites fall into a disturbing pattern of sin and judgment. Israel worshiped idols and God punished them through the surrounding nations. His punishment (correction, discipline) was never out of spite or revenge, but always rooted in His faithfulness and motivated by His desire for His people to love Him and follow Him. Those who care the most about us are often the hardest on us because they love us. It's the same with God. While God will always be for us, that doesn't mean He won't ever oppose us. While faith in Christ forever frees us from eternal punishment, God's love compels Him to let us face the consequences of our sin. In Galatians 4, Paul pleads with the Galatians to set aside their idolatrous legalism and return to the true gospel. They were already receiving punishment for forgetting the gospel—their joy had vanished.

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › Basketball drills may consist of a coach throwing a hard, baseball-style pass at players as they are cutting to the basket for a lay-up. In some cases, coaches will allot push-ups to those who drop the passes. This causes players to concentrate even more on catching the ball. Not only does the drill help improve a player's focus, but it is a beneficial discipline that helps improve a player's overall performance. God's discipline produces good results in us, too. It's always done out of love. It's always done to keep us on the right track. And for that reason, we shouldn't resent it or rebel against it. It all comes down to trusting that He has our best interests in mind.

God loves His people enough to oppose them.

- › <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/daily-devotionals/2/25/2016/>– This devotional from Truth for Life focuses on the story of Jonah and how he faced consequences as a result of his disobedience to God. We too will face consequences for our sin.
- › <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/rayortlund/2015/04/22/good-but-not-safe/> – Ray Ortland explains how God is good, but not safe. Following Christ is costly but it is always worth the sacrifice.

* 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.