

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › Write this quote on a whiteboard or poster board: “*God is God. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will that is unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to*” (Elisabeth Elliot). As students arrive, ask them to share some things about God that they don’t understand. Our role as Christians is to trust God and to obey Him, not to understand Him. But this can be difficult when God is calling us to something that seems impossibly overwhelming, can’t it? Can you imagine the amount of trust the apostle Paul would’ve had to have in God when God called him, a former persecutor of Christians, to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles? But Paul didn’t worry about how God was going to do it; instead, he obeyed, and he trusted God with the outcome.

CONTEXT

- › Paul continues this section by arguing for the divine origin of his message. Jesus came to Paul on the Damascus Road, revealing Himself as the Messiah and in the process totally disrupting Paul’s life. Paul had been busy persecuting the church, now he was trying to grow it. Only God can effect such a transformation. Paul explains how his misguided religious zeal had been radically redirected toward gospel ministry. His moral striving to please God by upholding the law had been replaced by grace—he now looked to Jesus for his righteousness. This message of grace is what the Galatians had forgotten and needed to be reminded of once again. So many people today are passionately pursuing the wrong things, including trying to make themselves right with God through religious practices. The gospel message is the only one that sets people free to truly live for God.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

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

- › Galatians 1:11-14. *The gospel message comes from God and is not related to human performance.* Paul was on the fast track to becoming a highly esteemed Jewish rabbi. His identity was tied up in that. It took an unexpected encounter with Jesus (Acts 9:1-7) for him to change course. Sometimes the things we cling to so strongly prevent us from seeing the truth.
- › Galatians 1:15-17. *God pursues us and then graciously uses us.* Paul said that God had a plan for him from before he was born. At the right time, God woke Paul up to grace, revealing Jesus to him and calling him to preach the gospel. Not only does God rescue us from our sin, but He also gives us a great purpose.
- › Galatians 1:18-24. *Our lives are meant to glorify God.* When we try to make our own names great, we ultimately fail. But when we live for God’s glory, we become part of a much bigger and better story.

GROUP DISCUSSION

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

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 1:11-14.

- › **Paul said the gospel he preached is not based on human thought. What do you think he meant by that? What do you think a gospel based on human thought might include? What might it be missing?**
- › **Paul said that he received a revelation from Jesus about the gospel. How do we receive revelation today? How do most people become Christians?**
- › **Paul said he was quickly advancing as a devout Jew before becoming a Christian. How do Christians grow? How is growth measured? What is different about it from other religions?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 1:15-17.

- › **Paul said he was called by God’s grace. What do you think he meant by that? Has God called you by His grace, too?**



- › **Why do you think Paul said he didn't consult with anyone after becoming a Christian? What point is trying to prove?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 1:18-24.

- › **Paul visited with Cephas (Peter) for 15 days. Why was this visit important?**
- › **People were amazed that Paul was preaching the gospel after previously trying to snuff it out. Do you know anyone who has done a complete 180 in their life after becoming a Christian?**
- › **Why did Paul's conversion and ministry bring glory to God in a particularly powerful way?**

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 2, students looked at how God gave the Israelites victory in the battle of Jericho. He not only gave them victory there, but He promised the victory up-front and then secured it in a most unusual way—by simply having them march around the city. What was the point of that? Why not simply attack the city in a more straightforward manner? Because a miraculous victory would demonstrate His power and glory to all other nations (Ex. 19:5-6). At the same time, a victory that clearly came directly from God's power would grow the faith of the Israelites. The Israelites obeyed God's instructions and secured the victory He promised. In Galatians 1, Paul is challenged to trust what God had revealed to him and faithfully share it with others.

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › Play the minefield game with your students. Paper plates (mines) are scattered in an indoor or outdoor place. In pairs, one person verbally guides his/her partner, a blindfolded person, through the "minefield." After each student has had a turn either guiding or following, talk about how trust and obedience are required on the blindfolded person's part. Ask them what would happen if the blindfolded person didn't follow his/her guide's instructions. Sometimes, our walk with God feels like we're walking blindfolded, totally unsure of what's ahead. But that's why we're called to walk by faith and not by sight. God doesn't give us an itinerary of everything that's ahead for us. Instead, He gives us His Word and His Spirit to guide us in trust and obedience.

God will accomplish all His purposes—our role is to obey.

- › <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/life/maker/how-trust-god-when-your-dreams-arent-working-out> – Corrine Carver shares five truths that can sustain our hope for the future even when our lives don't seem to be going the way we hoped.
- › <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/rayortlund/2012/06/25/trusting-god-is-not-easy/> – Ray Ortlund shares how trusting in God is not easy but it is always worth it.

* 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.