

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › Peer pressure affects us all. We all want to belong, and even if we want to be different in some way, it's often so others will think we're cool for being different. However, if our being different results in us being ridiculed or left out, it tends to become a lot less appealing. For these reasons, we need to have very strong convictions about what we believe if we're to stand up under peer pressure. We often see politicians telling people what they want to hear in order to boost their own ratings. That kind of thinking and behavior exists with false teachers in the church, too. They want to be popular and avoid persecution, so they don't challenge people with the offense of the cross, which says we need Jesus to save us, and Him alone. It's a continual challenge to remain faithful to the gospel.

CONTEXT

- › In this last section of Galatians 6 and the close of the book, Paul once again drives home the truth that adding anything to the gospel distorts the gospel and is really anti-gospel. The false teachers in the Galatian churches were preaching circumcision to Gentile believers, which was an unnecessary addition to the gospel. These false teachers wanted to avoid the persecution that comes with preaching the cross. Paul, on the other hand, said he had no interest in boasting in his ability to keep one small part of the law, but only in the cross of Jesus Christ. He was concerned with faithfulness to this message, not popularity. With the new covenant, what matters, according to Paul, is the newly created person in Christ, not keeping the law as a way to earn God's favor.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

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

- › Galatians 6:11-13. *Religious rule-keeping amounts to boasting in your ability to please God by your own goodness.* Legalism is the result of human pride. The legalist wants to remain in control, even in how God relates to him. He would rather work his way to God than receive grace.
- › Galatians 6:14-16. *What matters is a new creation.* We must never lose sight of the newness of the new covenant. Christians are not under law, but under grace. This creates a radical freedom from exhausting self-effort and paralyzing concern with what others think of us. We need only be concerned with God's opinion, and He is pleased with us on account of Jesus.
- › Galatians 6:17-18. *Suffering for Christ gives you great inner freedom.* Paul had stood firm for Christ and had the battle scars to prove it. He could not be bought. He was free. You can't put a price tag on the freedom that comes with faithfulness to Christ.

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 6:11-13.

- › **Why does Paul mention that he's writing with large letters?**
- › **What are some things people try to do to make a good impression? How about in church? Do you think some of these things are good and some not so good? How can we tell the difference?**
- › **Why is it impossible to be a consistent legalist? How does the gospel differ from legalism? What might encourage a legalist to embrace the gospel?**



ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 6:14-16.

- › **What are some things you're tempted to boast in? Is there a difference between healthy pride and boasting? How can you avoid arrogant boasting?**
- › **What does Paul mean when he says the world has been crucified to him and he to the world? Does that sound terrible or desirable? Why?**
- › **Paul says all that matters is the new creation. What is the "new creation" he's referring to? In this context, what are some things that don't matter?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 6:17-18.

- › **Who was causing Paul trouble? Why were they causing him trouble? Is that kind of trouble unusual for a Christian?**
- › **Is suffering to be avoided at all costs? What are some good things that come out of suffering? How had Paul suffered?**
- › **Paul closes his letter to the Galatians by calling them "brothers." Why is that important given the tone and message of much of the letter? What does it mean to carry the grace of Jesus with us?**

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 13, students read how God redeemed Ruth's story, and Naomi's story, too (Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17). Despite undergoing deep suffering after the loss of her husband, Ruth did not waste time wishing her circumstances were different. Instead, she chose to move on, trusting God was with her as she sacrificed her own prospects for remarriage in order to stick with her mother-in-law, Naomi. In the end, God proved faithful and she did remarry, but it took faith to trust God to take care of her. Sometimes our circumstances don't look good either, but God can be trusted to redeem our stories, too. In Galatians 6, Paul talks about how Christians are new creations. The gospel incorporates us into a much larger, better story than we can imagine. Just look at Paul's life. He went from persecuting the church to apostle to the Gentiles. Redeeming our stories is God's specialty.

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › We all love a good redemptive story. It seems to be written on our hearts. The greatest books, movies, and sporting events typically have a redemptive storyline. Think of "Cinderella." Or for the guys, think of the boxing movie "Cinderella Man." We love to see someone make a comeback against the odds. We love to root for the underdog. A few years ago, the true story of Olympic athlete and WWII POW Louie Zamperini was told in the book and movie "Unbroken." Zamperini's army plane was shot down over the Pacific, and he survives the shark-infested waters for 47 days before washing up on an island and being captured by the Japanese. Tortured in a prison camp, he somehow makes it through the war and makes it home alive, a deeply broken man. Struggling with alcoholism and with his marriage falling apart, at the prompting of his wife, he goes to hear Billy Graham preach and is radically converted. He then spends the next several decades of his life as a joyful, influential Christian doing great good for the kingdom. God can turn any story around, including yours.

God is always at work in our lives writing a better story than we could write for ourselves.

- › <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/worldview/beautiful-mess-redemption>– Kristin Tennant challenges us to believe in the power of God to redeem our stories.
- › <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2014/01/21/an-interview-with-paul-miller-on-a-loving-life/>– Justin Taylor interviews Paul Miller on what it looks like to let the gospel shape our love for others.

* 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.