

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Galatians 1¹ – 4⁷

Work Book

Hearing the Word Galatians 1:1- 4:7 Work Book

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Nigel Barge, January 2014

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The New Bible Dictionary 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The New Bible Commentary 21st century edition. A commentary on every
Bible book, IVP

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Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise - *Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

READING ‘LETTERS’ IN THE BIBLE

Whatever we read, we adjust to its style, sometimes without noticing. We approach a newspaper, a car manual, a cookery book, a scientific report and a Shakespeare play in different ways. We take into account the purpose for which it was written and how the writer uses words. Since the Bible also has many styles – law, poetry, history, wisdom, prophecy, letters and visions – we must allow for the style if we are to discern what God is saying.

The New Testament contains letters written by five Apostles to various parts of the church of their day. They are part of the Word of God and as such they not only *were* authoritative for the church then, but they *are* authoritative for the church of all time.

Since Galatians is written *as a letter*, in the first instance it must be read as such. We need to take into account that letters are:

- a) *Relational.* A letter is addressed to a particular person or group of people and its contents apply to them. So in the Bible, we must first remember that Paul (or James/Peter/John/Jude) is addressing named individuals or churches, in the first century. It is only once we have grasped what they are saying to *them*, *then* that we may generalise as to what God might be saying to *us, now*. The two will *always* be consistent.
- b) *Occasional.* Letters are one side of a ‘conversation’ between two people. They refer to matters in which details of situations and people are assumed to be common knowledge. A third party reading a letter needs to ‘read between the lines’ to work out the other side of the story. We have to understand the situation to which this Bible letter was written, so as to grasp how the writer was addressing *it*. Only then may we ask how God might apply this Word to our own circumstance.
- c) *Dated.* Letters are written at a particular time and place, and within a particular culture. So in the Bible, the letters of the first century are expressed within the habits and traditions of that day. In discerning what God might be saying to us, now, we need to separate any instructions which are ‘time-bound’ from principles that are timeless.
- d) *To be read as a whole.* When we open a letter from a friend nowadays, we read the whole thing. We recognise it as a single communication whose contents are all related. So with letters in the Bible: every part must be viewed in the context of the whole letter. Thus, it is best practice to read a Bible letter *right through*, before analysing its parts.

BACKGROUND TO GALATIANS

The Author

Paul, first known by his Hebrew name, Saul, became the foremost preacher of the Gospel in the NT. He was born in Tarsus, (*map, p6*) with the status of free citizen of Rome educated in Jerusalem and spoke four languages. He studied the Hebrew Scriptures under a well-respected Jewish scholar, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and as a young man was violently opposed to Christianity. While on his way to Damascus to imprison Christians, Jesus appeared to him, and his life was dramatically changed. Read the narrative in Acts 9, and two accounts in his own words, Acts 22:4-16: 26:9-18.

Later, Paul was brought to Antioch in Syria to teach new Christians who, as Gentiles, had no background knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. The Church there was very keen to spread the Gospel to Gentiles, and they sent Barnabas and Paul on what is known as Paul's first missionary journey (**Read** Acts 13, 14). People followed Jesus in four towns in present-day Turkey: another Antioch (i.e. not the Syrian one), Iconium, Lystra & Derbe.

Luke, the author of Acts, was a doctor who met Paul on his *second* missionary journey then travelled with him (Acts 16:10). In Acts chapters 9, 11 and 15 Luke says Paul visited Jerusalem *three* times, whereas Paul in Galatians mentions only *two*. Was one mistaken? No! Obviously, Paul wrote Galatians *after* his second visit and *before* the third: that is, between verses 1 and 3 of Acts 15, or Galatians 2:10/11, soon after the end of the first missionary journey. That fits his opening remark: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ ...* (Gal 1:6)

The Destination of the letter

There is controversy about exactly who the Galatians are. By the *South Galatian* theory, Paul wrote to these new Christians in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. (Acts 13:14 - 14:23) The problem is that this Antioch is in Pisidia, and the others are in Lycaonia. The ethnic area called Galatia was further north. The *Roman* province of Galatia, however, covered a far bigger area, including Pisidia and Lycaonia. We hold to the South Galatian theory for two reasons

- 1) It is fair to deduce that Paul as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29), would use Roman boundaries.
- 2) The Galatian letter is the least 'temperate' of all Paul's letters! It would seem appropriate that this was his first reaction to serious disorder among the first churches he planted.

The Date of writing

If the South theory is correct, Galatians was the *first* of Paul's letters, and of the New Testament books, written by 49 AD.

There are some things which corroborate the conclusion that this letter is very early – his first after the churches he had just planted on his first missionary journey are threatened by 'false teachers': It is

- 1) urgent (1:5,6) it is the only letter he doesn't offer thanks a prayer
- 2) crude! (5:12)
- 3) repetitive (eg 1:8,9; 1:16)

The Occasion

Initially Paul and Barnabas had started among the Jews in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13:14ff). However, after rejection by the Jewish leaders, they turned to the Gentiles (13:46ff). They were pursued by the Jewish leaders to the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in attempt to stifle the church. However, after the very young churches had been born, the tactic changed? – The Jewish leaders attempted to force all Christian converts to become Jews and make them a sect of Judaism?

Paul's good news was that sinful human beings can be made right with God by grace, received by faith. That is, forgiveness was a free gift of God, offered on the basis of what Jesus did for sinners, not what a sinner might do to try to earn it. In particular, one could not earn it by keeping the Law / becoming a Jew.

Within the church there was a Jewish lobby (The Judaisers). From their background as Pharisees, they were teaching Gentile believers that faith alone was not enough – you had to keep the Law as well. They wanted everyone to be circumcised and become Jews. They saw Christianity as a sect of Judaism, with all its rituals and food laws. Acts 15:5; Galatians 2:12.

Paul and Barnabas resisted this forcibly. This letter is the first step. They went on to argue the same case at the first Council of Jerusalem, when Apostles and church leaders had to gather to resolve the issue. They ruled in Paul's favour, and issued a letter upholding the principle, freeing Gentile Christians from any obligation to keep the Jewish law, but asking them to observe four features of it, to facilitate unity in the church (Acts 15:4-29).

Thereafter, Paul began his second missionary journey by re-visiting the four towns, delivering the Council's announcement to the churches, who were strengthened in faith and grew in numbers. (Acts 16:2).

The issue

The 'Judaisers' were trying to force non Jews who would be Christians to become Jews / obey the Law / to be circumcised, first. Paul asserts 'the only thing that counts is faith (in Jesus) expressing itself as love' (Gal 5:6b)

The tone of the letter

There is a hint of desperation. Paul, after his first, successful missionary foray, sees it all going 'pear shaped'.

His authority is being challenged and he vigorously defends it. (Note how often he uses 'I' – 18 times in (1:11-24)!!

The message of this letter is vital – it contends for the very heart of the Gospel. The explosiveness and crudeness of the letter lends weight to the suggestion that this 'shot from the hip', is Paul's reaction to his first major doctrinal opposition – the whole future of the church seemed to be at stake. It would seem appropriate if this letter was indeed the earliest of the New Testament writings. It is : -

- a) Assertive (1:1) It is clearly an apostolic pronouncement from God
- b) Urgent (1:6) There is no 'flannel' – he cuts to the quick.
- c) Serious (1:8) It is a matter of eternal life and death.
- d) Forceful (3:1) He berates the stupidity of the Galatians
- e) Explicit!! (5:12) He speaks in the strongest (and crudest!) terms
- f) Abrupt (6:17,18). Having emphatically made his point he closes the letter (– and hurries to post it?!)

History

God promised Abraham a land and 'seed', usually translated 'descendants'. Abraham believed Him, put his trust in him and God treated him as right with God (Genesis 12 &15). God gave Abraham and his descendants a sign to mark this faith – circumcision of all the males (Genesis 17).

God told him that future generations would posses the land (Genesis 15:13ff). But years passed; Abraham and his wife Sarah grew old and were still childless. So aged 86 he decided to make it happen himself. He took his wife's maid, Hagar, and as was the custom, he determined to have an heir by her. A son *was* born – Ishmael. God, however did not acknowledge him as the child of the promise and told Abraham to wait longer (Genesis 16). Eventually, aged 99, he and Sarah had a miracle son, Isaac (Gen ch 18+21).

Isaac, his son Jacob and their family lived among the people of Canaan in the land that was promised to them. Through Jacob's son Joseph, God

moved his people from Canaan to Egypt to avoid a famine (Genesis 37-47). There they grew to become a large nation whom the Egyptians enslaved.

Centuries after Abraham, Moses was used to save his descendants from Egypt (Exodus 1-13) leading them back to take possession of the Promised Land. As they travelled through the wilderness, they came to Mount Sinai, where God met with Moses and gave him the Law (Exodus 19 – 40).

Paul stresses: **The Promise was given *before* The Law.** It was therefore not the keeping of the Law that earned God's favour. Instead, his promise (deliverance from Egypt etc) came from his undeserved grace.

A possible time line

(Assuming Jesus was born in 4 BC, Galatian church is 'Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe' and the letter called 'Galatians' was written before the Council of Jerusalem):

29 Death of Jesus.

30 Death of Stephen (Acts 8:1) Saul *aka* Paul converted (Acts 9:1ff).
Paul left Damascus for Arabia and returned there (Gal 1:17).
33 After **3 years** (Gal 1:18) (= many days, Acts 9:23) Paul escaped Damascus, visited Jerusalem, Barnabus brought him to Cephas/Peter.
After 2 weeks, Paul to Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:30, Gal 1:21).

No data for about 13 years.

46 Then Barnabus brought Saul from Tarsus to Syrian Antioch: '1 full year' teaching (Acts 11:25, Gal 1:21,).
47 After **14 years** Paul to Jerusalem 'following a revelation' (Gal 2:1,2) = Agabus prophesied famine (Acts 11:27ff), taking gifts (cf Gal 2:10)
Paul confronted Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:11)
47 or 48 Barnabus and Paul began 'first missionary journey' from Syrian Antioch to Cyprus and South Galatia (Acts 13,14).

Letter to the 'Galatians' – 'so quickly...!' (Gal 1:6)

49 Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:2ff)

(**bold** – the known dates and times)

A commendation?!

The great reformer, Martin Luther said of it 'The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock. It is my Katherine (his wife).'

The structure of the letter to the Galatians

		Study	Page
A	An assertive address	1: 1 – 4	1 9
B	Paul's credentials		
	There's only one Gospel...	1: 5 – 10	9
	... Given by God, agreed by Apostles,	1:11 – 24	2 13
	... For Jew and Gentile alike.	2: 1 – 10	3 17
C	Justified by faith, not by Law	2:11 – 21	4 21
	Spirit given in response to faith, not Law	3: 1 – 14	5 25
	Grace precedes Law	3:15 – 25	6 29
	Sons of God by faith	3:26 – 4:7	7 33
D	Living by faith		(HtW Volume 2)
	Free from weak and miserable principles	4: 8-20	
	Children of freedom	4:21-31	
	Free to love	5: 1-15	
	Fruit of freedom in the Spirit	5:16-26	
	Guarding freedom	6: 1-10	
E	A potent Signature	6:11-18	

Paul's Visits to Jerusalem as a Christian, Page 5

First read Acts 9:1-31; 11:19-30; 15:1-29; for visits X, Y and Z
and Galatians 1:1 - 2:16 for Visits A and B.

	Key to comparison-lines
 Solid line	strong correlation
 Dotted line	correlation weaker, but not impossible
 Broken line	clear contradiction, i.e. Visit Z can't = Visit B.

Some of the strongest links are not *during* the visits, but *in between* them

Paul's Jerusalem visits listed in ACTS / His own account in GALATIANS

7:58; 8:1 Young Saul saw and approved the death of Stephen.

9:3 The risen Jesus confronted Saul.

9:8 Saul was blind, alone for 3 days. God told Ananias in a vision to go and help him.

9:19b Saul spent several days with the disciples in *Damascus*. He began to preach Jesus is the Son of God.

23 After many days (he escaped *Damascus*)

VISIT X *Acts 9:26* When he came to *Jerusalem*... Barnabas... brought him to the apostles... So Saul stayed with them and moved freely about *Jerusalem (just the city)*, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. The believers... sent him to *Tarsus (Cilicia)*

11:25 Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus to Syrian Antioch where they taught the many Gentile converts for 1 year. The disciples were first called 'Christians' here.

VISIT Y *Acts 11:27-30* 27 Agabus, a prophet from *Jerusalem* visiting *Antioch*, foretold a famine in *Judea*. The church at *Antioch* sent gifts to the brothers living in *Judea*... delivered by Barnabas & Saul.

12:25 Barnabas and Saul returned to *Antioch* from *Jerusalem*, with John Mark.

Chapters 13 & 14 first missionary journey, to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

15:1 Men from *Judea*... came to *Syrian Antioch*, teaching, *circumcision is necessary to be saved*. Paul & Barnabas had a sharp dispute and debate with them.

VISIT Z ACTS 15:2b-29

Antioch Church in Syria sent Paul and Barnabas to *Jerusalem* to see the apostles & elders. 4-29 Council of *Jerusalem* v7 long debate 12 *in public*, decision announced by letter & messenger, asking Gentile Christians to avoid meat offered to idols, blood, things strangled and sexual immorality; ie only four parts of Mosaic Law. NB Circumcision was **not** required.

1.15 When God...called me...my immediate response was not to consult any human being.... I did not go up to *Jerusalem* to see those who were apostles before me but went immediately into *Arabia*. Later I returned to *Damascus*.

VISIT A *Gal 1:18* Then after 3 years, I went up to *Jerusalem* to get acquainted with Cephas (Peter) and stayed with him 15 days. I saw none of the other apostles – only James the Lord's brother.

21 Then I went to *Syria* and *Cilicia*. I was personally unknown to the churches of *Judea* that are in Christ. They only heard the report: *The man who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy*, and they praised God.

VISIT B *2:1-10* After 14 yrs I went again to *Jerusalem* with Barnabas & Titus. I went in response to a revelation, meeting leaders in private. James, Cephas (Peter) & John... gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (ie approved Paul's message, and his right to preach it). They agreed we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

2:11 But when Peter came to *Antioch* I opposed him to his face; he used to eat with Gentiles, but when others arrived from James he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those in the circumcision group.

Conclusion

Visit X = Visit A; Visit Y = Visit B.

Galatians was written after the first missionary journey to *Antioch, Iconium, etc* and *Acts 15:1* and before the situation in *Syrian Antioch* was resolved by **VISIT Z**. Only an early date fits 'I am astonished you are so quickly deserting... ' (Gal 1:6)

Paul's First Missionary Journey: Cyprus and South Galatia



An assertive address

Background information and Word List

See Introduction, pages 2 & 5, to show why we think Paul is writing to the new Christians in the four churches he had recently founded on his first missionary journey: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Acts ch 13 and 14.

Letters in those days began with the sender, then the recipient, and a greeting.

1	<i>Paul</i>	First known by his Hebrew name, <i>Saul</i> . But during the first missionary journey Acts 13:9,13, he switched to <i>Paul</i> , a Greek name easier for his non-Jewish audience to recognise.
	<i>Apostle</i>	Literally, <i>delegate</i> , sent by Jesus. Originally, one of the eleven disciples of Jesus, Acts 1:13. Matthias was added in Acts 1:15-26, as a witness of Jesus' life and resurrection (v21,22).
	<i>Brothers with me</i>	i.e. fellow Christians here in Syrian Antioch
	<i>Galatia</i>	Ethnically, Galatia was in what we now call central Turkey; but the Roman province combined the name with others on all sides, including south, as ' <i>Galatia and ...</i> ' So people might say ' <i>Galatia</i> ' when they meant just one part of the wider area. Paul's home town was Tarsus in Cilicia, with the Taurus mountains to the north; it seems Paul thought of everything north of those mountains as <i>Galatia</i> .
3	<i>Grace</i>	God's love and favour, undeserved, a gift to people who do nothing to earn it. Greeting often (Rom 1:7) combined with: the resulting state of those who have received God's grace.
	<i>and peace</i>	
	<i>Evil Age</i>	Jews of the day expected God to intervene soon and end the present age characterised by evil oppression of Israel. In its place they looked for the restoration of Israel, peace and the righteous rule of God
5	<i>Glory</i>	the credit and the praise that only God is due

Bible Connections (But remember, the rest of the NT was *not yet written!*)

4	gave himself for our sins	Matt 20:28; Rom 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3
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LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Only One Gospel

Background information

Paul launches straight into his subject. There is not time given to pause and pray for, praise or thank the receiver of letter as he does in all his other letters in the New Testament.

His Gospel / The Gospel is : - Salvation is by faith alone and by grace alone! To desert this is to desert ‘the one who called you’ (6) – Jesus Himself.

The churches to whom he was writing in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch he had just visited on his first missionary journey

Word List

6	<i>desert</i>	of an army revolt or to change sides in debate / argument
	<i>grace</i>	an undeserved gift
	<i>'different'</i>	lit. ‘another’ – two adjectives used. <i>Heteros</i> = <i>different</i> <i>allos</i> = <i>a second</i> (you are turning to a different Gospel – not that there is another’ different’ RSV)
7	<i>pervert</i>	<u>strong</u> word. May be translated ‘reverse’
	<i>Gospel</i>	lit, ‘Good news’ : The Lord Jesus Christ... gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age’ (3/4)
8	<i>angel</i>	messenger of God
	<i>condemned</i>	accursed (gk anathema)

Bible Connections (But remember, the rest of the NT was *not yet written!*)

6	<i>a different Gospel</i>	1 Corinthians 11:4
	<i>not ‘the gospel of the grace of God’</i>	Acts 20:24
7	<i>throwing into confusion (lit. trouble)</i>	c.f. Acts 15:24
8	<i>rejection of those who reject God</i>	2 John 10,11
	<i>Achan’s rejection of God & vice versa</i>	Joshua 7:1ff
	<i>eternal condemnation</i>	Matt hew 25:41, 46

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- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 3

Galatians 1:11-24

One Gospel, given by God, agreed by Apostles

Background information

Paul continues his point that he is an apostle sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. Not only was he appointed by Jesus, but his message was given to him by Jesus. He starts to list his contacts with the church in Jerusalem, mainly to show that he got his message before going there.

Egocentric? – Uses 'I' 17 times in this passage.

Word List

11	<i>Gospel</i>	literally, <i>good news</i> ;
12	<i>Judaism</i>	Jewish religion, described in the part of the Bible written before Jesus lived on earth, the Old Testament (OT).
13	<i>zealous</i>	very eager, committed, keen
13	<i>persecuted</i>	the same word as for in war of 'sacking a city'
16	<i>Jerusalem</i>	The apostles stayed on in Jerusalem, even after persecution scattered the rest of the church. (Acts 8:1)
17	<i>Arabia</i>	desert east and south of Syrian Antioch; without people.
18	<i>Damascus</i>	city in Syria where Paul first believed in Jesus (Acts 9)
19	<i>James</i>	Not the disciple James, brother of John, (Matt 4:23), but a half-brother of Jesus also called James. He became one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13).
21	<i>Syria</i>	a large nation at the eastern end of Mediterranean Sea. Antioch was 300 miles north of Jerusalem as the crow flies.
	<i>Cilicia</i>	adjacent country on northern side of Mediterranean, at the eastern end, containing Paul's home town of Tarsus. The Taurus mountains made an awkward barrier to areas further north, including Lycaonia, Pisidia and Galatia (see map p6)
22	<i>Judea</i>	countryside within which lay the city of Jerusalem

Bible Connections

12	<i>received...from Jesus Christ</i>	Acts 9:1-16
12	<i>revelation from Jesus by Holy Spirit</i>	John 14:16,17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15
13	<i>persecuted the church</i>	Acts 7:58 – 8:3; 9:1-2
18	<i>to Jerusalem to meet Peter</i>	Acts 9:26

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

One Gospel, for Jew and Gentile alike

Background information

'14 years' appears to be the time-lapse between Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, and his emergence as Paul the missionary. After three years in Arabia and Damascus, two weeks in Jerusalem, on his first trip there as a Christian, (Acts 9:26, Gal 1:21) and a journey to his home town of Tarsus in Cilicia. We have no information for the next 13 years, until Barnabas brings him from Tarsus to Syrian Antioch where they taught for a year (Acts 11:25-26). A second trip to Jerusalem in Acts 11:27-30 matches this passage, Gal 2:1-10.

Word List

1 <i>Barnabas</i>	A follower of Jesus, who brought Paul to Antioch, and went with him on the 1st missionary journey Acts 13-14.
	<i>Titus</i> another trusted companion of Paul (Titus 1:2)
2 <i>revelation</i>	something uncovered or made known by God
	<i>seemed (+6,9)</i> a <u>positive</u> public recognition
3 <i>circumcised</i>	Sign of Old Covenant between God & Abraham Gen 17
4 <i>infiltrated</i>	come in among people, uninvited and unknown
7 <i>preaching</i>	speaking out, announcing
	<i>Gospel</i> Good news - 'the Lord Jesus Christ ... gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age' (1:4)
	<i>Gentiles</i> any people who were not Jews.
8 <i>ministry</i>	service
9 <i>pillars</i>	main support for building, metaphor for church leaders
	<i>right hand of fellowship</i> handshake conveying welcome and acceptance

Bible Connections

1 <i>Barnabas</i>	Acts 4:36-37; 9:27; 13:1-14:28; 15:2; 15:36-39
	<i>Titus</i> 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6, 17, 23; Titus 1:4
2 <i>a revelation</i>	Acts 11:28
10 <i>all they asked</i>	i.e. can't be 3rd visit with its 4 requests Acts 15:22-29.
	<i>continue to remember the poor</i> Paul & Barnabas had brought gifts from Antioch to relieve famine in Jerusalem. Acts 11:19-30.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 5

Galatians 2:11-21

Right with God by faith, not by Law

Background information

Paul and Barnabas were back in Syrian Antioch, recently returned from founding the 4 churches addressed in this letter (in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe). That trip had occurred between vv 10 and 11.

Peter's arrival in Syrian Antioch must have preceded the 'certain men' of the 'circumcision group' who had come from James in Jerusalem (2:12). Peter's ceasing to eat with Gentile Christians was the trigger for Paul to insist on the difference between the old Jewish thinking (saved by circumcision / keeping the Law) and the Christian (saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ).

With the truth of the gospel at stake, Paul confronted Peter (one of the church leaders no less!) who had previously agreed that Paul's message and calling were authentic: circumcision was *not* necessary for salvation. This argument also provoked the writing of this Letter to the Galatians, then Paul's third visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2b) where circumcision and all it implied were the issue (Acts 15:5). At the time of writing to Galatia, Paul could not have mentioned that third visit - *because it had not yet happened!*

Word List

11	<i>Antioch</i>	city in Syria, 300 miles north of Jerusalem, with a vibrant, young, mission-minded church
12	<i>James</i>	the Lord's brother (1:19) Leader of Church (Acts 15:13)
	<i>Gentile</i>	Non-Jew
	<i>Draw back</i>	defer—'cautious withdrawal of a timid person' Lightfoot.
	<i>circumcision</i>	surgical removal of male foreskin. Sign, given by God, of being a Jew (Genesis 17).
15	<i>Observing the Law</i>	circumcised, scriptures, fasting, prayer, alms etc
16	<i>justified</i>	legal term – declare righteous – opposite if condemn cf when a sinner is put right with God
	<i>Faith in</i>	3 x in one verse - 'beat it into our heads' Luther lit 'faith into Jesus Christ'.
17	<i>Absolutely not</i>	The strongest denial (cf same words - Romans 6:1)
20	<i>crucified</i>	literally, executed by nailing to a wooden cross, as happened to Jesus.
21	<i>righteousness</i>	being in the right with God.

Bible Connections

11-14	Luke describes the same confrontation in Acts 15:1,2a.	
19	die to the law	Paul will later elaborate this in Romans 6:1-14.

LOOK

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What questions does the passage raise?

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 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 6

Galatians 3:1-14

Believing in Jesus vs trying to be good?

Background information

In v1-5 Paul refers to what happened in the four towns when he preached the gospel there (Acts 13:13-14:25). He had narrated the death of Jesus so vividly, it was as if they'd seen it with their own eyes. When they responded in faith, they were *filled with joy and the Holy Spirit* (Acts 13:48,52)

To answer the arguments of the Judaisers, who appealed to Moses and the Law God gave through him, Paul goes further back in Jewish history, to Abraham, the founding father. (see **History**, page 3)

Word List

1	<i>bewitched</i>	tricked, deceived, ‘conned’, as if by magic
	<i>portrayed</i>	lit. ‘placard in public’.
2	<i>receive the Spirit</i>	when a person believes in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, the Holy Spirit enters his/her life with transforming power
	<i>observing the Law</i>	keep <i>all</i> the laws of the OT; not just the 10 commandments (Exodus 20) but scores of extra rules
6	<i>Abraham</i>	Father of the Jews (Genesis 12)
7	<i>credited</i>	given so that it belongs to you, reckoned as yours
	<i>righteousness</i>	right with God
8	<i>Scripture</i>	usually, the Bible (literally ‘writings’). Here it means the part Christians now call The Old Testament, since the New Testament was not yet written.
	<i>Gentiles</i>	non Jews
10	<i>curse</i>	judged by God and condemned for their sin.
11	<i>justified</i>	made right with God
	<i>(Alt. trans</i>	‘Because of their faith, the righteous shall live’
13	<i>redeemed</i>	delivered from, bought back out of, slavery.

Bible Connections

- 1 Foolish Luke 24:25
- 6-9 Abraham, man of faith Genesis 15:1-6; Romans 4:3
- 8 all nations blessed through Abraham Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18
- 10 cursed for not obeying whole law Deuteronomy 27:26
- 14 promise of the Spirit Acts 2:38-39

Grace precedes Law

Background information

Paul knew Roman as well as Jewish law. Roman law is well developed on the subject of contracts, which are similar to Jewish covenants, only the latter are generally one-sided, granted by God. If some human contracts are binding and unchangeable, a covenant made by God is even more so.

‘430 years’ in v 17 is a puzzle. It is also mentioned in Exodus 12:40, where it means the period Israel was in Egypt. In Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, Israel’s time in Egypt is ‘400 years’. The four generations between Abraham and Jacob moving to Egypt are not included in the 430 years. But the meaning is clear: a law given centuries later ***does not alter / limit the original promise.***

Word List

15	<i>covenant</i>	An arrangement or settlement, legally binding. e.g. after someone dies, their ‘last will and Testament’ is fixed. <i>Testament</i> and <i>Covenant</i> are translations of the same word.
16	<i>seed</i>	<u>child</u> (not children) i.e. anticipating Jesus.
19	<i>transgressions</i>	sins, things done that are against the Law
	<i>mediator</i>	person who brings two opponents together to speak. In this case, Moses, to whom God gave the law, Deut 5:5.
24	<i>justified</i>	reckoned as right (perfect) in the eyes of God
	<i>put in charge</i>	lit. <i>pedagogue</i> , a slave who looked after the master’s child, taking him to school. A strict disciplinarian - in ancient drawings often with a cane in his hand (cf 1Cor 4:15,21)

Bible Connections

19	<i>angels</i>	from a Jewish tradition, possibly Deuteronomy 33:2. Stephen also alludes to angels having a part in the giving of the Law, Acts 7:53.
20	<i>God is one</i>	Deuteronomy 6:4 (Mark 12:29); Ephesians 4:6
22	whole world .. sin	Paul developed this point in Romans 3:9-23.
23	<i>held prisoners</i>	cf kept in Damascus by King Aretas (2 Cor 11:32)
24	<i>locked up</i>	held, restrained cf ‘caught’ a shoal of fish (Luke 5:6)

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 8

Galatians 3:26 – 4:7

Fully fledged Sons of God by faith

Background information

The climax of Paul's argument is the status given to people who believe in Jesus Christ. Law divides people into categories; faith unites them.

For instance, Jewish men had a daily prayer that young Saul would have used: *I thank you, Lord, that I am not a Gentile, a slave or a woman.* (!) Here Paul shows that when we get right with God *by faith*, the old divisions become irrelevant. After a Jewish boy was twelve, he was taken to the synagogue and became a 'son of the Law'. The father then offered the benediction – 'Blessed be thou, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy'.

Having faith in Jesus means we share in the status *He* has with the Father, i.e. adult 'son'. Paul does not call us, 'sons or daughters of God' because that would have let some people retain human restrictions on women. A believer's status as 'son of God' stems not from his/her own gender, but from Christ's. God sent his Son that we might have the status of sonship and His Spirit that we might have the experience of sonship. (John Stott)

Word List

3:26 <i>baptised</i>	immersed/completely surrounded. Common Jewish practise for those converting to Judaism (with circumcision and a sacrifice (cf chs 11-15) Christian ceremony involving pouring, sprinkling or submerging in water, signifying faith in Jesus Acts 2:38; 8:36; 16:33
27 <i>clothed yourself</i>	garment 'toga virilis' put on by a Roman boy as he reaches manhood.
4: 2 <i>trustees</i>	those 'trusted' in Law, responsible for ensuring the will of another is put into action
3 <i>basic principles</i>	'Elemental spirits' (RSV, NEB) corrupted Law and used to entrap and condemn (4:8)
5 <i>redeem</i>	Buy back, e.g. a slave, prior to setting him/her free.
6 <i>Abba</i>	Aramaic word for father, like 'Da-da',

Bible Connections

3:28 <i>neither ... nor</i>	Paul later wrote similar words in 1 Corinthians 12:13, omitting <i>male nor female</i> ; there he means different roles believers play in the church. Here, he means the status of people saved by faith: all who trust Jesus are equal to God. Being male – and circumcised – adds no value.
4:4 <i>born of a woman</i>	Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6
6 <i>abba</i>	used by Jesus praying: Mark 14:36, six times in John 17 Those adopted cry 'Abba' .(Rms 8:16,17)
7 <i>a son</i>	living as a son of God Romans 8:1-17

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Sharing the Word

Use

‘Hearing the Word’ can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers *

A format

If you have 45 mins together, you might like to try dividing it up like this.

(If longer or in a large group, you can extend the times)

1) Drink, bite to eat, chat	(10 mins)
2) A Bible reading	(2 mins)
3) A Bible study	
a. Any questions? (Whether answer is known or not!) (Don’t answer any, till all questions noted!)	(2 mins)
b. Any relevant cross references?	(2 mins)
c. Discussion of answers	(13 mins)
d. Conclusion	(10 mins)
i. A Key verse and Main Point?	
ii. What does it show about God / Jesus?	
iii. What should I do?	
4) Sharing (Trials and joys – family, work, self)	(5 mins)
5) Prayer	(1 min)

Remember!

As we gather round God’s Word

- a) Listen to the views of others
- b) Make room for the novice. They can join in too when you start by listing ‘Any questions’
- c) Don’t let the ‘knowledgeable’ dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others’ especially, ‘seekers’ in your sharing together.

* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called **‘An Introduction to ‘Hearing the Word’**. Email: office@tpc.org

“I can read the Bible for myself!”

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,
the Rev Nigel Barge, minister of Torrance Parish Church,
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.
The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,
teaches them by means of an interactive course,
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,
which includes the next six passages in Mark,
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!

