

# CITYGROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



Week 10 (Galatians 4:1-20)  
Week of November 20th, 2016



**#CityGroupsTally**

## REMINDERS for leaders:

Here's a few reminders before you get going:

-  **VIDEO:** Each week we will have a video for you to show at your group meeting.
- **Group Leader Christmas Party:** (Thur Dec 8<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm) RSVP!
- **We are in the home stretch!** Do you have anyone in your group being apprenticed as a future group leader? Please let your coach and Craig know if your group is ready to multiply in the Spring (or even considering it). We would love to help you work out a multiplication plan! You will need three basic ingredients for a healthy multiplication:
  1. *An Approved Group Leader* (apprenticed & willing to lead the new group.)
  2. *A Host Home* and ...
  3. *A Launch Team* (of 6-8 committed people.)
- **Happy Thanksgiving!!!!** (I encourage your group to try and meet if possible)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. **Thanksgiving Food Drive:** Donate canned goods and non-perishable items to benefit Godby High School families. Fill a bag and drop it off in the lobby Sunday mornings until Thanksgiving.
2. **Christmas on the Moon:** Sign up to serve at [www.ChristmasOnTheMoon.com](http://www.ChristmasOnTheMoon.com)
3. **Fall Groups End in December.** (But feel free to get your group together for a Christmas Party!)

## BIG IDEA(s):

**We are heirs of God through faith in Jesus; no longer orphans or slaves. We have been divinely adopted into God's family. We belong! What's more, God Himself lives inside His adopted children; transforming us and causing us to know and be known by our Abba Father. Like Paul, we labor and even suffer to see Christ formed in one another, so that we can know our Father more intimately and enjoy Him more consistently each day.**

**PRAY:** Pray for your group's gathering and for the Spirit to equip us to follow Jesus into the world.

**READ: Galatians 4:1-20**

## HEAD (20 minutes)



### WATCH THIS WEEK'S VIDEO

- 1) Do you act more like a slave who is afraid of God or like a child who is assured of your Father's love? Examples?
- 2) What is the significance of Jesus being 'born of a woman' and 'born under the law'? (vs.4-5)
- 3) What are some reasons God sent His Spirit into our hearts according to vs.6? (The Spirit leads us to 1. Call out to God in prayer. 2. As a child to a parent 3. To experience an intimacy with our 'Abba' Father. 4. Assuring us that we are divinely adopted)
- 4) Read Romans 8:14-17. What can we learn about God and about ourselves from these verses?
  - Is it easy or hard for you to view God as your loving Father, who is well pleased with you? Why?
  - **Bottom Line:** Do you really believe God is pleased with you as His child? How would you live or feel differently if you had a greater grasp of this?

## HEART: (15 minutes)

- 1) How does calling God "Abba" make you feel? Why? Have you ever prayed to God as "Abba"? How has this impacted your prayer life?
- 2) Being a child of God is factual...but it's also experiential! How has God's Spirit helped you experience a more intimate relationship with God the Father recently? (Vs. 6)
- 3) What does it mean to 'know God'? (Vs. 9) Do you know God? (Or have become known by God?) How do you know? (Recommended Book: *Knowing God* by JI Packer)

## HANDS (15 Minutes)

- 1) What is one specific area of life where you feel tempted to drift back into spiritual slavery? (vs. 7) How will you remind yourself this week of your divine adoption?
- 2) Read verse 19. Who is someone who helped "form Christ in you"? How did they do that? What is one practical way you could help "form Christ" in someone else this month? (mentor a younger believer, pray for someone, read the Bible together, etc.)

**Pray:** Take a few moments to share prayer requests and pray for one another and your lost friends.

## **Commentary: Galatians 4:1-20 (To give you more insight into each verse & for hard questions)**

4:1. In verses 1-7 Paul shifted his emphasis from the inheritance to the heir. He based his analogy on the legal practice of guardianship. While still a minor, an heir did not have control over his future inheritance. In fact, he had little more control over his destiny than would a slave. Only when he came of age did the heir begin to enjoy the privileges of his inheritance.

4:2. Guardians and trustees controlled the property or estate in behalf of the heir until he came of age. Although such guardians could be trustworthy stewards, in Paul's analogy they were sinister custodians as verse 3 indicates.

4:3. The phrase the basic principles refers to essential ingredients or basic components. For example, letters of the alphabet are the basic components or building blocks of words and sentences. Some have suggested that Paul used the phrase the basic principles of the world to refer to a basic set of philosophical or religious ideas. Others have interpreted the phrase as designating the four elemental substances that many ancients believed composed the physical world— earth, water, air, and fire. It was held that warring among these elements would eventually result in the world's destruction. Most likely Paul used the phrase in the context of verse 3 to designate evil spiritual powers and any expression of these powers in the world. In any case, the Galatian believers were behaving like slaves to these basic principles instead of enjoying the freedom given them in Christ.

4:4. The time appointed by God the Father for redemption represents a divine prerogative that can never be completely understood by the human mind. We might wonder why the Savior was not introduced earlier in history. Yet, with the perspective of perfect knowledge and wisdom, God chose the right moment in time to send His Son. The phrase God sent his Son emphasizes the eternal deity of Christ. However, this Son was born of a woman, a phrase stressing that Christ was fully human as well as fully divine. Further, He was born under law in order to redeem those enslaved by it. Although Christ was under the law, He was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

4:5. The benefits of Christ's atoning work referred to in this verse are those of redemption and adoption. The term redemption may suggest a basically negative connotation—we are redeemed from slavery to sin, from the curse of the law, and from the control of evil spiritual powers. On the other hand, the phrase the full rights of sons addresses the positive aspect of salvation. The expression refers to the giving of sonship status to one who is not a natural child. It reflects the marvelous transformation that occurs in our relationship with God as a result of our faith in Christ who made provision for our redemption.

4:6. The Holy Spirit is the sign and pledge of our adoption as God's children. His presence in our hearts assures us of our salvation. The most basic indication of our adoption as God's children is that of an intimate relationship with God. We can address God as Abba [AB buh] an Aramaic expression meaning "father" The term carries connotations of respect and affection.

4:7. In this verse Paul changed from addressing his readers as a group to addressing them individually (see vv. 6-7 in KJV). In so doing, his application became direct and personal. Christian reader, "You are no longer a slave, but rather a child of God and thereby a joint heir with Christ."

4:8-9. Before Christ, the Galatians had been slaves to pagan gods such as Zeus and Hermes. When they believed in Christ, they had been delivered from this bondage. They could not claim any credit to say they had achieved a knowledge of God. God had taken all the initiative to form a love relationship with them so that he knew them. Now Paul asked them why they were turning back to the weak and miserable bondage of legalism which could not produce life or righteousness or freedom.

4:10. The Judaizers had persuaded the Galatians to observe the Mosaic calendar. These seasonal events included special days (weekly sabbaths), months (new moons), and seasons (Festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The Galatians kept these festivals to gain God's favor.

4:11. If they continued in legalism, Paul feared that his efforts on them would have been wasted. This could mean one of two things. It could mean that the Galatians were true Christians but that Paul's efforts to spur them on to spiritual maturity in Christ were not fruitful. Or it could mean that he feared that not turning from their legalism could indicate that they were never Christians in the first place.

4:12. This passage opens a window for us into Paul's pastoral heart. When the apostle pleaded with the Galatians to become like him, he was referring to his life of faith as opposed to their observance of Jewish rituals and regulations (see Gal. 2:20). Paul

wanted the Galatians to experience the same kind of freedom in Christ that he knew. From the time Paul had met Christ, he had realized that rabbinic traditions and ceremonial law were not necessary steps to knowing God. Paul became like his audience in order to win them to Christ. Through such cultural accommodations, however, Paul never compromised his convictions. This behavior on Paul's part was not an inconsistency but an intentional strategy to reach others for Christ.

4:13. Paul had made his first visit to Galatia because of some physical "illness." Various suggestions regarding the nature of this illness include malaria, epilepsy, or some type of eye disorder. Whatever the nature of the illness, Paul's Galatian readers could recall what had occurred ("as you know"). In any case, this verse points out God's overriding providence. Paul recognized God at work in leading him to proclaim the gospel to the Galatians.

4:14. In this verse the KJV uses a literal translation, "my temptation which was in my flesh," while the NIV has a literary translation, "my illness." Sicknesses and weaknesses commonly were viewed as forms of divine judgment in that time and culture. Instead of rejecting Paul because of his illness, however, the Galatians had warmly welcomed him. They had sacrificially accepted the trial or unpleasant symptoms resulting from Paul's illness. Instead of kicking Paul out, the Galatians had received both the messenger and the message. They had welcomed him as if he were an angel of God or Christ Jesus Himself. The Galatians previously had recognized and received Paul as a genuine apostle of the Lord. Why were they currently turning against Paul after all they and the apostle had been through together?

4:15. The Galatians had expressed profound joy over Paul's presence with them and his spiritual message. This Greek word translated joy is related closely to the word translated "blessed" in the Beatitudes (see Matt. 5:3-11). The term conveys a state of well-being that comes from a right relationship with God. As a result of receiving Paul's message of freedom in Christ, the Galatian believers had experienced spiritual blessings and inner joy. When they turned to legalism, however, their joy was gone. Living by the law (rules and regulations) meant a loss of spiritual blessings for the Galatians and a loss of the blessings of Christian fellowship for both them and Paul.

The Galatians' previous joy had generated a spirit of sacrifice to the point that they would have torn out their eyes and given them to Paul. Some Bible scholars suggest that Paul's reference to eyes indicates that his physical affliction involved some form of eye disorder. On the other hand, Paul may have been using a proverbial phrase that implied great sacrifice.

4:16. In any case, Paul pointed out that the Galatians had been ready to do whatever they possibly could to help him. Now, however, they had turned against him as if he were their enemy. Moreover, they were not only rejecting Paul, who was telling them the truth, but also believing the false teachers who were telling them lies.

4:17. The Judaizers ("those people") showed great interest in the Galatians by demonstrating the kind of devotion a man might show toward a woman while courting her ("are zealous to win you over"). The false teachers showed special concern for the Galatians' welfare, became their best friends, and served as ready counselors to give advice. The only problem was the Judaizers' motive—it was wrong and self-centered ("for no good"). What did the false teachers hope to accomplish by the attention they focused on the Galatians? They wanted to alienate (literally, "to shut out") the Galatians. From what did the Judaizers wish to alienate the Galatians? By supplying the words "from us," translators suggest that the false teachers wanted to alienate the Galatians from Paul and his companions. Other interpreters suggest the Judaizers wanted to alienate the Galatians from their freedom in Christ or from Christ Himself.

4:18. Paul had nothing at all against spiritual zeal, as long as it was for righteous purposes. Indeed, zeal can be evidence of a thriving, growing faith. Therefore, Paul wanted the Galatians to grow in zeal for Christ, whether in the apostle's presence or in his absence. The problem was that in Paul's absence, the Galatians' zeal had taken a direction inconsistent with the truth. The fact that such defection had occurred demonstrated just how immature the Galatians were in their faith.

4:19. In spite of all these concerns, Paul still addressed the Galatians as "dear children," evidence that he was not questioning their salvation. Their tendency to turn to false teaching had caused Paul agony. Previously, when he had labored so hard among them presenting the gospel and yearning for them to become Christians, he was like a mother experiencing the pains of childbirth. At the present time he again found himself in similar agony because the apostle wanted them to mature in Christ. Paul identified the process of Christian maturity as Christ being formed in them.

4:20. Paul concluded this part of his letter by expressing his longing to be with the Galatians. He was deeply concerned about his children in Christ and wanted to help them through the crisis they were facing.