

## Leader's Guide

### Session 4: Galatians 4

**Describe a time when you felt like you belonged in a group (of friends, coworkers, Christians, etc.). What made you feel like you belonged?**

**What might have made you feel excluded? How would being left out have made you feel?**

We learned in the last session that we are now part of the family of God. We belong. Jesus has brought us into the family of God, not by our own merit, but by His grace.

read

Read Galatians 4.

watch

Show Session 4: *Galatians 4* (11:15 minutes)

discuss

In our previous session, we left off discussing the idea of adoption and how our faith in Jesus causes us to become children of God and members of His family. At this point in his letter to the Galatians, Paul has turned his full attention to demonstrating how we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not through any works of our own.

**What are some of the practical changes that occur for someone who is adopted?** (New parents, name, home, etc.)

**In what ways do these changes parallel those that we experience on a spiritual level when we trust in Jesus Christ?**

Someone read 4:1–11.

**According to Paul, how do we enter into adoption?** (Through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ; v. 5)

**How does Paul describe life outside of Christ?** (Enslavement to the principles, or spirit, of this world and those who are not gods; vv. 3, 9)

**What are the characteristics applied to Jesus in verses 4–5?**

1. He is the Son of God.
2. He was born of a woman.
3. He was born under the law.
4. He is our redemption.
5. He is the means by which we receive adoption.

Go Deeper

*Learn more about the eternal preexistence of Jesus Christ from the following passages: Mark 9:37; 1 Cor. 8:6; 10:4; Col. 1:15–17; Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:5–9*

**How does Jesus describe God in Mark 9:37?** (“The one who sent me”)

**How does Paul describe Jesus in his other letters?** (Lord, the spiritual rock, image of the invisible God, firstborn over all creation, before all things, Son of God, and divine by nature)

**What does this tell us about the meaning of Paul’s description of God’s “Son” in Galatians 4:4?** (That the “Son” is Jesus, a fully divine member of the Trinity who exists eternally and was sent by the Father into this world as a sacrifice for our sin.)

It’s hard to grasp the full impact of this reality, but the point is that God did not merely send any kind of substitute for our rescue. He sent His Son, the very image and nature of Himself. In other words, God Himself came into this world to deal a deathblow to sin.

**What is Paul trying to communicate about Christ by describing Him as both “born of a woman” and “born under the law”?** (That He experienced the human condition in the same way as we do.)

Despite being fully divine, Jesus Christ took on human flesh and subjected Himself to the full experience of human life. **How does this truth influence the way you think about Jesus? Why should it embolden your confidence to turn to Him in times of need?**

**How did Kyle define the term “redeem”?** (He said that it means “to set free by paying a price.”)

**How has Christ redeemed us? In other words, how has He set us free? And what price did He pay to do so?**

When we stop to think about what Paul writes in these verses, the implications are staggering. In this context, the idea of redemption carries with it a negative background on the part of humanity. Christ's death saved us *from* imprisonment to the Law, the curse of sin, and enslavement to elemental principles and those who are not gods, but it has also saved us *to* adoption into the family of God. Jesus came down from heaven and offered up His life as our substitute not merely so that we could become God's slaves or even His friends, but His children.

**According to verse 6, what is the confirmation of our adoption through faith in Christ?** (The indwelling Holy Spirit who confirms for us that God has become our Father.)

PEEK AT THE GREEK

A word appears in verse 6 that will be familiar to anyone with a Christian background—*Abba*. The term is an Aramaic word meaning “father,” which is followed by Paul's use of the Greek term for father, *pater*. Many have added a sentimental value to *Abba* by explaining its meaning as that of “papa” or “daddy,” but that simply does not reflect accurately the meaning of the term. Throughout history, it has been found in legal documents and was used by adult children in the process of claiming an inheritance from their departed father. It reflects less the idea of an infant cuddling with a daddy as it does a child secure in his or her intimacy with a father. Through faith in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can walk in confidence knowing that the eternal God of the universe is our faithful Father to whom we can cry out because He hears us. In other words, *Abba* describes the welcome access we have been given into the heart of God.

Beginning in verse 8, Paul reiterates a portion of what he has already said. Before knowing God, we were all enslaved to “those that by nature are not gods.”

**What are some of the common forms in which these kinds of “gods” appear in our world today?** (Money, sex, power, self, approval, relationships, status, appearance, etc.)

**What does Paul say frees us from slavery to inadequate gods?** (Being known by God)

Paul makes an important distinction in verse 9 that relates to his overarching point about justification by faith. He connects the believer's state of knowing God with being known by God. More specifically, he conditions our knowing God on God's prior knowledge of us. The order is crucial here. We did not make our way to God through adequate obedience or blind luck. Rather, we know Him because He made His way to us through Jesus Christ.

PEEK AT THE GREEK

As products of the Enlightenment, we think of “knowing” in a particular manner, almost exclusively related to the mind. Because of that, we likely miss the deeper significance of Paul’s statement in verse 9 (“But now that you know God—or rather are known by God”). In the previous verses, he has been comparing our intimacy with God in Christ to that of a child. Children do not simply “know” a parent cerebrally. They experience a deep intimacy relationally. In context, Paul’s use of the term *ginosko* mirrors that of the Hebrew term *yada*, which is often used in the Old Testament to describe the intimacy of sexual intercourse. The Greek translation of the Old Testament actually uses the term to describe this intimacy in Genesis 4:1 when Adam and Eve conceived Cain. However, Paul’s point is not a sexual one. Rather, he is describing our knowing God and being known by Him as more than simply cerebral, but something that involves our entire being. We know Him and are known by Him in a way that claims our total selves.

Nonetheless, despite knowing God in this manner, Paul expresses his concern that the Galatians are being seduced back to their former ways by the Judaizers. What follows is one of the more heartfelt portions of Galatians and perhaps the entirety of Paul’s writings in the New Testament. Someone read verses 12–20.

**How would you describe Paul’s tone in these verses?**

**How does Paul describe the Galatians’ response to the gospel message?** (They embraced it and exhibited clear love and service toward Paul as a result.)

Clearly, this was a community Paul loved and one that appeared to love Christ as a result of his preaching. Yet, in his absence they began to veer from the truth and embrace the lies of the Judaizers. For any of us, it would be easy to feel betrayed upon hearing such news—and Paul likely did—but his example is sobering.

**Have you ever witnessed someone claim the name of Christ only to drift away from the truth over time? How did it make you feel? What kind of response did it prompt in you?**

**According to verse 19, what can we be certain about when it comes to Paul’s true concern for the Galatians?** (He had no interest in creating a personality cult of Pauline followers, but was committed fully to their maturity in Christ.)

**How should Paul’s pastoral example shape the way we treat those who drift from the faith? How should it inform the way we call them to repentance?**

In the final section of chapter 4, Paul returns to his discussion of the Abrahamic line in order to conclude his argument for justification by faith. Throughout chapters 3–4, Paul has been working his way toward

answering the question, “Who are the true sons of Abraham?” This section is the climax of his argument. Someone read verses 21–31.

**Who is Paul speaking to according to verse 21?** (Those in the Galatian community who “want to be under the law.” In other words, those who were flirting with the teachings of the Judaizers.)

**Who are the “two sons” Paul mentions?** (Ishmael and Isaac)

**Who are the “women”?** (Hagar and Sarah)

Paul’s allegorical interpretation refers to each of the women as “covenants” with a corresponding lineage. Think back for a minute to the story of Abraham as it relates to these women.

**What was the lineage of each woman leading up to the time of Paul?** (During the time of Paul, the line of Ishmael represented all non-Jews, or Gentiles, whereas the line of Isaac represented all Jews, the covenant people of God.)

As we know from the Old Testament, God made a covenant with Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:3–6). Rather than trust the Lord’s timing, Abraham slept with his servant, Hagar who conceived and gave birth to Ishmael (Gen. 16). Years later, God fulfilled His promise in spite of Abraham’s disobedience by causing Sarah to conceive and give birth to Isaac (Gen. 21:1–7). As a result, Abraham and Sarah dismissed Hagar and Ishmael from their household and cast them out, yet God protected the servant and her child promising to make a nation of him (Gen. 21:8–21).

Remember the context here. The Judaizers—part of Isaac’s ethnic line—have come into the Galatian community and taught them that obedience to the Law is necessary for salvation in addition to their belief in Christ. **Which of the “women/ covenants” do you think Paul’s readers were expecting to correspond with “Mount Sinai” and “the present Jerusalem” (v. 25)? Or to put it another way, which do you think Paul’s readers were expecting to correspond with the Judaizers?** (Isaac, because each of those locations has a rich heritage dating back to Abraham himself.)

**Which does he say actually corresponds with the Judaziers?** (Hagar who bears children of slavery.)

**Who does he identify as the “children of the promise” (v. 28)?** (The Galatians who were Gentiles, meaning they were ethnically tied to the line of Ishmael.)

This would have been shocking not only to the Galatians, but also to the Judaizers. With this teaching, Paul flips the story of the Judaizers on its head absolving their ethnic claim to fellowship with God. Even more, he argued that the religious system centered in Jerusalem produced slavery, not freedom. The Judaizers, despite their knowledge of the Old Testament missed the very heart—the promise—of its message.

**Bearing in mind that Paul is writing to those “who want to be under the law” (v. 21), what tense does he use when describing the Galatians in verses 28 and 31?** (Present tense—“you are”—meaning that their position as children of promise was a present reality due to their belief in Christ and not their obedience to the Law.)

**What does he instruct the Galatians to do with this knowledge?** (“Throw out the slave woman and her son,” meaning do away with the deception of the Judaizers.)

Slavery and freedom cannot coexist. We cannot depend on the atoning work of Jesus Christ for our salvation while simultaneously depending on our obedience to achieve the same thing. Despite the obvious impossibility, we have far more in common with the Galatians than we are often willing to admit.

**As you reflect on this session, has the Holy Spirit convicted you of any ways in which you “want to be under the law”? If so, how?**

**What are some of the obstacles that keep you from sole dependence on Christ? What could you do this week to more intentionally pursue freedom?**

Kyle closed the session by explaining how the gospel of Jesus Christ has given us a new identity such that we are now sons and daughters of God. While that’s a hard reality to fathom, it should change the way we live in profound ways.

**In what ways do you struggle to live in your identity as a son or daughter of God? How practically could you surrender that to Him over the next week?**

last word

It’s easy to fall back into the habit of living according to a moral law. It’s practical and measureable, but it removes the necessity of faith. Paul’s exhortation in this passage is for Christians to cast off anything that causes them to depart from sole dependence on Christ.

Identifying those departures is impossible to do alone. It starts with God's Word and conviction from the Holy Spirit, but it also requires honest community with other believers. Christ has paid for your freedom. Don't return to your chains. Instead, commit yourself to the difficult and sometimes painful work of sanctification because in it you will experience true freedom and joy.

live it out

**Pray:** Praise God each day this week for bringing you into His family. Ask Him to grow your understanding of your identity as His child.

**Confess:** Confess your sins to God this week. Consider telling a trusted Christian friend about your sin struggles as well. Pray for practical ways to repent and the strength to see it through.

**Let Go:** Pick one "god" in your life that you need to let go (money, a relationship, food, media, appearance, etc.). Choose one practical step of repentance and try it this week.

**Reflect:** Think back over all God's taught you through this series so far. Write down the areas of your life where you aren't walking in the freedom of the gospel. Pray that God would continue to work in your heart through the rest of the study.

**Encourage:** Talk to a friend or family member who knows someone who has wandered from the faith. Use what was discussed in this session to encourage that person and spend time praying for the lost friend.