**Small Group Talk Sheet**

**Galatians – Week 1: Introduction**

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**Intro –** “To be convinced in our hearts that we have forgiveness of sins and peace with God by grace alone is the hardest thing.”

― [Martin Luther](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/29874.Martin_Luther), [Commentary on Galatians](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1629238)

**Big Idea** – Humankind is saved by GRACE alone. There’s nothing extra that we have to do in order for Jesus to rescue us.

**Notes**

*Legalism, according to Galatians, was a religious system that combined Christianity with Mosaism in a way that demanded total commitment to Israel’s law as the climax of one’s conversion to Christ. This “deeper commitment to the law,” according to Paul, was a subversion of the adequacy of Christ’s work and an abandonment of the Holy Spirit as God’s way of guiding Christian ethics. In other words, the legalism of the Judaizers is more than a problem: it has become a new message, a different gospel*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Judaizers** (joo-day-eye-sers) Gentile Christians who adopted Jewish customs, and/or those (Jews or Gentiles) who encouraged such practices.

1. Custom-observing Judaizers maintained distinct Jewish customs within Graeco-Roman society but placed no salvific or membership significance on observance of the Mosaic law.

2. Social Judaizers placed social or membership significance on observance of the law and insisted on social separation from Gentile Christians.

3. ***Elitist Judaizers*** placed salvific (you can’t be saved if you don’t observe the Jewish rules) and membership (you can’t be a part of our religion/church of you don’t follow the rules) significance on observance of the law and insisted on circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, dietary restrictions in order to belong to God’s people and be saved.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**A Few Thoughts**

The biggest problem that the Galatian church faced was a group of people who were convinced that in order to be a “good Christian”, one must also look like a “good Jew”. This attitude isn’t necessarily coming from a truly evil place in the heart of those who thought this. It’s just that those folks who were coming out of Judaism into the new faith of Christianity were still caught up in old ways of thinking. They were used to the comfort of the ritual that Judaism offered. It was tangible and felt more real than accepting that Jesus had “jumped through all of the hoops” necessary for salvation. If I have to actually do something in order to be saved, then it feels more real. Now, we do believe that we LIVE our lives in a certain way as a result of what we believe, and that may FEEL like “jumping through hoops”, BUT what Christians DO as a result of what Jesus did comes as a result of our gratitude for his sacrifice. We don’t DO things to be saved. We do things (evangelism, being kind, changing attitudes, etc.) because of our salvation.

**Small Group Questions: Leader, please read the following questions and give everyone a chance to participate.**

1. Have you ever had a conversation in which a person simply gave way too many details? How do too many details distract from someone trying to make a point in a story?

2. Read the definition of *Judaizer* above. The *Judaizers* were a group of Christians who were trying to maintain Jewish rule-keeping in order to maintain a Jewish identity. In fact, they were trying to get Christians (non-Jews) to take on a Jewish identity that they did not have before. There are three catagories of *Judaizer* mentioned. Do you see this in today’s church (even at WOCC?!)? If so, what does it look like?

**Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10**

3. What does it mean to you that Jesus’ grace is sufficient (V.9)?

**Read Proverbs 3:5-6**

4. What does it mean to “lean on your own understanding”? If I do “lean on my own understanding”, where am placing my own faith (in *me* or in the *LordI)*?

5. Discuss the difference between working FOR salvation and working as a RESULT of salvation.

6. How can a church avoid the trap of legalism (focusing on rules and traditions over following what the Bible says in its simplest form)?

1. Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. S. Michael Kraeger, “Judaizers,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)