

Galatians

Week 3—SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Your assignment:

1. Read Galatians this week (6 chapters).
2. Take the notes each week and review them as you read.
3. Be open to God completely shifting your relationship with Him.
4. Text any questions to 440.557.2822.

Read Galatians 2:1-12 this week as you study these notes.

It is important to remember that the people getting this letter were very young in their faith...all first generation **Christians** (just like some of you), and Paul is writing them because they are turning away from the truth of Christianity. Paul's letter would have been hard to read because they don't think they are turning away from Christianity, in fact, they think they are becoming "better" Christians. However, there is **no such thing as a "better" Christian**. The false teachers were suggesting to be a Christian you must **believe in Jesus change, and God will love you**, but the Gospel of Jesus says, **believe in Jesus and God's love will change you**. It seems like a small difference, but it's completely different.

Here's a key verse for you to read and study this week...

It doesn't matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation. (Galatians 6:15)

This is counterintuitive to everything you and I are taught to think about Christianity.

- The question is not *are you trying to do better?*
- The question is *are you being transformed?*
- Under the "false Gospel" changing depends on you.
- In the Gospel, our transformation depends on the power of God working in your life.

So how are we transformed? **By continuing to believe the Gospel.**

This week's message is about community and our relationship to each other and spiritual leaders. Always remember...**We each come to God PERSONALLY and INDIVIDUALLY but we follow him together in COMMUNITY.**

God has given us three (3) very important things to help us live as believers...

- God gives us a church.
- God gives us a church family.
- God gives us church/spiritual leaders to help us follow Jesus.

Think of it like a **lifeguard**—keeping you from drowning and the presence of a lifeguard can mean the difference is living and dying. The Bible actually describes living as a Christian in this world as trying to be pulled away by the undercurrent.

(Hebrews 13:7-8)

Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them.

(Hebrews 13:17)

Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God.

So according to the Bible, God has called and positioned someone to watch after your soul, and one of the reasons is because we all have the tendency to believe strange new ideas and be pulled away by the undercurrents of this present age—the next fad, the next popular trend of spiritual health. That's what's happening in Galatians. Christians are getting pulled under by the undercurrent of new wrong ideas.

So Hebrews uses a word we don't like very much... **obey your spiritual leaders, in other words --** Listen to the lifeguard. The question is will you let someone watch over your soul?

Here are 3 reasons why you need spiritual leaders in your life. Take the time this week to review the scriptures and pray about application to your own life.

Spiritual Leaders Tell Us The Truth (v.3)

(v.3)... And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

We live in one of the most dangerous times in spiritual history. The undercurrent of relativism and individualism has never been more prevalent than it is today! The spirits of this age screams to us— **it is wrong for you to tell me I'm wrong.**

(2 Timothy 4:1-4)

I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

The best way to make sure you're believing the truth and not chasing after myths or things that pretend to be the truth is by planting yourself in a church with a spiritual leader who can be trusted.

Who gets to tell you if you're wrong?

Spiritual Leaders Encourage Our Gifts (v.9)

(v.9)...In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.

- It's not all theology and doctrine.
- Spiritual leaders also provide encouragement and pull out the best in you.

(1 Peter 5:1-8)

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches...As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

- Elders are examples of godly faith and behavior
- Elders are spiritual guides for the people
- Elders protect the church from attacks of the enemy.

Spiritual Leaders Give Us Direction (v.10)

(v.10)...Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

These are not salvation issues. Paul calls them suggestions—we all have areas where we sometimes need someone to help us with questions or areas of confusion...

Conclusion:

For Christians, we know God personally but we follow Him together.

To maintain my spiritual health and balance in this world:

- I will stay with my church and foster deep interdependent relationships with those with whom I regularly worship.
- I will quietly defy the individualism that is wreaking havoc in my world.
- I Surrender my autonomy to love and simply choose to love as many people as I can.
- I willingly place myself in the constraint of community, because it the place where I am set free.
- I give up my preferences for the sake of others.

- I'm re-enrolling in the school of Agape and if I fail a course, I'll throw myself upon God's mercy.
- With humility I come back to the Lord's table, and partake in the forgiving love of God.
- I will not be afraid to repent and to repent again and again and again, if needed.
- I will risk vulnerability to deepen my connections.
- I accept that I will from time to time get hurt and at some point will hurt others...it's part of facing Grace. My deepest wounds come from my relationships to others but so does my deepest joys...so the risk is worth it.