



## Two Ways to Live

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### WEEK 1

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### Alpha Prayer Points

- Fall Morning Alpha started October 26th. Pray for God to bring participants who are seeking after faith, to raise up leaders, and for smooth logistics.
- Pray that as a result of the Alpha testimony on Presbyterian School Sunday, Oct 22nd, that some parents of Presbyterian School will be stirred by the Holy Spirit to join this Alpha or another one in the future.
- Continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those who came to Spring 2023 Alpha and who are meeting now in twice-monthly post-Alpha groups. Pray that as they learn and experience Spiritual Practices, they would feel drawn to the love of Jesus.

### How Did it Go?

*10 Minutes*

**PROVIDE SUPPORTS, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO ONE ANOTHER FOR PUTTING THE WORD OF GOD INTO PRACTICE. TOGETHER, FIND WAYS TO LIVE OUT THE SCRIPTURE.**

- Last week we studied Joshua 1:1-9 about being strong and courageous. Where do you especially need these qualities today? Who have you been encouraging to be strong and courageous?
- What else stuck with you from last week's study, and how were you able to put that into practice in your life? For example, have you prayed for the teachers, students, and staff at Presbyterian School? If you forgot, what reminders could you put in place to help you?

- Did anything get in the way between you and living out the word of God that you studied last week? If so, what? How can you intentionally plan to counteract that this week?

## Read Aloud

Passage for this week: **GALATIANS 4:21-5:1**.

*A helpful note: Paul makes his argument in this passage using an allegory. One commentator notes that “in an allegory, persons and actions represent hidden meanings, so that the narrative can be read on two levels: the literal and the symbolic.” Look for both in this passage.*

## Head

*15–20 Minutes*

### OBSERVE THE TEXT AND THE AUTHOR’S MAIN POINTS

1. Paul uses the Genesis accounts of Abraham’s two sons to set up contrasts that are crucial to his primary argument in this letter. He contrasts:

Hagar and Sarah, and  
Ishmael and Isaac.

What does each of these four historical characters represent in the context of the contrast between the law and grace, and between bondage and freedom?

2. Paul contrasts living in one or the other of two “cities”: the “present Jerusalem,” (“in bondage with her children”); and the “Jerusalem which is above” (or heavenly Jerusalem, which is “free”). He reinforces this theme of freedom in the final verse of this week’s passage, Gal 5:1. What freedom is Paul referring to—freedom from what? Freedom for what?
3. Paul tells the Galatians that they, “like Isaac, are children of promise (v. 28).” In Galatians 3, we explored Paul’s references to the “promise,” or God’s covenant with Abraham. Why is Isaac a “child of the promise” and why is Ishmael not?

## Heart

*15–20 Minutes*

### ENVISION HOW THE TEXT—WHEN APPLIED—MIGHT TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE IN TERMS OF YOUR THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS

1. Paul is writing to the churches he planted in Galatia because Judaizers are teaching that the gospel Paul had preached—justification by faith alone—is a false gospel and that Paul is not a true apostle. He addresses the Galatians as a parent might speak to

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament, Volume 1*. Colorado Springs, CO, David C. Cook Publishing, 1989. P, 709.

his/her adult children. What can we learn from Paul's balanced approach of stern reproof combined with loving correction?

2. Paul is pointing out the dangers of religious legalism in our individual Christian lives and in the church.<sup>2</sup> When do you find yourself being legalistic, judging either your own spirituality or that of others—by adherence to laws, rules, and regulations? How might this passage encourage you to more fully embrace God's grace?
3. In 4:19, Paul explains how he longs to see Christ formed in the Galatians. Consider how Christ has been formed in you this past week, month, and year. Where do you see growth? What areas need prayer and surrender?

## Hands

*10 Minutes*

**APPLY THE TEXT BY MOVING FROM INWARD REFLECTION TO OUTWARD ACTION  
LOOKING FOR WAYS TO LIVE THE TEXT OUT IN OUR LIVES. THESE ARE SPECIFIC,  
CONCRETE EXAMPLES BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY WAY - THEY ARE IDEA-STARTERS  
FOR HOW TO PUT THE WORD OF GOD INTO PRACTICE.**

### **Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God**

- Paul frequently quotes from or refers to the Old Testament in his letters. Jesus also does this in his teaching. In this passage the phrase, "For it is written...," appears twice, and v. 30 begins, "But what does the Scripture say?" Make a commitment, in your small group and individually, to "stop and look back" whenever you encounter an OT reference while studying a NT passage. If you already do this, discuss with your group how this has helped you to better grasp the full meaning of these texts. For example:
  - Gal 4:22 describes events found in Gen 16:15 and 21:2-3,
  - Gal 4:27 quotes from Isa 54:1, and
  - Gal 4:30 quotes Gen 21:10 (Gen 21:9-13 provides more context).
- While the Galatians were tempted to turn to the old, comfortable ways of their previous experiences with Judaism, we are faced with our unique temptations that turn us away from the truth of the gospel. What are some of the things you are tempted to go back to rather than fully surrendering to Jesus? Talk to Jesus candidly about those things, and ask for His help in overcoming temptation and surrendering fully to Him in all areas of your life.

### **Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors**

- Look again at the reference to two Jerusalems in Gal 4:25-26. The city in which we live—the city of bondage or the city of freedom—can affect generations. In the

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. Op. Cit. pp. 712-713. Wiersbe notes that the Judaizers "had rules and standards to cover every area of life, making it easy for their followers to know who was 'spiritual' and who was not." He goes on to set up this stark contrast: "(T)he religious legalist wears the yoke of bondage (Gal 5:1); but the Christian who depends on God's grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ (Matt 11:28-30)."

sermon, Pastor Curtis suggested: “Our own ‘spiritual descendants’ will be profoundly affected by ‘the city’ in which we choose to live.” Who is/who could be your spiritual descendant(s)? Are they all blood relations? What friends or neighbors might you disciple? What steps will you take this week to begin?

- The Princeton Seminary Professor Charles R. Erdman calls Galatians “the Magna Carta of spiritual freedom for the whole world and for all time.”<sup>3</sup> Erdman points to three separate periods in the history of the church to which the letter’s “clarion call to a new dependence upon justifying grace” applies:
  - the First Century itself (when the letter was written),
  - the time of the Christian Reformation (which, in Erdman’s words, “dispelled the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages,”), and
  - and most importantly, the “present day.”<sup>4</sup>
- Discuss why this letter, which lays out and defends the doctrine of justification by faith alone clearly and concisely, is a timeless and critically important message to the church of the “present day.” Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit for ideas about ways you can bring this good news to life for your neighbors and neighborhood and take steps to do so.
- Ask a friend or neighbor to join you at church on Sunday November 12 and to stay for lunch and a participatory workshop on Spiritual Practices for a Simpler Holiday Season. <https://fpchouston.org/event/spiritual-practices-for-a-simpler-holiday/> For more information, contact Sara Buskirk at [sbuskirk@fpchouston.org](mailto:sbuskirk@fpchouston.org).

## Reaching Beyond

- Apply this good news in your life by joining a Prayer Walk around Cullen Middle School on November 15 or by joining the monthly at noon Engaging the Muslim World Prayer Time on November 16. For more information about these events contact Madie Weir at [mweir@fpchouston.org](mailto:mweir@fpchouston.org).
- For other upcoming outreach opportunities to serve at FPC, go to <https://fpchouston.org/serve/ways-to-serve/upcoming-opportunities>.
- Choose your own way to put this Scripture into practice this week and be ready to share it with your small group next week.



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<sup>3</sup> Erdman, Charles R. The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians - An Exposition. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1930. P. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.