

# WCAC Youth Group

## Quiet Times

Sept 1 – Sept 14, 2008

### *A Journey through the book of Galatians*

*(Devotions from Ryan Shyu, Jon Mann and Ben Tzeng)*



## Day 8 – Monday Sept 1, 2008 - Faith or Observance of the Law

*Spend time reading and marking up Gal 3:1-14*

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. 8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

#### **Questions:**

Do you *believe* that you are clean by Jesus' blood, and his blood alone?

What does it mean that Abraham's *belief* was credited to him as righteousness?

What does it mean to *believe*?

#### **Things to reflect on:**

Paul says it is impossible to follow the law—and some of us may identify with this, because it is really hard to live the right way by our own effort. We need God to help us out and in that spirit—Maybe we need a new perspective on the application and living out of our faith. Instead of thinking of it as "applying the Word," per se, try thinking of it as having faith in God—because, as Paul tells us here, the *righteous* will live by *faith*.

Now, what does it mean to live by faith? Faith is certainly not restricted to knowing that God exists, etc.—if that were the case, Satan would have more 'faith' than us, because he knows all too well that God exists. No—faith is something which is not passive but active, not static but living and dynamic. Belief is certainly one element of it. But the essential, active part of faith is a conscious surrender to God, a decision to give our entire selves to him, a decision to trust God first with our salvation, and secondly with the transformation of our lives.

In other words, God's word is best applied through surrender. To live a holy life, we must choose to surrender our entire lives to God and to actively trust him—and surrender can't be done halfway—God doesn't want just one part of your life, he demands you trust him with the whole thing. But once we give ourselves to God and fall into his endless love, grace, and mercy, it's easy. The living starts with the relationship. As Jesus said:

*Are you...burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life...walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*  
—Matthew 11:28-30, The Message

## **Spend some time in prayer**

### **Day 9 – Tuesday Sept 2, 2008 - The Law and the Promise**

#### *Spend time reading and marking up Gal 3:15-25*

15Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. 17What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. 18For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. 19What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. 20A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

21Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. 23Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

#### **Questions:**

God gave humanity the law first, and then gave us Jesus only two thousand years ago. What does this tell us about the way he works—his timing and his methods, as well as his faithfulness to his promises?

Now that we have Jesus, what happens to the Law?

#### **Things to reflect on:**

We went from having a covenant of the law to now having a covenant of mercy and freedom through Jesus. Jesus has set us free from the law—"we are no longer under the supervision of the law". But what does this really mean? Jesus himself said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mathew 5:17).

The Law is split into cultural and moral laws; the cultural laws had circumstantial purposes and are no longer useful. This includes crazy laws about lint and things like that. However, as Jesus said, the moral law is still very much in force. The change, then, is not so much a matter of what defines holiness, for that is not what it means to be under the supervision of the law. What the "supervision of the law" means is that the law was the method of attaining holiness. Thanks to Jesus, though, we have had our sins obliterated by his cross. Under this new agreement, we are given mercy and grace. Now, these are of course free. But no one who has truly received the gifts of mercy and grace is exempt from the great debt of love that we now owe Christ. The derives from the idea that when you love someone, what makes you happy is what makes them happy. Our obedience to the law now flows from this thankfulness, as well as from the power of the Spirit. If you ask me, that's a lot better than "follow the rules or go to hell". Praise God, he is good.

## **Spend some time in prayer**

### **Day 10 - Wednesday Sept 3, 2008 - Sons of God**

#### *Spend time reading and marking up Gal 3:26-4:7*

26You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

1What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

#### **Questions:**

What does it mean to be a child of God (look through the passage again)?

Look in Verse 6, what does the Spirit of his Son do?

Look in Verse 7, why is this important?

#### **Things to reflect on:**

I remember being in Taiwan for missions and meeting many children there that were so precious and cute. There was one particular girl that had tons of energy and was extremely pretty. I later found out that she had been adopted by one of the pastors of the church. The family told me that her biological parents had put her up for adoption on the internet. That BROKE my heart. This young girl even remembered her parents not wanting her anymore because they were too busy. But when I talked to this girl, she told me that she had a new mommy and daddy. She was now their child and she was so happy. Do we understand what it means to be in the loving arms of God who is a father that will always love us and care for us? Do we understand what it means to have rights as a child of God? I hope that we would take some time and just be so broken before a God that loves us so much and how it touches our heart that we have a God that we can call "Abba, Father" – just like that young girl could call her new adopted father – "daddy".

## Spend some time in prayer

### Day 11 – Thursday Sept 4, 2008 - Paul's Concern for the Galatians

#### *Spend time reading and marking up Gal 4:8-20*

8Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

12I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. 13As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. 14Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. 18It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. 19My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

#### **Questions:**

What is the problem that Paul is addressing in v. 8-11?

How does Paul make his appeal to the Galatians in v. 12-20? Is it through logic? Reason? Emotion? Which of these do you think would have been most effective and why?

#### **Things to reflect on:**

Paul's concern in this passage is that the Galatian believers not fall back into the old habits that had enslaved them prior to coming to Christ, namely, going back to Judaism. In coming to know Christ, they'd been set free from those things. **What "weak and miserable principles" might we be turning back to that Christ has set us free from?** After telling the believers of the problem, Paul makes his plea to them. While he could have been logical or eloquent, Paul chose to use the emotion of the moment to get across to them his great concern for them. Paul was correcting the believers because he wanted all his churches to be perfect so his reputation as a pastor could be respected. His actions stemmed from a genuine love for his congregations. In the same way, when we see those around us that might be walking down the wrong path, we don't bring them back because we want our youth group to look perfect, but because of the genuine love that we have for each other.

Finally, Paul has one clear exhortation for us and for the Galatian believers. V. 12, "Become like me." Paul here wants us to follow his example. (Take a look at 1 Cor. 2:1-5, 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:2-10 for more on Paul's example) But why the emotional plea to turn from their old ways and follow Paul's example? V. 19, so that "Christ is formed in you." **That's our goal, to see Jesus formed in us.**

## Spend some time in prayer

### Day 12 – Friday Sept 5, 2008 - Hagar and Sarah

#### *Spend time reading and marking up Gal 4:21-31*

21Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

24These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

28Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

#### **Questions:**

What argument is Paul making here about why the believers shouldn't return to their old way of life in Judaism? For more on the story of Hagar **Read Genesis 16, 21:1-21**

Make two lists of the characteristics of the covenant found in Hagar and the covenant found in Sarah.

#### **Things to reflect on:**

Paul's final argument for why the believers should not turn back to Judaism is simple. If you want the old covenant, the covenant of slavery and of this temporary world, then you go back to Judaism and Hagar. The New Covenant, formed in Christ is represented in Sarah, and under it we are free! Which do you want? The old covenant or the new? One thing to note is that in V. 29, Paul addresses the issue of persecution. The persecutors are the children of the world persecuting the children of promise. The Jews in that day were persecuting those who had converted from Judaism to the new way of Christ, to get them to turn back. Paul is reminding them to stand firm in the face of persecution because the inheritance has no part with the children of the old covenant. In the same way, we've got to stand firm when the world is telling us to go back to our former way of life, or to try a way of life that is more appealing. That way has no share with the inheritance with being a child of God. We are no longer slaves to it, Christ has set us free through the cross.

#### **Spend some time in prayer**

**For Saturday and Sunday, we would like you to do something a little different. Please look below at each day.**

**Day 13 – Saturday Sept 6, 2008**

Spend some time finishing the days that you missed and also reviewing all the studies from this week. Look back to see if you were able to apply the things that God taught you in James.

**Day 14 – Sunday Sept 7, 2008**

Spend some time resting in the LORD. Find time to just rest and worship him in a way that allows you to grow in your love with Him. Be creative and think of ways that will allow you to be rejuvenated by His love through seeing Him through Scripture, Creation, or Fellowshiping with others. Make sure you spend some time journaling about what God taught you through Sunday worship and the ways you want to apply it during this week.

Spend some time finishing the days that you missed and also reviewing all the studies from this week. Look back to see if you were able to apply the things that God taught you in Galatians.

**Day 15 – Monday Sept 8, 2008 – Freedom in Christ**

*Spend time reading and marking up Gal 5:1-15*

1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

2Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

7You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? 8That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." 10I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. 11Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

13You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

**Questions:**

How would you classify Paul's tone of voice in his writing here?

Why do you think he was so passionate?

**Things to reflect on:**

If we could witness Paul speaking these words, I can only imagine him speaking from the top of his lungs and spit flying from his mouth as he seems so intense in this passage. Why so serious...??? Because this is a huge deal. Circumcision is the cutting off of extra skin on the male organ which symbolized that you were a member of God's chosen people (the Jews). What has happened is that Jews are telling new believers that they have to follow their traditions and laws to be "true" believers in God. Paul is saying they are missing the point. It has always been about faith expressing itself through love. Thus, Paul wants them to emasculate themselves (cut off their male organ completely)...OUCH! He is saying that just because you do an action that seems to follow a law or tradition, doesn't mean that you have a relationship with God. Today we don't have the same issue of circumcision. However, we do see people sharing that you just have to be a good person. Or you just have to go to church and read your Bible. Those things mean nothing unless you have a relationship with Christ. Those things are intended to help you grow in your relationship not to be the reason why you have a relationship.

**Spend some Time praying to see how this works out in your life**

## Day 16 – Tuesday Sept 9, 2008 – Life by the Spirit

*Spend time reading and marking up Gal 5:16-26*

16So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

19The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

### Questions:

What are some of the list of vices (sinful acts) that are present in your life?  
How have you seen the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?  
Why do you think Paul ends with verse 26?

### Things to reflect on:

This passage is so well known as many of us can even say all the fruit of the Spirit. However, we find more and more that even if we can list them out, how many of us really feel like the fruit of the Spirit are present in our lives. Can we share about ways that we have seen that work out in our walks? I remember helping out in a church in Hong Kong and many of the students were international students at Christian schools. They knew Scripture inside and out and could rattle off all the fruit of the Spirit when asked. But when I asked them, how were they able to see the ways you showed love to someone this week or self-control, not one of them was able to share. At the same time, this passage isn't just about the fruit of the Spirit, but it is also the conflict between a life with the Spirit and one living for sinful desires. We must be Christians that are desiring more of the Spirit that will keep us from things that are apart from God. If you are finding yourself struggling, it is time to stand firm and look to the Spirit to guide you to be filled with God rather than these sinful ways.

**Spend some time praying about what God wants you to do in next steps**

## Day 17 – Wednesday Sept 10, 2008 – Doing Good to All

*Spend time reading and marking up Gal 6:1-10*

1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5for each one should carry his own load.

6Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

7Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

### Questions:

As you circle themes and main ideas from this passage, what is the emphasis that Paul is sharing with the Galatians?

How is this passage connected with the passage from yesterday with the acts of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit?

### Things to reflect on:

The problem that occupies Paul's attention while addressing restoration is pride on the part of the restorer. Pride is wrong (v. 3), and each restorer should check himself or herself out (v. 4a) and not find personal status by comparison with others, especially with sinning brothers and sisters (v. 4b). In the final analysis, each person is responsible before God for what he or she has done (v. 5). So why is it so hard for us to steer away from the downfall of pride. We too often forget to take our eyes off ourselves and place them on Christ, who allows us to see with His eyes. Christ then fills our hearts with a love for others. We must find the ability for us to humble ourselves and know when we are being selfish. We also need to fight the natural tendency to be offended or turned off when a brother/sister brings to our attention some areas of sin in our lives. May we be challenged by God to be able to speak truth into each other's lives and also be humble enough to hear from others.

**Spend some time in prayer**

Day 18 – Thursday Sept 11, 2008 – **Not Circumcision but a New Creation**

*Spend time reading and marking up Gal 6:11-18*

11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

12 Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. 14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

17 Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

**Questions:**

What does Paul say that we should boast in?

What does Paul say really counts?

**Things to reflect on:**

I love Paul's attitude that shows that the only thing that matters in this world is Christ. It doesn't matter who you are Jew or Gentile (circumcision or uncircumcision). What matters is a relationship with Jesus who creates us into a new creation. I know that I spend time reflecting where would I be without Jesus. I know that my life will be drastically different if Christ had not taken hold of me and made me a new creation. I ask that you also reflect and what does Christ mean to you. Where would you be without Jesus?

**Spend some time in prayer**

Day 19 – Friday Sept 12, 2008 – **REFLECTION on GALATIANS**

**God's devastating acceptance and our unthinkable freedom**

*Read this verse a couple of times and really let it sink in:*

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”  
Galatians 5:1*

I hope you have enjoyed your journey through the book of Galatians. I know it has been an enriching experience for those that have been preparing these. God's devastating acceptance and love for us is so overwhelming. But instead of feeling this guilt that hinders us from getting closer and closer to God, we hopefully have found this unthinkable freedom in our lives.

This is an important place for us to begin this upcoming school year. We have to find freedom in Christ and not this feeling like we are going to be tied to a sinful life. God doesn't want us to live these lives that continue to remember our old life and our life of sin and continue to fall back into that living. God rather wants us to have a new life with Christ, transformed and desiring so much to be FREE!!!! Not the kind of free that we can do whatever we want, but a freedom from following after Christ. It seems we lose freedom if we live by God's rules and regulations. But once you have experienced a taste of God, you know that these rules and regulations are there not to bind us and keep us from “fun”, but they are given rather to protect us and guide us to true peace and joy in God. Also, hopefully as you have gone through the different passages from Galatians, you saw Paul's PASSION to make sure you knew the true way to God. That is through Jesus only. We don't act like a Christian, or follow all these rules so that God will love and accept us. It is God who loves us and has given us Jesus, so that we are able to be loved and accepted if we place our faith in Him. So the response of Jesus in our lives is this desire to follow and obey Christ.

So take some time to reflect on God's love for you. Do you have a passion like Paul does to make sure that people truly understand that you can't earn God's love, but you must accept God's love and see the ways it transforms you to live lives that are obedient and shine for God? How can you get there?

**For Saturday and Sunday, we would like you to do something a little different. Please look below at each day.**

**Day 20 – Saturday Sept 13, 2008**

Spend some time finishing the days that you missed and also reviewing all the studies from this week. Look back to see if you were able to apply the things that God taught you in James.

**Day 21 – Sunday Sept 14, 2008**

Spend some time resting in the LORD. Find time to just rest and worship him in a way that allows you to grow in your love with Him. Be creative and think of ways that will allow you to be rejuvenated by His love through seeing Him through Scripture, Creation, or Fellowship with others. Make sure you spend some time journaling about what God taught you through Sunday worship and the ways you want to apply it during this week.

Spend some time finishing the days that you missed and also reviewing all the studies from this week. Look back to see if you were able to apply the things that God taught you in Galatians.