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LifeChange
SERIES

A NavPress Bible study on the book of
GALATIANS

NAVPRESS 

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The Navigators is an international Christian organization. Jesus Christ gave His followers the Great Commission to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). The aim of The Navigators is to help fulfill that commission by multiplying laborers for Christ in every nation.

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SERIES EDITOR: KAREN LEE-THORP

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Objectives

Most guides in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies cover one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book;
2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides;
3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need, so that your only other reference is the Bible;
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole;
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take 60 to 90 minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

Optional Application. Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

For Thought and Discussion. Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give

obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

For Further Study. These include: a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the LIFECHANGE guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

Overview and Details

The study begins with an overview of the book of Galatians. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about*?—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author’s *aim* for the whole work? In lesson one you will lay the foundation for your study of Galatians by asking yourself, “Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?”

In lessons two through eleven you will analyze successive passages of Galatians in detail.

In lesson twelve you will review Galatians, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of it has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

Kinds of Questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth *affect* my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don’t let your study become an exercise of knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God’s Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray, “Lord, what do You want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember.

Study Aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 133. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

Scripture Versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. Other versions cited are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the Revised Standard Version Bible (RSV), The New Testament in Modern English (PH), and the King James Version (KJV).

Use any translation you like for study, preferably more than one. A paraphrase such as The Living Bible is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

Memorizing and Meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you, and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

For Group Study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen’s studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You

will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called "For the group." These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each "For the group" at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all of the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

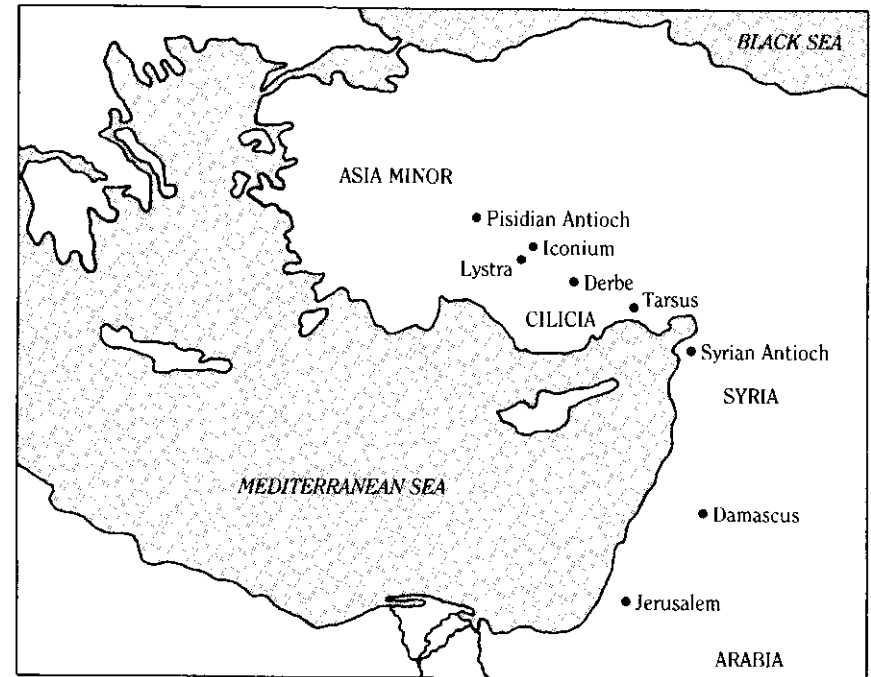
Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting. Rotating these tasks can help include people. Some groups have someone take notes on a large pad of paper or erasable marker board (preformed shower wallboard works well), so that everyone can see what has been recorded.

Pages 135-136 list some good sources of counsel for leading group studies. The *Small Group Letter*, published by NavPress, is unique, offering insights from experienced leaders every other month.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Paul and Galatia

Map of Paul's Missionary Journey



The early Church

Just before the risen Christ returned to Heaven, He instructed His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The early believers boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ as eternal Lord and Savior, the fulfillment of all God had promised for His chosen people Israel. Thousands in Jerusalem responded to their proclamation (Acts 2:41).

Major Events of Paul's Life and Ministry

	SUGGESTED DATES
Birth at Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39, 22:3)	?
Training in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3; see also 26:4-5)	?
Persecution of Early Church (Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2, 22:4-5, 26:9-11)	?
Conversion (Acts 9:3-19, 22:6-16, 26:12-18)	33 AD
Time in Arabia, Damascus (Acts 9:19-25, 2 Corinthians 11:31-33, Galatians 1:17)	33-35
Visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29, Galatians 1:18)	35
Return to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)	35
Teaching at Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:25-26)	45-47
Taking Famine Relief to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30, 12:25)	46
First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:26)	ca. 47-48
Ministry in Antioch (Acts 14:26-28, 15:35)	48-49
Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)	49
Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)	ca. 49-52
Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:17)	53-57
Arrest at Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-23:22)	57
Imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32)	57-59
Transfer to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:15)	59-60
House Arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16-31)	60-62
Release and Further Travels (?) (see Titus 1:5, 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:3, 3:14; 2 Timothy 4:13,20; perhaps Romans 15:24,28)	62-65?
Final Imprisonment and Death in Rome (2 Timothy 1:16-17; 4:6-8,16-18)	65?

When persecution by the Jewish authorities scattered them from Jerusalem, their “good news,” the gospel, scattered with them. Still, they only spoke to those who had already embraced the Jewish faith. Non-Jewish people—the Gentiles—were avoided as impure until God Himself showed that they too were now part of His chosen people (Acts 10:28,34-35; 11:19). Churches with Jews and Gentiles meeting together soon appeared throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Within forty years, Gentile urban centers had replaced Israel as the focal point of the Church.

The Apostle Paul

This rapid expansion and extreme diversity brought many moments of confusion and crisis to the early Church. God prepared and called a special man to help His Church cross the threshold with its faith and vigor intact.

Paul (then Saul) was born into a family with Roman citizenship and devout Jewish beliefs. His home was in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia and a city noted as a center of Greek learning. Paul was multi-lingual and exposed to Greek thought, but he was trained in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the most respected Jewish teacher of the day. Paul rose to prominence among the Pharisees as one wholly devoted to the detailed observance of God's Law.

Paul's zeal lead him to persecute the Church for its departure from Jewish traditions. His vision took him far beyond Jerusalem in that mission. One day as Paul traveled toward Damascus with murderous intents against the believers, the glorified Christ confronted him. “Last of all, as to one born abnormally late, He appeared even to me!” (1 Corinthians 15:8, PH). Shaken to the core, the persecutor became a suffering apostle of the truth he once hated.

God specifically called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Though his heart ached for his fellow Israelites (Romans 9:1-4, 10:1), his greatest fruit was among other peoples (Acts 9:15; 22:18,21). His first major period of ministry took place at Antioch in Syria under the discipling of Barnabas. Then God thrust the two men out on a missionary journey (see the map on page 9) that included the establishment of churches in the southern portion of the province of Galatia.

The Galatians

About 280 BC, a group of Celtic warrior tribes known as Galatians established themselves in north-central Asia Minor. They later became a kingdom subject to Rome. When their king died in 25 BC, a Roman province by their name was established. Since the Galatians had ruled over other groups, the Roman province of Galatia included areas south of the original territory.

Paul's first missionary journey (about 47 AD) took him into the southern portion of the Galatian province. Churches were established in Pisidian Antioch,² Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:3-14:23). Many commentators believe these churches were the recipients of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Others think that Paul also visited the original ethnic group in the north, and that these were the people he addressed as Galatians. While nothing in Scripture rules out a visit to northern Galatia, there is no certain record of it. On the other hand, the New Testament is clear regarding Paul's close ties with the southern part of the province (Acts 16:1-5, 20:4).³

The Judaizers

There were many who wanted to twist the early advances of the gospel to their own ends. They would follow Paul and other missionaries, attempting to “straighten out” the new converts to their own crooked ways of thinking (Galatians 5:7). We call one such group “the Judaizers” because they wanted to Judaize the believers—to make them Jews as well as Gentiles. They taught Gentile converts that “Unless you are circumcised according to the Law of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1; compare Galatians 6:12). They apparently claimed to represent the church leadership in Jerusalem (Acts 15:24), so some Gentiles obediently began trying to follow the Law (Galatians 3:2-3, 4:10).

The Law and many traditions were not evil in themselves. Circumcision, dietary restrictions, and special days were within the Christian's liberty to observe (Acts 16:3, Romans 14:5). Jesus Christ had lived perfectly in the will of the Father as a Jew. Paul himself was a Jew, and Christianity did not require him to abandon his Jewishness in areas unopposed to the truth of the gospel (Acts 21:20-25, 1 Corinthians 9:20).

But if even Jews looked to the Law as a means to secure God's favor, then their faith was not in Christ and His completed work on the Cross. If the Gentiles were required to practice the Law—an impossible task—then suddenly the means of both salvation and living the Christian life became human effort, rather than faith in God.

Paul's letters

Paul was certainly at the forefront of the expansion in the early Church. Yet many whom the Holy Spirit gifted were boldly spreading the gospel throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. What set Paul apart as a proclaimer and defender of the truth were his letters to the infant churches. They were soon recognized by the Church as Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 3:15-16). Over the centuries, these thirteen⁴ letters of the New Testament have repeatedly restored the Church to life and teaching in accord with God's truth.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is probably his sternest defense against false teaching. He normally begins each letter with some expression of praise and thankfulness for the faith of his readers. To the Galatians he gives not one word of commendation before he plunges into his counterattack against the inroads of the Judaizers. Like a parent for his children, he bares his heart in an effort to steer his converts in the truth (Galatians 4:19).

It is possible that Galatians is Paul's earliest epistle.⁵ Those who see it as addressed to southern Galatia usually date it in the vicinity of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 (about 48 AD). This meeting of church leaders dealt with the same issues the Galatians faced and involved the same people, if not the same events, that the letter refers to.

The outcome

What resulted from Paul's appeal to the Galatians? Paul was confident that the Galatians would respond to his admonitions (Galatians 5:10), and we have no indication that it happened otherwise. Paul continued to teach those churches (Acts 16:1-6, 18:23). They shared in his collection for the poor believers in Judea (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) and provided two of his faithful coworkers (Acts 16:1, 20:4).

The Judaizers did not fare as well. The Jerusalem council removed from them any pretense of apostolic authority (Acts 15:1-29). It recognized Gentile believers as having full rights in the Body of Christ without submitting to Jewish requirements. Judaizing efforts weakened, and with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Church's center shifted to Antioch in Syria. The danger of a Church bound to Jewish legalism was past.

1. F.F. Bruce, *The Letters of Paul: An Expanded Paraphrase* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), page 8.
2. Pisidian Antioch should not be confused with Syrian Antioch, Paul's sending church. Seleucus Nicator, the general who took over a large section of Alexander the Great's empire after Alexander's death, had a father named Antiochus. Seleucus named sixteen cities after his father.
3. For a complete discussion of the north Galatian and south Galatian views, see Donald Guthrie, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), pages 15-27. Many other commentaries also address this issue in detail.
4. A few commentators attribute the anonymous book of Hebrews to Paul, which would make the total fourteen.
5. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), page 55.

LESSON ONE

OVERVIEW AND GALATIANS 1:1-9

The True Gospel

Background

If you have not done so already, read the historical background on pages 9-13. Then read through the whole book of Galatians. It is a fairly short letter, and you are just reading for an overall view. If you've read it before, try to get a fresh perspective. As you read, or afterward, jot notes to question 1.

1. Repetition is a clue to the ideas an author wants to emphasize. What key words and phrases occur repeatedly in this letter?

2. According to Galatians 1:7-8, how would you explain the circumstances that led Paul to write this letter?

For Thought and Discussion: Rebuke as strong as Paul gives in this letter is hard to take. What do you think should have made the Galatians want to accept what Paul had to say?

For Thought and Discussion: Why do you think Paul reacted so strongly to the Judaizers?

3. Describe Paul's relationship with and feelings for the Galatian believers in the following verses:

4:11 _____

4:13-15 _____

4:19-20 _____

4. How does he portray the Galatians in the following verses?

1:7 _____

3:1 _____

4:15-16 _____

5:7 _____

5:15 _____

5. What seems to be Paul's mood or tone in this letter?

6. What would you say is the basic purpose of this letter?

7. An outline can help you see how the parts of a book relate to each other. In an overview, it's helpful just to give titles to the main sections of the book. Skim back through Galatians, and make up a title for each section listed below. Use a short phrase or sentence that summarizes the section and distinguishes it from other sections. Key words from the section are often good in titles.

1:1-9 _____

1:10-2:21 _____

3:1-4:31 _____

5:1-6:10 _____

8. Write down any questions that your first reading of Galatians has raised. They can serve as some personal objectives for further study.

For Thought and Discussion: a. Note by whom and for whom the letter was written (1:1-2). How did Paul view himself?

b. Why do you think Paul introduced himself the way he did in this letter? Consider the situation he was facing.

For Thought and Discussion: List as many features of the gospel message as you can find in 1:1-5. Why do you think Paul incorporated this into his greeting? What lessons can you draw for your own conversation and correspondence?

Greetings (1:1-5)

Apostle (1:1). Literally, a “sent one,” one who is appointed and empowered for a specific mission. The term was used of many in the early Church designated to spread the gospel (Acts 14:14, Romans 16:7). In a strict sense it referred to the Twelve, whom Christ Himself chose to bear witness to His teaching and resurrection (Mark 3:13-15).

Ancient letters normally begin by identifying the sender and recipient. Paul varied his identifications to suit the situation of the particular letter.

Grace and peace (1:3). A Greek letter normally followed the identifications with a greeting. Paul devised a greeting that invited God’s favor and blessing in the broadest terms. “They summarize Paul’s gospel of salvation. The nature of salvation is peace, or reconciliation—peace with God, peace with men, peace within. The source of salvation is grace, God’s free favour, irrespective of any human merit or works, His loving-kindness to the undeserving.”¹

9. What do you think God’s purposes are in rescuing us from “the present evil age” (1:4)?
(*Optional:* See Ephesians 1:6,10; 2:4; 3:10-11.)

A different gospel (1:6-9)

Gospel (1:6). Literally, “good news,” the message God entrusted to Paul to preach and defend (1:12; 2:5,7). “The gospel is the joyous procla-

mation of God’s redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of men enslaved by sin.”²

10. From 1:6-9, how do you think Paul would respond to the idea that there are many roads leading to Heaven?

Study Skill—Application

James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” In other words, application is an essential part of Bible study. Every lesson of this study contains both “Optional Applications” in the margins and at least one open-ended application question after the interpretation questions. Application will often require some time for thought, prayer, planning, and action. You may want to discuss the passage with someone else to help you decide how to apply it. You’ll be looking for specific ways to do what God’s Word says.

Some questions to ask yourself are, “What difference should this passage make to my life? How should it make me want to think or act?” At times, you may find it most productive to concentrate on one application, giving it careful thought, prayer, and effort during the week. At other times, you may want to list many implications a passage has for your life, plan to memorize and meditate on the passage during the week, and look for ways to apply it. Choose whatever strategy is most fruitful.

Don’t neglect prayer. As John 15:1-5 points out, you can’t do what the Word says unless you are living intimately with Christ

(continued on page 20)

For Thought and Discussion: Can you think of some modern perversions of the gospel? How can one discern what is really true and avoid being led astray?

(continued from page 19)
 and drawing on His power. Go to God for guidance about what to apply and how, for strength to do what He says, for forgiveness when you fail, and for thanksgiving when you succeed.

11. What are some things you would like to see happen in your life during your study of Galatians? Write them down, then ask God to accomplish them.

For the group

This “For the group” section and the ones in later lessons are intended to suggest ways of structuring your discussions. Feel free to select what suits your group and ignore the rest. The main goals of this lesson are to get to know Galatians as a whole and the people with whom you are going to study it.

Worship. Some groups like to begin with prayer and/or singing. Some share requests for prayer at the beginning, but leave the actual prayer until after the study. Others prefer just to chat and have refreshments for a while and then move to the study, leaving worship until the end. It is a good idea to start with at least a brief prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and some silence to help everyone

Chart of Galatians

Theme: The Gospel of Freedom in Christ

TRUTH	Chapters 1-2	Paul defends his gospel message against perversions that followed.	1:1-9 The Gospel Must Be Kept Pure
			1:10-24 Paul’s Gospel Came from God, Not Man
			2:1-10 The Apostles Recognized Paul’s Ministry
			2:11-21 Even Peter Needed Paul’s Correction
FAITH	Chapters 3-4	Relationship with God is based on faith, not on following the law.	3:1-14 Faith Has Always Done What the Law Could Not
			3:15-25 Law Never Replaced God’s Promises
			3:26-4:11 In Christ We Are Sons and Heirs, Not Slaves
			4:12-31 Like Isaac, We Are Born for Freedom
SPIRIT	Chapters 5-6	Christian living is to be directed by the Spirit, not by the flesh.	5:1-15 God Wants Us Free to Live by Love
			5:16-26 Only the Spirit Can Help Us Overcome the Sinful Nature
			6:1-10 Spiritual Living Is an Ongoing, Group Pursuit
			6:11-18 Internal Change Is Important, Not External Rituals

change focus from the day's busyness to the Scripture.

Warm-up. The beginning of a new study is a good time to lay a foundation for honest sharing of ideas, to get comfortable with each other, and to encourage a sense of common purpose. Group discussion can be either stimulating or intimidating, depending on how safe people feel. Especially when you are studying a book full of truth-versus-error issues, you need to cultivate respect and acceptance so that people will be open to facing wrong thoughts and behavior. Establish the ground rules that the standard of right or wrong will be the Bible, and that no person will be rejected or carelessly hurt even when someone disagrees with someone else's views.

One way to foster common ground is to talk about what each group member hopes to get out of your group—out of your study of Galatians, and out of any prayer, singing, sharing, outreach, or anything else you might do together. Why do you want to study the Bible, and Galatians in particular? If you have someone write down each member's hopes and expectations, then you can look back at these goals later to see if they are being met. Allow about fifteen minutes for this discussion so that it does not degenerate into vague chatting.

How to use this study. If the group has never used a LIFECHANGE study guide before, you might take a whole meeting to get acquainted, discuss your goals, and go over the "How to Use This Study" section on pages 5-8. Then you can take a second meeting to discuss the overview. This will assure that everyone understands the study and will give you more time to read all of Galatians and answer the overview questions.

Go over the parts of the "How to Use This Study" section that you think the group should especially notice. For example, point out the optional questions in the margins. These are available as group discussion questions, ideas for application, and suggestions for further study. It is unlikely that anyone will have time or desire to answer all the optional questions. A person might do one "Optional Application" for any given lesson. You might choose one or two "For Thought and Discussion" questions for your group discussion, or you

might spend all your time on the numbered questions. If someone wants to write answers to the optional questions, suggest that he use a separate notebook. It will also be helpful for discussion notes, prayer requests, answers to prayers, application plans, and so on.

Invite everyone to ask questions about how to use the study guide and how your discussions will go.

Reading. It is often helpful to refresh everyone's memory by reading the passage aloud before discussing the questions. Reading all of Galatians is probably unreasonable, so just read 1:1-9. Try to make the letter sound like a living person talking.

First impressions. Try to get through questions 1-5 fairly quickly. They are background to the meat of question 6. The better your statement of the overall purpose of Galatians is, the better is your foundation for studying the details. However, don't belabor this point; you'll come back to it in the review.

You might want to compare your broad outlines of Galatians to some in Bible handbooks or study Bibles. There is also a chart of Galatians on page 21.

Questions. Give everyone a chance to share questions about the historical background and the letter. It is good to clear up any confusion as early as possible. However, don't answer any questions that deal with specific passages. Write those down and let the group answer them when you get to the passages.

Greetings and A different gospel. Questions 9 and 10 are some interpretation questions based on 1:1-9. Encourage several group members to offer answers.

Application. Invite everyone to share answers to question 11. If application is new to some group members, you might make up some sample applications together. Choose a paragraph or verse from 1:1-9 and think of how it is relevant to you and some specific things you could each do about it.

One application that is immediately relevant is handling the conflict that inevitably arises when people seek truth. What kinds of conflict do you observe in 1:7, 2:12, and 5:17? You'll be studying these passages in more detail later, but what principles for handling this kind of conflict (in your

group, for instance) can you see? Take a look at 2:9,11; 5:15,26; 6:1-5.

Wrap-up. The group leader should have read lesson two and its “For the group” section. At this point, he or she might give a short summary of what members can expect in that lesson and the coming meeting. This is a chance to whet everyone’s appetite, assign any optional questions, omit any numbered questions, or forewarn members of possible difficulties.

Encourage any members who found the overview especially difficult. Some people are better at seeing the big picture than others. Some are best at analyzing a particular verse or paragraph, while others are strongest at seeing how a passage applies to their lives. Urge members to give thanks for their own and others’ strengths, and to give and request help when needed. The group is a place to learn from each other. Later lessons will draw on the gifts of close analyzers as well as overviews and applicers, practical as well as theoretical thinkers.

Prayer. Many groups like to end with singing and/or prayer. This can include songs and prayers that respond to what you’ve learned in Galatians or prayers for specific needs of group members. Even if your focus is on Bible study, an atmosphere of caring and praying for each other is essential to openness. Encourage members to become friends, not just fellow students.

Some people are shy about sharing personal needs or praying aloud in groups, especially before they know the other people well. If this is true of your group, then a song and/or some silent prayer, and a short closing prayer spoken by the leader, might be an appropriate end. You could also share requests and pray in pairs.

1. John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1968), page 16.
2. Walter A. Elwell, editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), page 472.