



Pray Together

Use the first few minutes of your time together to lead your group in a focused prayer time.

- **Praise:** Spend time praising God for who He is.
- **Repent:** Take a few moments to silently confess any sin that is lingering in your heart.
- **Ask:** Verbalize your needs and the needs of others to God.
- **Yield:** Surrender your will to God.

Read Together

In the context of Christianity, legalism is defined as strict adherence to moral law rather than personal faith. Prior to the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Jewish people were given laws, rituals, and a sacrificial system to follow so that they could remain in right standing with God. These moral codes were given to Moses by God and put in place as a means of reconciling sinful man with a holy and righteous Creator. The Law, along with every sacrifice, pointed to Jesus—the perfect sacrifice. At the cross, grace overwhelmed the law. It was a stark contrast to the Mosaic system and practice. Ritual was replaced by relationship and law with liberty. The Gospel dispelled legalism, giving those who would believe—whether Jew or Gentile—eternal life through Jesus Christ.

The cost for this freedom was great—Jesus' life. This is why maintaining integrity, not hypocrisy with regard to the Gospel, was imperative. Paul was adamant in his defense of the Gospel of grace through faith and not works of any kind. This week we will eavesdrop on the conversations of several Jewish leaders who were pillars of the Church, along with a meeting with Paul and the Jewish Council. We will hear their defense of the Gospel of Grace, and the leaders' acceptance and affirmation of his defense. We will even see Paul correcting a fellow pillar of the Church, steering him away from hypocrisy and legalistic requirements and toward license, liberty, and freedom.

Discuss Together

Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion.

- Read Galatians 2:1-16 along with Acts 15. Paul was summoned to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish Council. Describe the background and role of each of these key players in the meeting. Note which men were Jews and which were Gentiles. Who was circumcised and who was not.
 - Paul
 - Barnabas
 - Titus
 - Peter (Cephas)
 - James (Jesus' brother) and John
 - "False brethren"
- What was the reason for the meeting?
- Discuss the practice of circumcision in the Old Testament. How is the New Testament believer circumcised?
 - Genesis 17:10-14
 - Leviticus 12:3
 - Deuteronomy 10:16



- Jeremiah 4:1-4
 - Romans 2:25-29
 - Colossians 2:8-15
 - Philippians 3:1-3
- Why was it imperative that Titus not be circumcised? (See Galatians 2:5)
 - Legalism in Christianity can be lethal. It is a deadly disease that destroys the freedom we have in Christ. What does legalism do to the Gospel? Why is it lethal to the believer? Discuss ways legalism destroys freedom.
 - Read Luke 12:37-44. What did Jesus say about the Pharisees and their legalism? How does Luke 10:25-37 prove that the heart of the Gospel is love and grace, not a list of rules to follow?
 - If Christianity is all about grace and not about fulfilling the law, how does the believer balance grace and obedience? (See Luke 10:27 & John 14:8)
 - Rituals and man-made laws can tamper with the Gospel of Grace in our day. In what areas of your life could legalism take you captive and destroy your freedom? How have you seen legalism cause disunity within the church? How can legalism cause unbelievers to turn away from the Gospel?
 - In Galatians 2:11-16, Paul and Peter have a disagreement. What was the cause of this argument and what did Paul do? Discuss a time when you had to confront another believer about a faith issue. How did you handle the situation?

How I must obey Christ...

- Examine yourself. As a result of this study, identify a specific area in which you need to obey Christ this week.
- How do you specifically need to obey Christ in this area this week?
- How can Jesus redeem this area? How has He proven that in Scripture?
- Who will keep you accountable to this commitment this week?

Pray Together

Pray Galatians 5:1-6 with your group. Ask God to sever any ties you have with legalism and help you cling to the grace and love you have in Christ.

