



Week 8: Galatians 4:1-11

GOSPEL IDENTITY

As Paul calls the Galatians back to the true gospel, he reminds them that it's through this gospel alone that they have received sonship in Christ. If they were truly sons, they were free. So why return to the bondage of the Law? These flimsy, external rules only serve to enslave them and threaten to dismantle the very freedom they found in Christ.

THE SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:1-11

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

^o **elementary principles** - refers to the basic religious practices the Galatians previously followed. For Jewish Christians, this meant the Mosaic Law, while Gentile Christians likely followed basic pagan beliefs. Importantly, these principles were not merely religious; they also represented a mindset and lifestyle of bondage under a legalistic system.¹ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 8

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt like you were "too young" for something? Maybe it was a movie, a concert, or even a responsibility. Share a time when you felt this way.
2. Aside from giving your life to Christ, can you think of a time in your life when your identity changed radically? What was it that produced this change?

DIVING DEEPER

3. In this section of his letter, Paul describes being a follower of Jesus using family terms like, "son," "heir," and for contrast, "slave." Make note of each word and its forms in the text to help you follow his flow of thinking.
4. Define the word, "heir." If possible, try to include the word, "promise" in your definition.
5. According to verses 1 and 2, how can an heir be like a slave?
6. What were the "elementary principles" that the Galatians followed? How did these principles affect them? Did you experience something similar in your life before becoming a Christian?
7. According to Paul, what made it possible for us to join the family of God? In what manner were we brought in?
8. What does it mean for you personally to be an adopted child of God? How does understanding your identity as an adopted child impact your relationship with God, others, and yourself? Consider the implications of being chosen, loved unconditionally, and given an inheritance. How does this understanding change the way you view challenges, blessings, and even your purpose in life?

9. The term, Abba in verse 6, is the term Jesus himself used to address God as "Father" when he prayed in Gethsemane (see Mark 14:36). How should this influence the way we pray to God?

10. Verse 9 says we know God but also that God knows us. How does this make you feel?

11. What area of your life right now do you see the need to stand up and live like a child of God?

12. In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to remember that your true identity is found in Christ? How might consistently focusing on Christ's presence make a difference in those areas?