



2026 READING PLAN

Galatians Week 1

Welcome to Galatians!

We are starting a new book!! We will be journeying through Galatians for the next four weeks. We will be sticking with the same format as we did with Luke. We are reading 10-15 verses a day, we will offer some context and thoughts, and we will end with practice and questions.

If you will recall, our big lofty dream for the Spring was to have Canterbury journey through the Bible together. We want to be people who ENCOUNTER God daily, and learn how to love our neighbors just as Jesus and the early church did. Our hope is that through our reading, practice, and discussion, that we as a Church, learn to ENCOUNTER God in our every day life and interactions. It is not a small dream, but it is one that can transform our lives and the lives of our community!

To further that dream, Natalie and I chose Galatians for several reasons:

- 1st – After spending time studying how to be like Jesus with Luke, we now wanted to study what it means to be the Church!
- 2nd – It is one of Paul's earliest letters of instruction for how to live as the Church.
- 3rd – Natalie loves the fruits of the spirit, and she even says it is her favorite verse!

Before we get into the devotionals, here is a little context:

Who:

Paul was formerly Saul. He spent time hunting down early Christians, but Jesus had other plans for him. Jesus came to him, gave him a new mission, and changed his name to Paul.

What:

Paul wrote this letter of instruction to the people of Galatia. Paul likely visited them on his first missionary journey, and maybe even started these churches. He is disappointed with them for not being more inclusive to new converts.

When:

No one is quite sure about the specific date, but we do know it was one of Paul's earliest letters potentially being the very first one.

Where:

Galatia is in modern day Turkey. In New Testament language, this is Asia Minor.

Why:

Paul wrote this letter to confront an early church problem. Jewish converts to Christianity were putting lots of restrictions on Gentile converts. The Jewish converts wanted the Gentile converts to go through processes such as circumcision. Paul, is frustrated about these restrictions, and starts his letter quite angrily. After he addresses these issues, Paul then talks about how the Church should function.

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

Monday, April 13: Galatians 1: 1-10

Tuesday, April 14: Galatians 1: 11-17

Wednesday, April 15: Galatians 1: 18-24

Thursday, April 16: Galatians 2: 1-10

Friday, April 17: Galatians 2: 11-21



WEEK 1 | MONDAY

Galatians 1: 1-10

Weekly Word: Preach

What a start to a letter! Paul comes in hot! Welcome to Galatians ha!

If you compare Paul's intro in this letter to other letters such as 1 Corinthians or Ephesians, Paul starts much more harsh. In most of Paul's letters to the early church, he keeps a similar pattern. He identifies himself, he talks about the good news, and he usually thanks them for their good work. He leaves that last part out in Galatians... he isn't thanking anyone here.

In other letters, Paul spends time correcting moral behavior. In Galatians, it seems Paul is attacking something much worse, exclusion. He went into full details until chapter 2, but he is angry with the people in Galatians for making new converts in the faith jumping through hoops.

Paul makes it his mission to preach a gospel of inclusion. He goes so far to say, that if anyone preaches anything other than inclusion, "they should be cursed." For Paul, anything that isn't inclusive is not the gospel at all.

It may not be an uplifting intro to a new book... but it is so important to remember all are welcomed into the Church no matter what. Paul draws no lines. Paul gives no prerequisites. All are invited by Jesus into the church. That is the message he will preach throughout this letter.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Have you ever visited a place where you didn't feel included or felt like an outsider? How terrible is that feeling? Try to preach a message of inclusion this week with how you welcome people in. Invite someone to lunch, invite someone to church, or to anything. Let inclusion be our message!

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who has included you in the past, and how did it feel?
2. What message of inclusion have you preached?



WEEK 1 | TUESDAY

Galatians 1: 11-17

Reflection:

We continue our study of this letter to the Galatians today with Paul giving the churches in Galatia his resume. I want to invite you to go back to Acts as a refresher, Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9. We hear directly from Paul what his history and experience has been, so we know that he is going to use the first person point of view to tell the Galatians something later on in this letter. By his own definition, Paul is an intense guy, so it feels significant to me when he mentions grace.

Maybe you have experienced grace like this in your life. Grace, specifically prevenient grace, is a foundational concept in our United Methodist theology, rooted in the teachings founder John Wesley. It refers to “grace before we knew we needed it”, God’s active, initiating love that works in a person’s life before they are aware of it, enabling them to respond to God’s offer of salvation.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to a favorite song of mine, Back To You by Mosaic MSC. While we probably haven’t had an experience with it as dramatic as Paul, grace is a part of all of our faith journeys. Take a moment to maybe journal and consider the times you have felt God’s grace.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What has your experience with grace been?



WEEK 1 | WEDNESDAY

Galatians 1: 18-24

Reflection:

Paul's story is fascinating. Paul is retelling the story of how Jesus came into his life and changed everything. He is telling the people of Galatians of how he used to be the horrible Saul, and now he is Paul the builder of churches. This is the story that takes place in Acts 9. Truly one of the most powerful stories in all of scripture, but did anyone notice verse 18? After his interaction with Jesus and after his conversion, it says he went away, "three years."

In my entire life, I always assumed Paul was immediately and completely changed after he encountered Jesus in Acts 9. Until this week, I have never heard of Paul disappearing for three years. I found this to be extremely comforting. It took Paul three full years to make sense of his interaction with Jesus. It took Paul three full years to reconcile his former life of violence with his new life of building the church. It took Paul three full years to live into who Jesus was calling him to be.

Often times in the Bible, I read about these heroes of the faith and I marvel at their blind obedience. However, there is a human truth I often overlook, and that is the long journey of slow change. I wonder how many times over those three years Paul doubted what he heard from Jesus. I wonder how many times Paul must've said "Jesus can't mean me. Surely someone else is better for this job." Sometimes our yes to Jesus is instantaneous, but sometimes it takes time. It gives me great comfort that Paul, who was the most voracious of anyone in the New Testament, took a lot of time to prepare and ready himself for this great work.

Wesley Wednesday:

We as the UMC believe grace presents itself in three main forms. The third form is called sanctifying grace. It is the grace of transformation. It is the belief that the Holy Spirit will continually work on us over the course of our lives. It is the belief that we are never left in the same state, but that we are slowly gradually becoming more like Jesus.

If you feel as if you haven't grown in your faith, maybe this passage can serve to comfort you. May we all trust in the work of the Holy Spirit to gradually change us. It took Paul three years to change and accept his new way of life. I wonder how we have all changed in three years or more?

-- Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Take some time to reflect. Where were you in your spiritual walk this time three years ago? How has the Holy Spirit been working? Where has God been present in that time? How have you been changed?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What do you think about Paul taking three years after he saw Jesus?
2. How has sanctifying grace been present in your life?



WEEK 1 | THURSDAY

Galatians 2: 1-10

Reflection:

Today we see Paul start to reveal one of the purposes of his letter to the Galatians. What are the rules of our faith? What defines us as a follower of Christ? Paul emphasizes freedom in Christ Jesus. He also argues against elevating particular people, those who seem to be important. God does not judge by external appearance.

Today's passage moves me. These are things we continue to deal with today, don't you think? We are constantly sifting through the humanity of ourselves and others to find the truth of the gospel for our own lives. As someone who is a "rule-follower", I like clear instructions. I don't like being wrong or doing something wrong. So it makes sense to me that the people of Paul's day were also trying to define what makes you a part of The Way.

If you are following this devotional series with us, I am going to make the assumption that you have been on this faith journey for a while. You may have gone through seasons of your life when you felt very strict about your faith practices. I know I certainly have. But maybe God surprised you in the middle of all of it to show you what freedom in Christ truly is.

There is a song that I love by Benjamin William Hastings called I Still See You In It. In the song he talks about how God uses us despite ALL of our humanness and how if you look closely you can see God working in all of us.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to this song and think about where you see God working in your life.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What people exemplify God's grace and freedom to you?
2. Where is God calling you to display this in your own life?



WEEK 1 | FRIDAY

Galatians 2: 11-21

Reflection:

I have been reading a book called “A Quid Without Any Quo.” It is a book study on Galatians. The book argues that the whole premise of Galatians is simple, we do not have to do anything to be loved and accepted by Jesus. We are loved and accepted because that is who God is. No matter what we do, we cannot earn God’s love. God’s love is a free gift. No quid will earn us any quo and vice versa.

The Jewish converts in Galatians are imposing a lot of rules on the new Gentile converts. They want new converts to follow Jewish food laws, strict Old Testament living, and they also want the men to be circumcised. The message they are preaching is one of rule keeping. They are telling this newly formed Church that their acceptance by God depends on how they act. Thanks be to God that is never the case. God’s love is never earned. Verse 21 says, “if we become righteous through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

Here is how “A Quid Without Any Quo” describes it, “the gospel does not declare that God is like an Almighty Mother-in-law who gifts you a priceless crystal vase, but then every time she visits you she inspects it for nicks and scratches.” God’s love is not dependent on anything. We can mess up and God’s love will never falter. God’s love may compel us to live differently, but God’s love never depends on our actions. We are loved and accepted no matter what. May that be the good news we cling to today.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Who in your life do you love unconditionally? Who in your life will your love never fade? Know that is how God loves us.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How can we show some of God’s acceptance to people in our lives?



2026 READING PLAN

Galatians Week 2

Galatians Week 2!

I hope you enjoyed our first week with our new book! As I'm sure you're aware, Paul can be a bit wordy... but in the midst of his writings (rants?) come some of the most beautiful words about Jesus and Jesus' love for us all.

Some of the biggest questions Galatians asks is: what must we, as the church, do to be faithful Christians? Do we need to follow the laws? Do we need to adopt Old Testament living? Do we need to be inclusive or exclusive with who is let into the church?

Paul starts to answers those questions this week. These may sound like early church problems, but they are incredibly relatable even now. If you have ever felt excluded by the church or felt like you had to act a certain way to fit in, then you may find that this letter is addressing those issues.

This week's readings will feature thoughts from Gann Waters-Wright and Rick Owen! They are both incredibly profound, and I hope you enjoy hearing from them. Thanks for reading!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

Monday, April 20: Galatians 3: 1-9

Tuesday, April 21: Galatians 3: 10-18

Wednesday, April 22: Galatians 3: 19-29

Thursday, April 23: Galatians 4: 1-11

Friday, April 24: Galatians 4: 12-20



WEEK 2 | MONDAY

Galatians 3: 1-9

Weekly Word: Spirit (pneuma)

The Greek word for “Spirit” in Galatians 3:2 is (pneuma), which is used to refer to the Holy Spirit. The word literally means wind, breath, or spirit, indicating the divine influence, presence, or power.

Devotional: In today’s passage, we find Paul making a case for how we receive the Holy Spirit in our lives. We cannot do anything to make us worthy, simply believe. He does not hold back when he calls the Galatians foolish MULTIPLE times in the passage. The law cannot save us or make us worthy or filled with the Holy Spirit. In Paul’s argument, belief accomplishes ALL of this.

I love the meaning of the Greek word because it means both Spirit and breath. Breathing is something we just do, right? It’s not something that we have learn a lot about to accomplish or something to struggle with (unless we have some sort of health issue). It’s not something that we have to make overly complicated. Maybe the Spirit in our lives is like this too. Something we invite in and don’t have to earn.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

There is a song that I love called All Who Would Believe by Tenielle Neda and Eliza King. I want to invite you to listen to this song and just BREATHE. Breathe in, asking the Holy Spirit to make a home in your heart. Breathe out, the pressure to be perfect, knowing that holiness and humility go hand in hand.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

How can every breath we take remind us of God?



WEEK 2 | TUESDAY

Galatians 3: 10-18

Reflection:

I tend to be a rule follower—especially when it comes to social rules and norms. I like knowing what's expected and trying to stay within those boundaries. My friends in high school, college, and even now have always known this about me, and they've used it to their advantage. They love putting me in socially awkward situations. In their defense, it's usually pretty funny. They'll talk way too loudly in a quiet setting or say something completely off-the-wall just to get the attention of strangers... all to watch me squirm. And honestly, it works every time.

I'll come back to that in a minute.

This passage isn't really about social norms, but it is about rules. The church Paul is writing to had a lot of questions about the Law—what to follow, what to let go of, and how to live together as a community made up of both Jewish and non-Jewish people. That's not a small issue. The Law had been central to Jewish identity for generations, so naturally there was tension. What rules still matter? Which ones don't? And how do you build a unified community when people come from such different backgrounds?

But instead of giving them a clear checklist, Paul does something different. He shifts the focus. He suggests that maybe the real issue isn't just which rules to follow, but how they understand the Law itself.

Paul points to a deeper truth: faith and the Law are not always the same thing. We are called to live by faith—specifically, the kind of faith that Jesus demonstrated. A faith marked by trust, obedience, humility, and love. After all, we are followers of Jesus, not just followers of rules.

Rules can be good. They can provide structure, clarity, and even safety. But they can also become a source of comfort—and if we're honest, we really like comfort. The problem is that Jesus rarely calls people into comfort. Over and over again, He calls people into the uncomfortable—into places that require risk, trust, and a willingness to let go of control.

That's where I think back to my friends. As juvenile as it may sound, I'm actually grateful for the times they pushed me into awkward, rule-breaking moments. Those experiences reminded me that life isn't meant to be lived entirely inside safe, predictable boundaries. Sometimes the most meaningful moments happen when you step outside of them.

And in a much deeper way, following Jesus often looks like that. It means being willing to step beyond what feels safe or familiar. It means letting go of the need to have everything neatly defined and controlled. It means trusting that faith will lead you where rules cannot.

– Gann Waters-Wright

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

What's a rule you're holding onto that might actually be keeping you from following Jesus more fully?



WEEK 2 | WEDNESDAY

Galatians 3: 19-29

Reflection:

Maybe you've noticed... but Paul can be way too wordy... Verses 19-24 are rather confusing BUT these verses are the ultimate good news. Gann helped us define the rules and law yesterday, but we have more of that language today. So first, let's talk about some buzz words:

The Law = the Law of Moses which is both the 10 commandments PLUS the 613 Old Testament rules of living

Justified = forgiven/restoration

Righteousness = living a life of faith

Paul wants to make it clear that the Law is not a bad thing. For hundreds of years, the Law served as guideposts for living as the people of God. The Law is useful, it is good, and it can be helpful. However, the Law will never offer justification. The Law cannot offer any judgment on how good or bad a person is. Whether a person keeps all 613 laws perfectly or whether all 613 laws are completely ignored, the Law does not determine worth or value as a Christian (after all, you may remember in Luke Jesus broke a few of these rules himself). The only thing that gives us worth and value is Jesus. It is by grace that Jesus offered us justification. We cannot earn it with good behavior. We cannot lose it with bad behavior. Jesus has claimed us. Jesus has adopted us. Jesus accepts us no matter what.

So what must we do to be justified? The answer is surprisingly simple... nothing. The work of forgiveness is Jesus'. Jesus does the work of justification, not us. If we add any condition to that formula, then we have a hand in our own justification.

Verse 27 says, "In Baptism, we put on Christ." This is a phrase we use in our UMC funeral liturgy. We use it as a reminder, that through this justification, God sees us as Jesus. We are forgiven. We are restored. We are claimed. We are loved. We don't need to do anything except to trust in this good news.

May this good news seep deep into our souls. We are justified, forgiven, loved, and set free to live like Jesus.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

No practice today. Let's rest in the truth that we don't need to practice to earn God's favor. Jesus gives us love, forgiveness, and justification as a gift with no strings attached.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are some unspoken rules we feel obligated to follow in church that Jesus wouldn't?
2. What strings do we often attach to Christianity?



WEEK 2 | THURSDAY

Galatians 4: 1-11

Reflection:

In today's passage, Paul continues his thoughts about us as children of God. We are fully HIS, with all of the freedom and responsibility that comes with it. The responsibility comes with that knowledge that we are God's children, so that we do not look for other ways to experience redemption.

Is that knowledge as difficult for you as it is for me? When I read this passage, my mind always goes to the scene in the Lion King when Rafiki strikes Simba on the head and tells him "You don't know who you are! But I do! You're Musafa's boy!" Do you ever feel like that? Like it is hard to know in your heart that you are a child of God?

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

There is a song that we sing in Contemporary sometimes called Who You Say I Am by Hillsong Worship. I want to invite you to listen to this song and ask for this knowledge to make its way from your head into your heart, so that we can live knowing whose we are.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

How can we assure ourselves and others that we are children of God?



WEEK 2 | FRIDAY

Galatians 4: 12-20

Reflection:

Paul's letter to the Galatians is in the midst of a struggle of authority and law versus grace and the power of relationship. Paul fondly remembers his previous visit with the Galatians in our passage for today. The relationship they discovered and celebrated when he was with them was highlighted by their care for him when he was infirmed in some way. Some scholars think it may have been some disease of the eyes based on Paul's letter (4:15).

Paul pours out his heart to the believers in Galatia, urging them to return to the genuine relationship they once shared. He appeals, "I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you." Paul's words reveal deep concern and vulnerability — he's not lecturing from a distance, but inviting the Galatians into a relationship marked by empathy and mutual understanding.

Paul reminds them of their early love and kindness, despite his illness, and laments how their affection has faded. He asks if he's become their enemy simply for telling them the truth. This passage challenges us to reflect on our own relationships: Are we loving and honest with others, even when it is difficult? Do we seek to build each other up in Christ, or do we allow misunderstandings and outside influences to create barriers?

– Rick Owen

Practice:

Today, let's pray for hearts open to authentic friendships and truth. May we value honesty, compassion, and love above all, striving to restore any broken relationships in Christ. As Paul yearned for the Galatians to remain steadfast in their faith, let us encourage one another in our walk, always pointing each other back to Jesus — The foundation of true community.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Are we loving and honest with others, even when it is difficult?
2. Do we seek to build each other up in Christ, or do we allow misunderstandings and outside influences to create barriers?



2026 READING PLAN

Galatians Week 3

Galatians Week 3!

We are coming into the last two weeks of our Spring Reading Plan. THANK YOU for all the amazing feedback and the fun discussions around scripture! I am learning a ton about Galatians and I hope you are as well. We only have a few weeks before our Spring Reading Plan comes to a close. I want to make sure you know what's coming your way

This week, 4/27-5/1: Will be normal reading and devotionals

Next week, 5/4-5/8: Will be a full week on the fruits of the spirit

The Rest of May: Will be a short break

Starting in June! We will offer a different reading option we are calling Beach Reads. For June and July, we will offer a 3 different options for books to read. Then at the end of the month, we will offer dinner and discussion around the book. We will have the full list coming your way next Sunday evening, but go ahead and get excited for a different way to read together over the summer!!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

Monday, April 27: Galatians 4: 21-31

Tuesday, April 28: Galatians 5: 1-12

Wednesday, April 29: Galatians 5: 13-21 (*we'll come back to 5: 22-23*)

Thursday, April 30: Galatians 6: 1-10

Friday, May 1: Galatians 6: 11-18



WEEK 3 | MONDAY

Galatians 4: 21-31

Weekly Word: Children

We can't fault Paul for being strategic. In chapter 3, Paul talked about Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. Now, here in chapter 4, Paul turns his attention to Sarah, the mother of the Jewish people.

Quick Genesis recap:

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of thousands of people. God promised Abraham that his descendants would number more than the stars.

Genesis says that Abraham got to be the age of 100 and still didn't have any children. What's worse, his wife Sarah was barren. They began to doubt God's promises. In an effort to bring God's promise, Abraham and Sarah decided to take matters in their own hands. Abraham slept with his wife's servant Hagar. Hagar had Ishmael.

God was not pleased they failed to trust the promise, but God still remained faithful. 25 years after Abraham had his initial interaction with God, he and Sarah finally gave birth to Issac.

Abraham, Sarah, and Issac are heroes in our scriptures. The whole nation of Israel came from them, and more importantly, Jesus came from their lineage.

So why is Paul referencing all this? Our key verses came to us back in chapter 3.

Galatians 3:26-29 says:

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

Jesus has torn the veil. There is no longer any division in the family of God. It does not matter if we can trace our heritage back to Abraham and Sarah or not. God has adopted all to be in the family of the Church. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile because we have all been clothed with Christ. When God looks at us, God sees Jesus. We are clothed with Jesus. It does not matter who our biological parents are, because in Christ, we are all God's children.

Paul's main message for this early church: all of God's children are welcomed regardless of where they come from, what they look like, and that is without exception.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Welcome someone to your table or in your home. Give them the same unconditional love and acceptance that God gives to all of us.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How does it feel to be welcomed and loved unconditionally?
2. What does it mean to be a child of God?



WEEK 3 | TUESDAY

Galatians 5: 1-2

Reflection:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GET-TO

Oh! Rats! Morning, I've got-to drag out of bed again.

OR...

Oh! It's morning! I get-to have another day.

Oh! I've got-to go to work, deal with all that stuff again.

OR...

Oh! I have some work...some things I get-to do with my life that matter.

Oh! I've got-to deal with all those people coming at me.

OR...

Oh! I get-to to have some people in my life that I love and who love me.

Over the years, I have shared what I often remind myself.

Our lives are not a drudge of things we have got-to do to make us acceptable. Though life has a 'drudge factor' for sure, our lives are gifts that we get-to have.

From 55 AD or so with Paul's letter to the Galatians, to here and now, there persists the notion/gut feeling that there are certain things we have got-to do for God to love us. Yet the heart of the Gospel of Grace is the lives we get-to have, things we get-to do, is because God already loves us, enables us to get-to love and be loved in ways we can't do on our own.

Our passage – Galatians 5.1-12 – gets at this. It is full of amazing life material that would be wonderful to explore verse by verse with you around a study group table! But here, at least some incomplete quick comments...

Paul gets at the got-to vs. get-to way of faith and life by con-trasting Law & Gospel, Circumcision & Cross, Works & Faith. All this needs deep dives into grace in that study group!

5.1: 'For freedom Christ has set us free' from all this got-to bondage – set us free for lives of joy, serving one another, often bearing the burdens of other people in the world. 6.2

Intelligent-faithful Bible study and life application means separating the timebound and the timeless in scripture, clarifying the then and now, for the Bible's abiding meaning.

Circumcision now is a procedure on male infants thought to have hygienic benefits. Deep in Jewish faith (the ancestor of our Christian faith) circumcision was considered (Genesis 17) essential, required for identity and acceptability to God.

Some zealous Jewish Christians – Paul calls troublemakers – showed up in Galatia saying circumcision was a 'got-to' for the new Gentile Christians to be acceptable to God.

The 'ouch factor' aside, Paul proclaims the shock (scandal), mystery of Jesus' cross (what some call 'atonement') is what saves us, overcomes the brokenness between us and God, us and each other, even the brokenness rattling around inside you and me. Doxology!

FOR ADULTS ONLY: Okay...no dodging: 5.12. Where is that study group when we need it? Have you ever said something you wish you hadn't? Perhaps...this was Paul's sarcasm, humor, crude to be sure... 'If you guys are so intense on other people making this little cut on themselves, why don't you just do the whole thing on yourselves.' Whew!

If you are still with me... Over the years the church has sometimes engaged in the got-to factor... Got-to be baptized this way or another, believe this or that... Plus, often we come up with our own unconscious got-to's... The success-status-stuff thing, the appearance thing, keep the happy face up thing... Whew!

Help me and I will try to help you remember... 'For freedom from all this, Christ has set us free'...to live with joy, serve with love, and die with hope.

– Bill Morgan

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

What are some "get tos" and some "got tos" in faith?



WEEK 3 | WEDNESDAY

Galatians 5: 13-21

Reflection:

Love your neighbor as you love yourself and live by the Spirit! In today's passage, we get into what our freedom in Christ actually means. It isn't a freedom to do things that hurt us or others, but it is freedom to experience and share the love of God.

In our Wednesday Night Bible Study about Galatians, we went around the room and talked about ways that we personally experience the Holy Spirit in our lives. Every single response was something that connected us to others and to God, nothing that divided us from each other. We didn't feel connected by following the rules but by loving God and others. There is a song called Love is a Rebel Song by Jon Foreman. He kind of does what Paul does in this passage and lists things that harm us or our relationships with others, and concludes by saying "love is a rebel song". I wonder if this is what it means to live by the Spirit. To seek the things that connect us and to avoid the things that don't. That we LOVE. We love God. We love others. And in that way we live by the Spirit.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to Love is a Rebel Song by Jon Foreman.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does it mean to love others?
2. How have you felt this in your own life?
3. How do you personally experience the Holy Spirit?
4. How do you make more space for those experiences in your life?



WEEK 3 | THURSDAY

Galatians 6: 1-10

Reflection:

Finally! We have made it to the beautiful parts! Wow, these verses are amazing! All of his friends are useful instruction, but I want to focus on verses 1 and 2.

Galatians 6:1-2

“Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual should restore someone like this with a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted too. 2 Carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, “Life Together” lists ministries that all Christians must follow. One of the ministries he lists is the “ministry of bearing.” He says, “To be Christian means to be a bearer. When we see someone hurting their burden becomes ours and when we are hurting our burdens are carried by others.”

As Christians we are called to pay attention. Not just to the sign of the times... but to the very people we see each and every day. We are called to rejoice in their joys and to bear each others burdens. If someone is having a hard time, Paul urges us to be gentle. He never says to condemn or judge, but he asks us to restore them.

Who in your world feels like an outcast? Who in your world needs the ministry of bearing? Who in your world needs to be restored with gentleness? May God guide us to them and may we get to work practicing the ministry of bearing.

*****SIDE NOTE*****

You may have noticed that we skipped the Fruits of the Spirit, but have no fear! We are going to spend a full week with them next week!!

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Find someone to practice the ministry of bearing with!

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who has bore your burdens in life?
2. Who is God calling you to go to?



WEEK 3 | FRIDAY

Galatians 6: 11-18

Reflection:

One of the central themes that permeates both the Old and New Testaments is that of covenant. A BERIT (Hebrew) or covenant, has its roots in the Ancient Near East when two parties would make a treaty. Usually there was a dominant party, a King or a conquering party, and a subordinate party, whose roles and responsibilities were spelled out in the BERIT.

In our story with God, this Ancient Near Eastern form was adopted and transformed in a remarkable way to speak to the way God wants to relate to God's people. God establishes a covenant, multiple covenants, with God's people in exchange for their loyalty and trust. It is notable that when you look at the big covenants of the Old Testament they start as broadly as possible with God covenanting with all of creation not to destroy it again (the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9), moves to all the people of the earth (the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 & 15), to the 12 tribes of Israel (the Mosaic and Davidic covenants of Exodus 19-24 and 2 Samuel 7 respectively). Some of the covenants do not require any great response from the people and are thus known as unconditional covenants like Abraham's covenant with God. However, the laws and commandments of the Mosaic covenant represent a different kind of conditional covenantal agreement between God and God's people.

So here, at the end of Galatians, we can see the argument clearly (or as clearly as we ever see things in the Pauline letters!). I wonder if what is at stake is that good faithful people are not in agreement about which covenant holds sway for these new Jesus followers. Is the resurrection of Christ the culmination of God's unconditional Abrahamic Covenant to bless the whole world or is Christ's work the embodiment of ultimate Torah obedience of the Mosaic Covenant? How will we know if these new converts are participants in God's covenants?

In this final chapter of his letter to the Galatians, Paul argues to shift the sign of the covenant away from the physical act of circumcision and towards the embodiment of a new creation. If we survey the stories of God in our Bible, it does seem true that God's actions have a decided bent towards bringing about a new creation. After the flood, God makes the whole world new. After Abraham's journey, God seeks to mark humanity by God's new blessing. After Moses delivers the Israelites, God seeks to make a new nation grounded in faithful relationship with him. After David becomes king, God makes a new line to lead God's people. After Christ, God makes each of us a new creation empowered to bring about the new world order of love.

It seems like Paul is saying, don't miss the forest for the trees, my friends. Circumcision should not be the focus of our conversation, but instead we should turn our hearts to what new thing God is creating in each of us through Christ Jesus.

I, for one, am happy to leave the topic of circumcision behind. Bye! Let's talk about less awkward things! But, what I would not want to leave behind is the commitment to what undergirds this ritual: a celebration of the faithfulness of God.

Practice:

Today, let's pray for hearts open to authentic friendships and truth. May we value honesty, compassion, and love above all, striving to restore any broken relationships in Christ. As Paul yearned for the Galatians to remain steadfast in their faith, let us encourage one another in our walk, always pointing each other back to Jesus — The foundation of true community.

Prayer: Dear God, as I look in the mirror this day help me see myself as a new creation. The more I lean into your love and constant presence, the more I can recognize how being close to you changes me from the inside out. Keep up the good work, God. I'm grateful to be your handiwork. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.



2026 READING PLAN

Galatians Week 4

Galatians Week 4!

Welcome to our Fruits of the Spirit Week! This entire week we are looking at Galatians 5: 22-23. We will cover 1-2 different fruits each day. Why did Paul create the fruits of the Spirit? Throughout the book of Galatians, Paul made sure they knew the law itself does not produce good church people. The law is a tool we can use as a measurement. The people in Galatia followed the law because they believed in works based righteousness. They believed if they followed the law, then they could earn God's favor. However, Paul has a different story to tell. Paul believes that good church people will naturally produce these fruits. He believes that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control are signs of the Holy Spirit working within us. It is a beautiful verse and we want to spend a full week studying it!

Before we get to the fruits, I want to say THANK YOU!!! This will be our last week of the Spring Reading Plan. It has been an amazing journey. I will talk about this more in Friday's devotional, but we had so much fun reading Luke and Galatians together as a church. Our very first week together we offered a simple formula:

More time with God each day = slowly becoming more like Jesus
Becoming more like Jesus = transformation in our lives and community

I pray we all proved this right in our various and many ways. I pray we were able to learn about the Bible and about God. I pray we were about to grow in our relationship with God. I pray that over these last five months, we do in fact look a little more like Jesus.

What's next, you ask?

First up, starting in June! We will offer a different reading option we are calling Beach Reads. For June and July, we will offer three different options for books to read. Then at the end of the month, we will offer dinner and discussion around the book. Our book list will come out later in the month, but go ahead and put these dates on your calendars:

Tuesday 6/23 and Tuesday 7/28.

Secondly, our Reading Plan will return in the Fall!

Thank you for faithfully participating in this plan!!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

Monday, May 4: Galatians 5: 22-23 | Love and Joy

Tuesday, May 5: Galatians 5: 22-23 | Peace and Patience

Wednesday, May 6: Galatians 5: 22-23 | Kindness and Goodness

Thursday, May 7: Galatians 5: 22-23 | Faithfulness and Gentleness

Friday, May 8: Galatians 5: 22-23 | Self Control and the Whole of the Fruits



WEEK 4 | MONDAY

Galatians 5: 22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Reflection | Love and Joy

This week we do a deep dive into my FAVORITE scripture in the Bible! The Fruit of the Spirit! I love this passage because I use it as my own personal barometer for how my spiritual life is doing. Are the fruits of the Spirit being produced in my life? If not, what's going on?

We decided to look at the fruit listed by Paul in sets of two, so in today's devo we explore love and joy. But before we do that, I want you to think about the Holy Spirit. How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life? In our Wednesday Night Bible study on Galatians, we asked this question, and ALL of the answers that came back were describing moments that connected us, whether it was to God, each other, or nature. SO before we explore the fruit of love and joy, I want to invite you to think about specific examples of how and when you have felt connected.

Now onto to love. If you have been a part of a church community for a while, you have probably heard multiple sermons, lessons, and had experiences with the love that Paul is talking about. One of my favorite descriptions of love (also written by Paul) is in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. It is absolutely beautiful! We are all familiar with John 3:16, "For God so loved the world..." Love is a very popular topic at church. But what does it look like when the Holy Spirit is actively producing love in us? Do you feel like you can see the evidence of it in your own life? What does love require of us so that we see the evidence of it in our lives? Does it require time? Sacrifice? Something else?

I don't know if you are allowed to have a favorite fruit of the Spirit, but joy is mine. I love that joy is second in this list. I love the concept of joy because it's transformative, it can change an outlook on life. It's FUN! It is also something that can't be manufactured. I think all of us can spot fake enthusiasm or manufactured happiness from a million miles away. Real joy isn't cheesy, and it isn't just looking on the bright side of things. It doesn't dismiss difficult things but walks you through them. It is real and truly life changing. I think it appears when we are actively seeking the Holy Spirit and allowing it to be moving in our lives.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

There is a new artist that I just love named RAYE. I want to invite you to listen to her song Joy. and see if this matches your experience with joy.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. As we begin this deep dive in the fruit of the Spirit, I want to ask one more time, what is your personal experience with the Holy Spirit?
2. Can you identify moments that you have felt connected?
3. Think about the fruit of love and joy. How are these showing up in your life right now? If you feel like they may be lacking a little bit, take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to make these evident in your life.



WEEK 4 | TUESDAY

Galatians 5: 22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Reflection | Peace and Patience

Fruits of the Spirit day 2! Natalie set the tone beautifully with love and joy. Now we are moving into peace and patience. When I think of peace and patience together Psalm 46:10 came to my mind. I want to offer this as a secondary guiding verse for these two fruits.

Psalm 46:10 – “Be Still and know that I am God”

If I am being honest with you all (and this may not surprise you), I have a horribly difficult time with being still and I am one of the more impatient people you will meet. If I sit still for too long, I go stir crazy quickly. So when I hear this psalm and I think about peace and patience, I have a natural bad reaction to it. Unfortunately I am more inclined to the opposites of being still. Isn't being active important? What about the fruits of urgency and productivity? Aren't those admirable traits too? Doesn't it feel better to be urgent about building Jesus' Kingdom rather than building it with peace and patience? If you are like me, being busy feels good. However, I wonder just how much I miss when I am busy. I wonder how many people I fail to notice. I wonder how many times I miss what God is doing.

Especial priest and author, Barbara Brown Taylor, once said, “we often miss what God is doing because we are always trying to get somewhere else. God isn't found in the next moment... God can be found in this one, if we are paying attention.”

I needed to hear that quote today. I needed to be reminded that peace and patience are fruits of the spirit AND NOT busyness and manyness. God is here and present in this very moment which means every moment is both sacred and a gift.

So here's the question for us:

Where in our lives are we rushing ahead of God instead being still with God? Where do we need to be still and know that God is here? How does stillness make us more like Jesus?

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Today let's slow something down. Drive slower. Eat slower. Pray slower. Let your life match the pace of someone who believes God is in control. Be still and know that God is with us right now.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How difficult is it to be still? Why?
2. How do peace and patience work together?



WEEK 4 | WEDNESDAY

Galatians 5: 22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Reflection | Kindness and Goodness

Well folks, this is my last devo before summer, and I am so glad that I get to end this journey with you talking about kindness and goodness. These are two of my favorite fruit within this passage of scripture.

I like how Paul separated these two qualities, because they are unique in their own way. In Romans 2:4, Paul describes the kindness of God as what leads us to repentance. Repentance literally means a “change of mind” or a “change of direction,” derived from the Greek word *metanoia*. The kindness of God can absolutely lead us in a different direction, just like Paul’s experience in the book of Acts. One of my favorite services of the year is always Ash Wednesday. It feels to me like a big life reset, as we ask God to change us, clean our hearts, and grant us humility. Associating this with the idea of kindness can begin the season of Lent in a transformative way. It makes me wonder, when we are kind to others, if it can be just as transformative as the kindness of God.

Goodness, what a word! Goodness is not a passive term in Paul’s eyes, but virtue in action! It means being consistent, sincere, and living an upright life that is not hypocritical. Goodness is selfless and consists of helping those in need and doing good for ALL people. Thinking of this word as an active directive instead of just a passive description, changes the whole way I look at what is God. It calls to mind our famous Methodist saying “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” I don’t know about you but that concept makes me so excited about my faith and it makes me expect to see God do amazing things in the world around me.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I have two songs for you all to listen to today for my final devotional for the semester. The first one is called Kindness by Christ Tomlin (Live from Austin version is my favorite) and the second, Goodness of God by Bethel. These are two of my all-time favorite songs and as you consider how these two expressions of the Holy Spirit are evident in your own life, I hope you get the chance to listen to them. It has been so wonderful to study this scripture with all of you! Thank you for learning alongside us this year.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How have you experienced the kindness of God?
2. How does repentance show up in your own life?
3. Do you associate this with the kindness of God?
4. Think about a time when kindness has transformed you. How do you experience the goodness of God? Does it feel active in your life and in the life of others?
5. Think of examples of goodness is active in the world around you. I also want to invite you to spend some time inviting the Holy Spirit to grow these fruits within your own heart and life.



WEEK 4 | THURSDAY

Galatians 5: 22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Reflection | Faithfulness and Gentleness:

Today we are looking at faithfulness and gentleness. For some reason, when I think of these fruits, I think of people. For the other fruits, I thought of traits, but for these I have people in mind. The people I am thinking of are the best kind of people in my life. They are people I admire.

Who are the gentle and faithful people in your life? I have always been drawn to people like this. When I find someone gentle, I find they are incredible listeners and almost always the wisest people in the room. I find there is something unique about Christianity with this. Often in life, we admire the loudest, the most successful, and the strongest personalities; however, it is the gentle and faithful people that draw us in and make us come close. I have always imagined this was Jesus' usual demeanor. We are drawn in because when we encounter gentleness and faithfulness, I think we feel safe, seen, and loved. When it comes to faithfulness, I don't imagine people with the strongest faith. Instead, I imagine the most consistent people in my life. The people, who despite distance, are faithful to showing up. They offer care and concern from afar.

My friend Jon has always been a good combo of faithfulness and gentleness way for me. Jon lives in Virginia so I almost never see him anymore. However, when I am around Jon, I find myself sharing my deepest thoughts and feelings and it is completely unintentional. Something about his presence and his gentleness allows me to feel safe and my words start flowing out. He is such a gift as is all the faithful and gentle people in our lives. I wonder who are the people in your life who help you feel seen? Who help you feel safe? Who are the people who invite you to share what is truly going on in your life? May we model our demeanor after them and offer some gentleness and faithfulness to a world that so desperately needs more of it.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Call someone on your mind today. Maybe you thought of someone as you were reading the devotional. Call them up and thank them for their gentleness and faithfulness. Then, offer them the same gift of gentleness and faithfulness, they have offered us in our lives.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How do you imagine Jesus used his faithfulness and gentleness?
2. Who models this best for you?



WEEK 4 | FRIDAY

Galatians 5: 22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Reflection | Self-Control and the Whole of the Fruits

Let me start today with a HUGE thank you!!! This is the last day of our Spring Reading Plan, and it has been such a gift to read scripture together. I cannot thank you all enough for all the feedback and support of our daily readings. When we began to dream about daily reading scripture together, we wondered what it would be like for a church to focus on a few passages at a time. What we have learned is that it was amazing. It was such a gift to be walking the halls and be swept up in conversations about Luke and Galatians. It has been such a gift to talk more and more about what God is doing in our lives. And it is such a gift to get to know each of you better through this daily plan. THANK YOU!!!

For those who are curious about what is next, we are going to take a small break and switch our reading this summer with Beach Reads (more info coming during May!)... AND will be back with our daily scripture readings in the fall!!

Devotional:

Today's fruit is self-control. At first glance, it might be the least exciting fruit... but its the one that holds all the others together. This is a fruit that you all have taught me. You have so faithfully followed this reading plan. You all have been so encouraging, so kind, and so up-lifting. Thank you for all the self control you've shown for 5 months of daily readings. Thank you also for the self control you've shown by not pointing out all my typos and mistakes over these months ha!

For today, lets look back at the self-control we saw across the Spring. Let's take a look back on our scripture reading and on our your relationship with God.

Spend some time with these questions:

- What have we learned about the Bible, God, or ourselves?
- Through our daily readings, were we more sensitive to the Spirit? Did we find God was on our mind more?
- Has daily scripture played a role in building our relationship with God?

Write down your thoughts and answers to these questions. Spend time with God. May it be a fruitful close and ending to our Spring daily reading plans. THANK you for taking on this journey with us!!!

Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Continue reading scripture and looking for God in your daily walks. Our reading plans will be back in the Fall!.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

What books of the Bible do you most want to read next?