



# Freedom

reconsidering Galatians  
mpc growth group studies | first quarter 2009

## **Welcome to GrowthGroups09.**

Thanks for agreeing to be part of a growthgroup this year. Here at mpc, we're convinced small groups are the key to a healthy church, which is why reconnecting in a group is one of our four rechurch goals.

Each quarter, a grouplink social event will be followed by a series of six studies, which will in turn be followed by a service activity that you'll work on as a group. Please make every effort to be part of the whole eight weeks!

These studies take us through Paul's short letter to the Galatians. It's easy to read through in a single setting, and I'd encourage you to do that often. Most of the letter is not complicated at all - and the bits that seem difficult at first have often been made that way by past generations of Christians!

PLEASE PREPARE before your group meets, so that the discussion time is meaningful. You don't have to get things 'right' - just think things through so you've got something to spice up the conversation.

It's up to your leader to work out how best to run the night. It's quite okay to skip over obvious questions that have been covered in personal preparation. When you see the **'grouptalk' icon**, you'll know you've hit an area that is especially designed for group interaction.



I am praying that many people will get a fresh grip on the basics of the Christian 'gospel' through these studies - and be refreshed in the unity and the freedom that comes from living by faith and not law. May that be true for you.

*Phil Campbell, January 2009*

# Whatever happened to the Gospel?

## Galatians 1:1-2:10

Paul's mission to the Gentiles (non-Jews) in the region of Galatia in Acts 13 to 15 was the start of a revolution. The Kingdom of God was no longer just for Jews! No matter who you were, no matter where you were from, you were invited to join the people of Israel's Messiah, Jesus. The shockwaves were felt all the way to Jerusalem. Some of the Jewish Christians were unconvinced that unwashed, unclean, uncircumcised gentiles should truly be welcomed - at least until they cleaned up their act! They wanted to add Jewish ritual and law to the message Paul had been preaching in Galatia... so new "missionaries" were sent to add the bits of the message that Paul had left out. The question is, how will the Galatians react? How will they respond to being told there was something lacking in the message that saved them? Let's find out!

### But first...

If you're already a Christian, how and when did you first come to understand the "gospel"?

As a Christian, how would you react to someone who told you that you had to 'do something extra' to truly be a Christian?

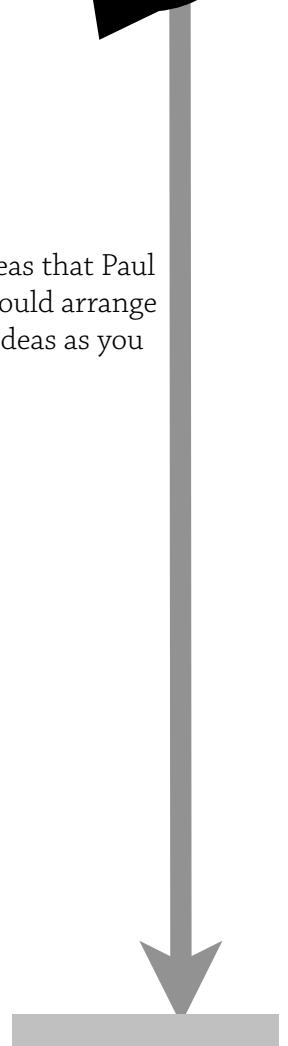
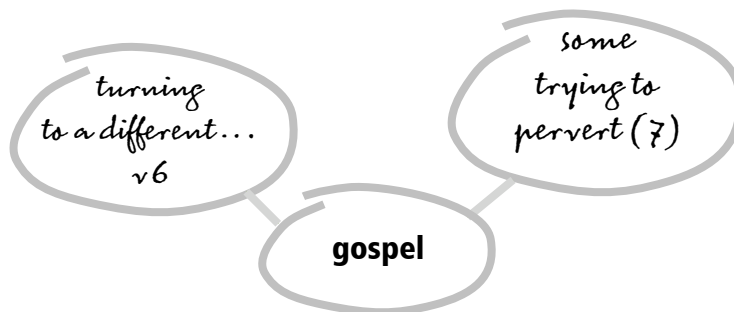
### Read through Galatians 1:1-2:10

a) There are some key phrases in verses 1 to 4 that bring to mind the gospel Paul preached when he was in Galatia. What are they?

b) In summary, what has happened in Galatia since Paul preached this gospel to them?

### c) Make a mind map...

Work through the passage again, and on the diagram below, attach all the words and ideas that Paul associates with the word "gospel." Some are positives, some are negatives... maybe you could arrange them so that similar ideas are in the same general area. Think freely. Associate as many ideas as you can.

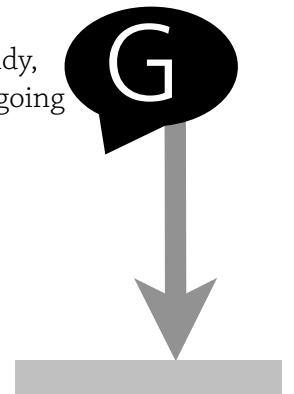


d) How does Paul feel about what's happened to the gospel?

e) Imagine an angel appeared in the centre of the room while you're doing this study, and announces that there's a whole new way to get right with God. What are you going to say, and why? (Would you REALLY say this? Be honest!)

f) Why would "another gospel" be "no gospel at all"?)

g) What are the effects of the different gospel that's being preached in Galatia?



### **A Message Made in Heaven**

Romantic types might tell you their marriages were "made in heaven." But Paul's not being romantic when he tells us where his gospel comes from. It's "made in heaven" too. In fact, it's because of the origin of his message that it's so important that we don't mess around with it! This point is so important to Paul that he restates it over and over again... look at 1:10, 1:11-12, 1:16b-17. Not only that, it's the idea he started the letter with back in 1:1.

### **A Dramatic Turnaround...**

a) Paul tells the story of the dramatic change in his own life from verse 11 to 24. You can read the details in Acts 9:1-19. What does it prove? (v12)

b) Paul, who used to persecute Christians, is suddenly one of them. He meets with Peter (v18), James (v19), and other church leaders "who appeared to be important." What was their verdict on Paul's message?

c) How did James, Peter and John confirm Paul's ministry and message?

### **Compelled to Object**

d) According to 2:4, the issue of whether Titus (a Greek) was circumcised was raised by the "false brothers." What were they concerned about?

e) Why did Paul object so strongly to their demands?

f) Why would giving in to the demand for Titus to be circumcised “make us slaves” and prevent the “truth of the gospel” from remaining with the Galatians?

g) For Paul, anything that was added to the “truth of the gospel” actually subtracted from the truth of the gospel. If the false brothers wanted to compel people to be circumcised, Paul was compelled to object. Can you think of extra things that people want to add to the gospel today? How should we respond?



h) How is “the freedom we have in Christ Jesus” (v4) expressed in **your** Christian life?

The Jews tried to force Christians to take on all kinds of rules and regulations. Did they succeed with you?

Are there things that you have unconsciously added to the simple message of repentance and faith in Jesus?