

Dear Life Group Leaders,

It's week 9 of our series, and we're looking at the end of Galatians 4 this week. There are some clear sections within the book of Galatians and Paul brings one section to an end here with a final theological argument, before exploring the freedom we have in the Spirit in the next section (ch's 5-6). In this passage, Paul uses the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar as an allegory to make his point, so it might be helpful to familiarise yourself with that story (Genesis 15-17 & 21) as you prepare to lead this week's study.

God bless!

Ben

(This week's Life Group Guide is brought to you by Ben Atwell, a Life Group Leader in our Wimbledon Venue)

LIFE GROUP GUIDE

Galatians 4:21-31

This Week's BIG IDEA: v28 – we are children of the promise.

1. Can anyone recap the key messages from chapters 3-4 so far?
2. **Please read Galatians 4:21-31.** Who is Paul specifically addressing in these verses? (v21)
3. v22-23, what story from Genesis does Paul refer to in this passage? What do we know about this story and about the people involved?
[Leaders note: Genesis 15-17 & 21 – Sarah was Abraham's wife, and Hagar was Sarah's Egyptian slave girl. Abraham had a son, Ishmael, with Hagar, and then another son, Isaac, with Sarah.]
4. v23, Paul says the son with Hagar was born "according to the flesh" whilst the son with Sarah was born "as a result of the divine promise". What do you think this means? Can you put this into your own words?
[Leaders note: Check out the NLT translation of this verse. It's works vs. faith.]
5. Have you ever tried to rely on yourself to fulfil God's promises? What was the result?
6. v24-25, who/what does Paul say that Hagar represents? How would the Jewish people in the Galatian church have reacted to this? How does Paul describe the children of Hagar?
[Leaders note: Hagar represents slavery under the law and the present city of Jerusalem, i.e. the Jewish people relying on the law for their standing with God. This would have outraged Jewish readers, who were immensely proud of their Jewish heritage as God's chosen people, and children of Sarah. It's worth emphasising, that Paul is clear in v24 that this is only an illustration. The Jews are the children of Sarah, that's a historical fact which he's not disputing.]
7. v26-28, what contrast does Paul make here? Who/what does Paul say that the other woman (Sarah) represents? How does Paul describe the children of Sarah?
[Leaders note: Paul is leaning in to the symbolism of Jerusalem as a place of God's presence and holiness where there is freedom and fruitfulness for those who trust in him.]
8. v27, what point is Paul reinforcing by quoting Isaiah 54v1 here?
[Leaders note: Tread carefully here. Childlessness and infertility are difficult topics and may be impacting members of your group right now. Paul is associating the barren woman in Isaiah 54 with Sarah, who represent grace acknowledging believers in Paul's flow of argument. He is drawing us to consider the fruit that lasts in God's kingdom, particularly through the growth of the church.]
9. v29-30, Paul refers Genesis 21v8-14, quoting v10. He's urging those being persecuted to "get rid" of that which is persecuting them, just as Abraham was instructed to "get rid" of Ishmael for mocking Isaac. Are there areas of your life where legalism is creeping in? What do you need to do to "get rid" of it?
[Leaders note: Make sure you emphasise the importance "power of the Spirit". This is a theme that Paul will expand on and is the major theme of chapter 5.]
10. What choice has Paul presented us in these verses?
11. v28, 31, spend time in prayer and worship to God, thanking him that we are "children of the promise", "children of the free woman". Our standing before Him is not based on our performance but on a promise!