

## Galatians 1:11-24 ~ Paul called by God ~ Discussion Questions

1. Paul tells the Galatians that when God called him to preach among the Gentiles, he “did not receive [the gospel] from any man, nor was I taught it” (v.12) and that he “did not consult any man” (v.16). Why is that information important in the context of this chapter?
2. Earlier in Verse 7, Paul said “some people are throwing you into confusion, which probably means Judaizers (Jewish Christians that said that converts to Christianity must follow certain Jewish rituals). In Verse 13, Paul speaks of Judaism. When and where did this develop?
3. Paul says in vs. 15 that God set him aside from birth and called him to preach. What well-know prophets were also called from birth? (Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5)
4. Does God know you from birth? How about today? What’s so important about omnipresence? (Psalm 139, Psalm 33:13-15)
5. If you felt called by God to preach, what would you do first? Why? Often, someone who has gone through a recovery process then feels qualified and wants to teach or counsel others. Should he do so?
6. Paul says in vs. 16-17 that he did not consult any man or go to Jerusalem, but went immediately to Arabia to preach. Was this appropriate?
7. What would you think if a person came up to you in church and told you that God had revealed to him or her that, for example, people who dance are not really saved? What would you say to her?
8. If you want people to believe what you say, do you normally tell them good things or bad things about yourself? Or do you avoid yourself altogether?
9. Twice in this passage (v. 13 & v.23), Paul reminds the Galatians of his past. What is his purpose in doing so? How can we apply this?
10. Do you know anyone who was once hostile to Christ but is now His follower? How about someone of another religion? Or an atheist? What was the major factor in that person becoming a Christ follower?
11. If you had to convince someone that Christ is real by giving an example from your own life, what would you say?

## Galatians 1:11-24 ~ Paul called by God ~ Leader's Guide

**1. Paul tells the Galatians that when God called him to preach among the Gentiles, he “did not receive [the gospel] from any man, nor was I taught it” (v.12) and that he “did not consult any man” (v.16). Why is that information important in the context of this chapter?**

In the last part of the chapter, Paul continues build his credibility and answer the implied question of why the Galatians should listen to him instead of the Judaizers. He stated his credentials right in verse 1 but now adds that: (1) his message was received directly from Christ (v 12), (2) he had been an exemplary Jew (v 13-14), (3) he had a special conversion experience (v 15-16, Acts 9:1-9), (4) he had been confirmed and accepted by the other apostles (v 18-19 and 2:1-9).

Acts 9:1-9 – Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice(F) say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

<sup>5</sup> “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. <sup>6</sup> “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

<sup>7</sup> The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. <sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

**2. Earlier in Verse 7, Paul says “some people are throwing you into confusion, which probably means Judaizers (Jewish Christians that said that converts to Christianity must follow certain Jewish rituals). In Verse 13, Paul speaks of Judaism. When and where did this develop?**

Judaism, the legalistic Jewish faith and way of life, largely developed during the period between the Old and New Testaments. The term is derived from Judah, which outlasted Israel, but still came to an end in the sixth century B.C. with the exile of its people into Babylonia.

**3. Paul says in vs. 15 that God set him aside from birth and called him to preach. What well-know prophets were also called from birth? (Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5)**

Isaiah 49:1 – Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

The Lord also spoke to Jeremiah and in v 1:5 said, “Before I formed you in the

womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Several other scriptures imply that God calls a prophet, even before he is born, and he has been selected by God for that service, but only these three scripture specifically mention before birth.

#### **4. Does God know you from birth? How about today? What’s so important about omnipresence? (Psalm 139, Psalm 33:13-15)**

Yes. God is all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful, and everywhere present. God knows us, God is with us, and His greatest gift is allowing us to know Him.

Psalm 139 by David is the “God knows everything about me” psalm. Consider just verse 13 – For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

God’s omnipresence is roughly described as the ability to be “present everywhere at the same time.” This is one of the main ideas that separates Judeo-Christianity from most other religions.

Psalm 33:13-15 – From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

#### **5. If you felt called by God to preach, what would you do first? Why? Often, someone who has gone through a recovery process then feels qualified and wants to teach or counsel others. Should he do so?**

Pray? Go to seminary? Talk to other preachers? Try to get a job in a church? Listen to tapes of great preachers? Get involved with planting a new church? Start preaching out on a street corner?

James 3:1 – Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

#### **6. Paul says in vs. 16-17 that he did not consult any man or go to Jerusalem, but went immediately to Arabia to preach. Was this appropriate?**

Paul was already schooled in the law and prophets, through study with Gamaliel, the best Hebrew scholar of the day. But he lacked guidance by The Holy Spirit when he was a Pharisee, which Christ gave him through His disciple Ananias at Damascus (Acts 9:15-22).

Acts 9:15-22 – But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

<sup>17</sup> Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>18</sup> Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he

could see again. He got up and was baptized,<sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.<sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>21</sup> All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?”<sup>22</sup> Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Some people seem to think that when they get baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit, they then know all of God’s word, and then have no need of further study. But even very smart people who have read the word for many years don’t know it all and need to continue with studying it.

In the case of Paul, once he received proper understanding by the Holy Spirit, his knowledge of Messiah from the Old Testament was all pulled together in his mind. No doubt, being a persecutor of Christians before, he was also somewhat familiar with Christian doctrine. So don’t think that once someone who receives the Spirit, and without knowing the written word (the Bible), that they can just go out and properly teach.

**7. What would you think if a person came up to you in church and told you that God had revealed to her that, for example, people who dance are not really saved? What would you say to her?**

**8. If you want people to believe what you say, do you normally tell them good things or bad things about yourself? Or do you avoid yourself altogether?**

Honest testimony is much more powerful than a message of “look at me; I don’t drink, I don’t do drugs, I’m a good person, I read the Bible every day. You should be like me.” Okay, that’s a little extreme, but as in our previous lesson where we discussed distortions of the gospel, your testimony can be equally distorted by leaving things out, by trying to make yourself look a little bit like Jesus, by exaggerating, etc.

Some people prefer to not talk about themselves at all. This may be a mark of shyness or humility, which is not bad. On the other hand, a testimony is much more powerful when it involves you and you tell it from the heart.

This is a tough thing to get right. Some people love to go on and on and talk about themselves. That’s not good either. I heard a testimony a few months ago that told a very moving story. Had it been told in 10 or 15 minutes, listeners would have been asking questions and wanting to know more. But unfortunately, the guy went on and on about himself for an hour and a half and he totally lost most of his audience.

So try to strike a middle ground like Paul does: who you are, why you’re qualified to talk (what you did and where you came from), what happened to you

and where you are now. And almost always, shorter is better than longer. As William Strunk said nearly a century ago in *The Elements of Style*, “do not overstate, do not explain too much, omit needless words, avoid fancy words, and be clear.”

**9. Twice in this passage (v. 13 & v.23), Paul reminds the Galatians of his past. What is his purpose in doing so? How can we apply this?**

Many of the Christians well knew about Paul, as he was a great persecutor of their brothers before Christ appeared to him. But as he immediately began preaching Christ, the Churches soon heard that this great persecutor had been turned, and was now doing great works for Christ.

As with the answer to Q 8, honest testimony carries more weight than simply talking about the wonderfulness of your life since coming to know Christ. Testimony that includes both before and after is much more powerful than focusing on after only.

**10. Do you know anyone who was once hostile to Christ but is now His follower? How about someone of another religion? Or an atheist? What was the major factor in that person becoming a Christ follower?**

**11. If you had to convince someone that Christ is real by giving an example from your own life, what would you say?**

## Galatians 1:11-24 ~ Scripture Verses [NIV-1984]

### Paul called by God

<sup>11</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. <sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. <sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

<sup>18</sup> Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. <sup>21</sup> Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they praised God because of me.

(See note on Scripture in Lesson 1 about NIV-1984 vs NIV-2011)