



GALATIANS

ACCEPTED & FREE

STUDY GUIDE • SIX SESSIONS

JADA EDWARDS

ZONDERVAN

Galatians Beautiful Word Bible Study Guide

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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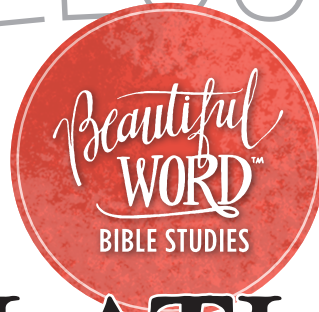
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CONTENTS

Beautiful Word Bible Study Series Introduction	5
How to Use this Guide	9
SESSION 1: The Hidden Power of Acceptance	11
SESSION 2: Your Life Is Rich in Purpose.	29
SESSION 3: Approval in Christ > Human Approval	47
SESSION 4: The Truth about Your Inheritance	65
SESSION 5: You've Been Set Free for This.	83
SESSION 6: Your Restoration Restores Others.	101
Scripture Memory Cards.	120
Endnotes	124

WELCOME



GALATIANS

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SOMETIMES the Bible can seem overwhelming. Where do you go for words of comfort when you're feeling overwhelmed, lost, or frustrated in life? What book of the Bible do you turn to for wisdom about the situation you find yourself in?

The Beautiful Word Bible Study series makes the Bible come alive in such a way that you know where to turn no matter where you find yourself in your spiritual journey.

Have you ever experienced a moment when you felt unaccepted? Perhaps it was the way you dressed, your accent, or the color of your skin. Maybe you felt like you were too much or just not enough. Or perhaps you couldn't pinpoint the cause, and you're left with that sinking feeling that you just didn't fit in—and maybe you never will.

When we sense that we're unaccepted, it has this way of unraveling us from the inside out. We replay the scene on an endless mental loop calculating what we could have said or done differently. We rehearse our failings from the past and our weaknesses of the present. We start to wonder what we *should*, *could*, *no*, *must* change about ourselves.

That's one reason it's so important to know in the deepest recesses of your soul that you are wholly and fully accepted in Christ, by Christ and, through Christ. From your birth, God has called and chosen you—yes, you! Whenever you catch a whiff of rejection, you can find security in the liberating acceptance of Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote the churches of Galatia (modern-day Turkey), in part, because they had forgotten this foundational spiritual principle. Within two years of visiting the churches in the region, a group of devout, God-fearing, people known as the Judaizers had slipped into the church. Now the term *Judaizer* does not refer to Jewish people in general, but a particular movement in the early church that tried to convince the church that God's acceptance through Christ wasn't enough.

Paul taught:

God's acceptance through Christ = Enough

The Judaizers taught:

God's acceptance through Christ + select Mosaic laws = Enough



Rather than cling to the pure acceptance and freedom of Christ, the Judaizers argued that following the Mosaic law (which included circumcision, dietary food restrictions, and Sabbath regulations) was required to truly be right with God. This addition may not seem like much at first glance, but it threatened the very foundation of the gospel.

That's why Paul's letter to the Galatians reads so fiery. Unlike other epistles, you won't find a request for prayer or abundant words of commendation or thanksgiving. Instead, Paul takes a more stern and solemn approach. Paul's letter is both a reflection of his personal acceptance in Christ and a reminder to the churches at Galatia that they *are* accepted. He outlines, in detail, the work and meaning of the gospel to challenge and remind these believers—and us—that the gospel is enough. Acceptance through Christ gives us security in our standing relationship with God and liberating freedom to live lives that bear spiritual fruit.

Deep spiritual acceptance brings healing and wholeness, renewal and revival—not just to us, but to those around us. Perhaps that's one reason Martin Luther placed Galatians on the mast-

head of the Reformation and described it as his favorite epistle. John Wesley was so deeply moved by Paul's letter that when he sought revival, he preached from Galatians.

"In a sense I believe this epistle has been the backbone and background for every spiritual movement and revival that has taken place in the past nineteen hundred years," observes J. Vernon McGee. "And, my friend, it will be the background for other revivals."¹

Through *Galatians* may you find the comfort, wisdom, healing, and wholeness that comes from discovering your acceptance and authority in Christ alone.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Group Size

The Beautiful Word *Galatians* video curriculum is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, small group, or during a weekend retreat. After watching each video session, you and the members of your group will participate in a time of discussion and reflection on what you've learned. If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time.

Materials Needed

Each participant should have their own study guide, which includes video outline notes, group discussion questions, a personal study section, Beautiful Word coloring pages, and Scripture memory cards to deepen learning between sessions.

Timing

The timing notations—for example (20 minutes)—indicate the actual time of video segments and the suggested times for each activity or discussion. Based on your allotted time, you may not get to all the discussion questions. Remember that the *quantity* of questions asked isn't as important as the *quality* of the discussion.

Facilitation

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Opening Group Activity

Depending on the amount of time you have to meet and the resources available, you'll want to begin the session with the group activity. You will find these activities on the group page that begins each session. The interactive icebreaker is designed to be a catalyst for group engagement and help participants move toward the ideas explored in the video teaching. The leader will want to read ahead to the following week's activity to see what's needed and how participants may be able to contribute by bringing supplies or refreshments.



THE HIDDEN
POWER OF
ACCEPTANCE

A watercolor-style background with various shades of brown and tan. A prominent horizontal band of darker brown color runs across the middle. The word "GALATIANS" is written in white, serif, all-caps font across this band.

GALATIANS

Opening Group Activity (10–15 MINUTES)

What you'll need:

- ▶ Sheet of blank paper for each person
 - ▶ Several packets of colored pencils or crayons
1. Invite participants to sketch, or summarize in a few words, a memory in which they felt acutely unaccepted.
 2. On the flip side of the paper, invite participants to do the same regarding a memory in which they felt acutely accepted.
 3. Discuss the following:
 - Briefly describe each image.
 - What are some of the negative effects of feeling unaccepted?
 - What are some of the positive effects of feeling wholly accepted?

SCRIPTURE COVERED IN THIS SESSION:

GALATIANS 1:1–24

Session One Video (23 MINUTES)

NOTES: *As you watch, take notes on anything that stands out to you.*

➡ The letter of Galatians embodies a sense of urgent, direct language.

➡ God created a plan that you could never achieve on your own.

➡ Any alteration to the gospel is a complete distortion of the gospel.

➡ How many times do we doubt the authority that God has given us?

➡ Followers of Jesus Christ are called into unpopular situations.

➡ Distort means "to transpose."

➡ It doesn't matter if you have a history of great decisions or ones you're not proud of, God has a calling for you.

➡ Personal testimony shows us that God doesn't do things without reason.

Group Discussion Questions (30–45 MINUTES)

1. Read Galatians 1:1, 11–16. When have you experienced people second-guessing you because you didn't match what others expected? How did you respond?
2. The Judaizers taught God's acceptance through Christ + Select Mosaic laws = Enough. Look at the equation below. What are you most tempted to place in the blank and why? (ex., Striving, Achieving, Volunteering, Being Nicer, Behaving Better, etc.) What are you most tempted to place in the blank.

God's acceptance through Christ +
= Enough.

3. Jada teaches,

“When we understand that we are accepted and claimed by Christ, we can confidently walk in His authority. We don't have to conjure up self-confidence or recite man-made mantras. We can boldly stand before men because we are fully embraced by Christ.”

What are some man-made mantras that you have recited? (*I am as good as my success, I must be the smartest in order to be accepted, etc.*) What Christ-centered statements can you replace them with? (Use the truth of God's Word to rewrite your mental script.)

4. Read Galatians 1:6–9. When have you stayed silent when you needed to speak up? What caused you to remain silent—your insecurity, fear of rejection, lack of authority, or something else? Explain.
5. Read Galatians 1:15–24 in which Paul clearly explains his calling and assignment. Take a few minutes to write two sentences that sum up how God has called and assigned you. Share your response.
6. In what ways are you looking for validation from others instead of from God? How is waiting for others' validations hindering you from being obedient to what God has called you to? What is the story that God has been writing through you?

Close in Prayer

Consider the following prompts as you pray together:

- ▶ *Help us to accept that Christ has fully accepted us.*
- ▶ *Give us strength to stand on the authority of God alone and refuse to seek the acceptance of man.*
- ▶ *Learn to boldly live out our personal assignment from God.*



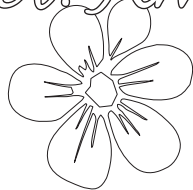


Preparation

To prepare for the next group session, read Galatians 2, tackle the three days of personal study, and memorize this week's passage using the Beautiful Word Scripture memory coloring page. As an added bonus, look up the Scripture memory passage in different translations and take note of the variations.

Grace and peace
to you from God our
Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ,
who gave himself
for our sins to rescue
us from the present evil age,
according to the will of our
God and Father, to whom be
glory for ever and
ever. Amen.

—Galatians 1:3–5



SESSION

1

PERSONAL STUDY TIME

DIGGING INTO THE

Beautiful
WORD™
BIBLE STUDIES

GALATIANS

The Hidden Power of Acceptance

DAY 1

GALATIANS 1:1–5

Correspondence written in Paul's day often followed the same Greco-Roman format for letters. The opening identified the sender and recipient, followed by a salutation or welcoming words.

It's
important
to note that

**GOD
CALLS ALL**

of us, not
just the
apostles,

**to
proclaim
the good
news**

of Jesus
& Christ.

1. **Read Galatians 1:1–5. Paul's initial greeting in Galatians differs from his other letters. Look up and read Ephesians 1:1–2, Colossians 1:1–2, and Philemon 1–3. Make a note of the differences and similarities in Paul's greetings. What does this reveal about Paul's concern for the churches in Galatia?**

2. **Read Galatians 1:1–5. Identify each of the elements of the opening:**

Sender (1:1):

Recipient (1:2):

Salutation: (1:3–5):

Paul sets the reader on course for what he wants to accomplish. The opening verse identifies the source of Paul's apostleship. Now an apostle means "one who is sent with a commission." The twelve disciples and Paul were chosen by God and Christ to establish the early church.

Right off the bat, Paul wants us to know that his authority does not come from his lineage or a particular commissioning ceremony or from graduating from such-and-such school. His authority comes through Jesus Christ and God who raised him from the dead. This theme will continue to unfold during the first two chapters.

3. **How would you describe the divine commissioning and appointing that God has given you? Sum up each one in two sentences each.**

I have been commissioned by God to . . .

.....
.....


I have been appointed by God to . . .

.....
.....

After noting the recipients of the letter, Paul delivers a greeting that often appears at the beginning of his epistles: grace and peace (v. 3).

4. **In what areas of your life do you most need to experience grace and peace immediately?**

GRACE
(*charis*) is the unmerited favor of God that's founded in his steadfast love.



PEACE
(*shalom*) is a holistic deep wellness and completeness.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

When Paul writes of

"THIS EVIL AGE,"

he is not referring to a literal period of time but rather the

SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD

that are ruled by the

ACCUSER OF THE SAINTS.

The churches in Galatia were giving into this system by

EMBRACING

the teaching of the Judaizers, when all along

GOD

had something much better for them in Christ.

5. Name one person in your life who you can pray grace and peace over right now. Take a moment to write a prayer for that person in the space below.

.....

.....

6. Consider the order of grace and peace. In what ways do you need to experience the grace of God before you can experience the peace of God?

Grace and peace do not come from humans, but only from above. As believers, we are showered with grace and peace because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

7. Read Galatians 1:4 and fill in the blanks below. Notice what Paul chooses to highlight about the work of Christ.

(Christ) gave himself for

to rescue us from

according to the

How have you experienced Christ accomplishing this work in your life?

Paul wants us to know that our salvation is not based on our works but rather on the work of Christ on the cross. The Galatians had become confused and duped by false teachers. They'd lost sight of the truth that right relationship with God comes through Christ with nothing added.

Paul concludes his opening with a type of doxology or offering of praise. He's so in awe of what God has done, he can't help but celebrate God's goodness.

8. Read Galatians 1:5. What does giving glory to God realistically look like in your life? What are three things Christ has done for you in the past that compel you to offer glory to God? What are three things in your life *today* that compel you to offer glory to God right now?

DAY 2

GALATIANS 1:6–10

1. Read Galatians 1:6–7. What has distressed and shocked Paul? Why is the gospel apart from grace so dangerous?

2. Read Exodus 32:8. How are the Galatians repeating the patterns of the Israelites?

One of the challenges of the teachings of the Judaizers was that they never denied the facts of the gospel—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What they denied was that the work of Christ was enough. They added to the truth by suggesting the Galatians must also follow the Jewish law, or else they wouldn't be saved. They tried to mix the pure gospel of Christ with the traditions of men. Paul reminds them that standing on Christ's authority is an "all or nothing" deal.

3. In what areas of your life are you tempted to add to the gospel of Christ in order to feel accepted? Where are you striving to be good enough, achieve enough, or accomplish enough to earn God's love or favor?

4. If you remove God's grace from the gospel, what do you have left? In what areas of your life have you been tempted to abandon God's grace?

- Professionally:
- Relationally:
- Personally:

Legalism tries to convince us that self-reliance and self-preservation are better ways of life. Legalism whispers, "Try harder. Do more. You can't trust God fully in this area." Legalism will make you feel that everything rests on you, and will leave you with an overwhelming low-grade sense of exhaustion.

Meanwhile, Grace whispers, "In Christ, you are more than enough. You are accepted. Rest in my favor and love." Grace will always leave you trusting God more, grateful for his provision, and content in his presence.

5. Which voice is speaking loudest in your life right now—the voice of legalism or the voice of grace? Explain.

Paul wants his readers to know that proclaiming another gospel is destructive, and those who preach a false gospel should be destroyed. He repeats the curse twice to highlight the weightiness of the matter. After issuing such fiery words, Paul says he is not trying to please anyone but God, again highlighting the point that his apostleship comes from God alone.

6. Read Galatians 1:8–10. What’s one example in your life where pleasing God and pleasing people are in direct conflict? What changes do you need to make to please God above all else?

DAY 3

GALATIANS 1:11–24

In addition to undermining Paul’s message, the Judaizers were also questioning his apostleship because he was not one of the original twelve disciples. Paul addresses this issue by reminding them through his personal history, transformation, and travels that his calling came directly through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

1. Read Galatians 1:11–12. How did you first receive the good news of Jesus? Describe a time when Jesus made himself real to you.

2. Read Galatians 1:13, Acts 8:3, and Acts 9:1–2. How did Paul specifically try to destroy the church?



The original twelve disciples

included
Andrew,
Simon Peter,
James and
John (Sons
of Zebedee),
Philip,
Nathanael,
Matthew,
Thomas, Simon
the Zealot,
Thaddaeus,
James (son
Alphaeus),
and Judas
Iscaiot.



Paul mentions that God called him to **PREACH** *to the*
GENTILES. *A Gentile is anyone belonging to* **any nation** *or people group other than those of Jewish descent.*

3. If you want to gain credibility with someone, do you normally tell them good things or bad things about yourself? Paul openly shares about his persecution of Christ followers. Why do you think he takes this approach in Galatians?
4. Read Galatians 1:14–16, Acts 9:3–9, and Acts 9:13–19. How does Paul’s story of transformation demonstrate the power of Christ? Describe how you have experienced the power of Christ transforming you.
5. Who do you know that was once hostile towards Christ but is a passionate follower?

What was the major factor in that person becoming a believer?

6. The Judaizers were suggesting that Paul was dependent and subordinate to the other apostles. Paul makes his case for his independence as an apostle. Why do you think this argument was important to him?

7. Read Galatians 1:17–24. What specific details highlight that Paul was not waiting for further instruction from someone else to preach the gospel? Why do you think that is relevant to this particular letter and to this particular audience? How is this relevant to you today?

Paul shares the story of his life to give us an example of the **freedom** we can experience through the **grace** of Jesus Christ. Paul's life provides a living testimony of his **acceptance**, appointment, and authority in Christ. He tells his story in three parts by sharing his life before Christ (1:13–14), his encounter with Christ (1:15–16), and how his life is different as a result (1:17–24).

Using these three stages, write a brief description of how Christ has changed your life in the space below:

▶ How You Lived Before Christ:

.....
.....

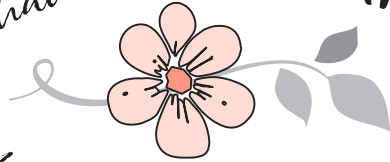
▶ How You Encountered Christ:

.....
.....

▶ How Your Life Is Different Because of Christ:

.....
.....

As you **reflect** on your personal study and Galatians 1,
what are the beautiful words



that the Holy Spirit
has been highlighting to **YOU** through this time?

Write or **draw** them in the space below.

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