

# Genuine Good News

## Topic

The gospel's genuineness

## Theme

We can know the gospel is genuine because it fits God's revelation, brings transformation to the sinner, and results in God's glorification.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will share the gospel with confidence in its genuineness.

## Materials

- Resources 1, 2, and 4

## Scripture Focus

Galatians 1:11–24

## Summary

Paul proved the genuineness of the gospel as he continued his letter to the Galatians. He shared with the Galatian churches that he received the gospel as part of God's special revelation, testified to its transforming power, learned how it fit in the context of Scripture, and witnessed its purpose to glorify God.

## Outline

- I. The Gospel Has a Divine Origination (Gal. 1:11, 12)
- II. The Gospel Causes Life Transformation (Gal. 1:13, 14)
- III. The Gospel Fits in God's Revelation (Gal. 1:15–20)
- IV. The Gospel Brings God's Glorification (Gal. 1:21–24)

## Memory Verse

*"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (Galatians 1:11).*



## GETTING STARTED

Use the following activities to spark the learners' interest in God's ability to change a person's life.

### Taste Tests

Set up a blind taste test. Pour several cups of generic cola and several cups of Coke or Pepsi into unmarked cups. Have several learners taste both colas to see if they can guess which one is the name brand cola.

**ASK:** How willing are you to buy store brand products rather than genuine, name brand products? (Q1)

**ASK:** What genuine, name brand products can you not live without? (Q2)

The Galatians were faced with a product decision: go with Paul's gospel or choose the Judaizers' gospel. Paul finished Galatians 1 with four reasons to choose his gospel, the genuine gospel with divine origin that brings true life transformation.

### Conflicting Advice

**ASK:** What conflicting advice have you received when facing a tough decision?

**ASK:** What swayed you to decide?

The Galatians listened to and seriously considered the Judaizers' new spin on the gospel. Consequently, they were in danger of forsaking God's directions from Paul. They had to choose what to do: to keep following the gospel of grace, or to change to the new "gospel" of the false teachers. Paul wrote to persuade the Galatians to choose his gospel, the genuine gospel with divine origin that brings true life transformation.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Why should the Galatians follow Paul's gospel instead of the Judaizers' gospel? Paul gave the Galatians four reasons: the gospel has a divine origination; the gospel causes life transformation; the gospel fits in God's revelation; and the gospel brings God's glorification. Paul's presentation gave proof that the gospel he preached is indeed the genuine gospel.

### I. The Gospel Has a Divine Origination (Gal. 1:11, 12)

In the opening paragraph of Galatians, Paul addressed the problem of the Judaizers' false teaching. They claimed that believers needed to trust Christ but also keep the regulations of the Jewish law. Paul called this teaching a perversion of the gospel of Christ. That's to be expected for a gospel invented by people. Any "gospel" created by people could never work. It's God's wrath that hangs over humanity. So, He must be the One to tell us how to be saved. Only He can say what satisfies His justice and what will allow us to escape His wrath.

**READ:** Galatians 1:11, 12.

Paul's gospel was "not after man." He hadn't received it from a man, nor had he learned it from a religious document passed along to him. Instead, Jesus Christ revealed the gospel to him. His message, like his calling, had come straight from the Lord.

**ASK:** Describe the qualities of a person who believes he can invent a new gospel. (Q3) *The person must be both arrogant and ignorant.*

**ASK:** How much did you consider the gospel's origin before you trusted in Christ as your Savior? (Q4)

Almost none of the New Testament had been written and circulated when Paul wrote to the Galatians. Confusion over the gospel is understandable, although not excusable. The Galatians had heard it directly from Paul. That should have been enough (1:6). When confusion reigned, Paul's letter made abundantly clear that his gospel originated with God.

## **II. The Gospel Causes Life Transformation (Gal. 1:13, 14)**

The genuine gospel will bring genuine change in a believer's life. Paul used his own life as an example of the transformation that comes from the gospel. Before his conversion, he became famous for his efforts to spread and protect Judaism. He had an impeccable pedigree and was educated by the eminent rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

**READ:** Galatians 1:13, 14.

As a Pharisee, Paul's zeal for Judaism was white hot. His wholehearted commitment to the religious system showed in his allegiance to both the law of Moses and the rabbinic traditions passed on by the scribes. His Jewish countrymen highly esteemed him as a leader among the Pharisees.

**READ:** Acts 9:1, 2. **ASK:** Describe Paul's pre-salvation feelings toward believers? (Q5) *He hated them and threatened to kill them all to squash their movement and silence their gospel.*

Paul's loyalty to Judaism blinded him to the identity of Jesus Christ. He made no connection between Jesus and the Old Testament prophecies. He missed that Jesus is the Messiah. So, "beyond measure" he "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13). Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54–60), and "he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

The Judaizers in Galatia cast doubt on Paul's apostleship. They rejected his gospel because they denied his authority. But when Paul described his past life as a zealous, murdering Pharisee, he blunted their attack. If Paul had believed and preached a false gospel, then why had his life changed so dramatically? His whole youth had been consumed by zeal for the Jewish traditions. He left that life in an instant and almost immediately began preaching Jesus Christ, the Man he had

passionately hated.

Paul's Damascus road experience provides the explanation for his radical life change (Acts 9:3–6). Christ appeared to Paul to show him the light of the gospel. Paul realized his persecution of the church was hurting, not helping, God's cause. He embraced the gospel and trusted Jesus as his Savior. His zeal continued, but for the cause of Christ instead of the persecution of Him. Only God's power could have brought about such an immediate transformation.

**ASK:** What transformations did you notice in your life after your salvation? (Q6)

**ASK:** How did those transformations affect your confidence in the gospel? (Q7)

**ASK:** How should Paul's transformation encourage us? (Q8)

After salvation, Paul rejected the very traditions the Judaizers had added to the gospel of grace. He understood that no one can obey his way into Heaven. Jesus made that point clear.

**READ:** Matthew 5:20. **ASK:** What point did Jesus make about the Pharisees' righteousness? (Q9) *It falls short of the righteousness needed to be acceptable to God, a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ rather than through good works.*

### III. The Gospel Fits in God's Revelation (Gal. 1:15–20)

Paul's fanatic defense of Judaism came to an abrupt halt when Christ spoke to him on the road to Damascus. After that experience, Paul did an about-face and followed the Lord instead of the Jewish religious leaders. He identified himself to the Galatians as "the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10) and recognized that he owed his spiritual life and ministry to God's gracious calling.

Paul testified that God had separated him from his mother's womb and called him by His grace (1:15). No human rationale could explain God's act of kindness in calling Paul, the murderer of Christ's church. The apostle simply said, "It pleased God."

**READ:** Galatians 1:15, 16. **ASK:** Why do you think it pleased God to call Paul to salvation and to preach to the Gentiles? (Q10) *Paul had a detailed understanding of Scripture; he was a gifted communicator; his background as a famous Jew made his conversion a strong testimony to the power of the gospel.*

God had two purposes in calling Paul. The initial purpose was to reveal God's Son in him (1:16), that is, to bring Paul to a personal knowledge of Christ. Paul knew the Old Testament but only from a Jewish perspective. He needed to learn the Old Testament from a Christian perspective. He had to retrain his brain to see Jesus as the same Messiah the Old Testament predicted. God called Paul to give him a firm understanding of Christ.

God's second purpose in calling Paul was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Though Paul did preach soon after his salvation (Acts 9:20), he still had a lot of doctrine to learn. So, how did he prepare for an extensive ministry to the Gentiles? Not by going to "flesh and blood" for instruction and enlightenment.

Luke didn't mention  
Paul's time in Arabia.  
Most likely it fits between  
Acts 9:22 and 9:23.

**READ:** Galatians 1:17.

Paul stayed away from Jerusalem and the apostles living there. He had no problems with Peter or the other apostles, but God had called him away from them to a time of private learning. Paul went somewhere in Arabia for a time before going back to Damascus. Where in Arabia isn't important. It's Who was in Arabia that's important. Paul apparently learned directly from the Lord about the Messiah's place in Scripture and the ins and outs of preaching and ministering to Gentiles.

The book of Romans, Paul's treatise on the gospel, is evidence that Paul spent significant time learning from the Lord in Arabia. The Holy Spirit later moved Paul to record what he learned so believers throughout the ages might take advantage of Paul's personal training. Romans provides us with the best explanation of the relationships between law, grace, and gospel.

**READ:** Romans 1:16, 17. **ASK:** Summarize what Paul wrote about the gospel as a result of his training from the Lord. (Q11) *The gospel is God's power for salvation and the only way to receive Christ's righteousness.*

Paul's point to the Galatian Judaizers is that the gospel of Christ doesn't conflict with the Old Testament. Rather, the gospel fits in God's revelation of truth from beginning to end. And Paul knew that better than anyone else in his day because of his time of study and learning under the Lord's direction. So, the Judaizers' arguments against his authority and apostleship were once again proven ignorant and misinformed. Paul's gospel is the true gospel.

**READ:** Galatians 1:18, 19.

After spending three years in Damascus and the surrounding district of Arabia, Paul went to Jerusalem for a fifteen-day visit. This brief period allowed time for only a few conversations with Peter and James (1:18, 19). Paul had been a believer for three years, so his message had not come from the leaders of the church but from the Lord Himself. In fact, according to Acts 9:28 and 29, preaching and disputing with Hellenistic Jews consumed most of Paul's time in Jerusalem.

**ASK:** Why do you think Paul cited his limited contacts with the apostles? (Q12) *Paul's point is that the gospel he preached came from his encounter and time with the Lord.*

**READ:** Galatians 1:20.

Paul's brief autobiographical sketch played such a crucial role in his defense of the gospel that he confirmed it with an oath. Recognizing that both the credibility of his ministry and the reliability of the gospel were at stake, he used the strongest language to emphasize that he was telling the truth.

#### **IV. The Gospel Causes God's Glorification (Gal. 1:21–24)**

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 2. Point out Syria, Cilicia, and Antioch as you mention them.



After leaving Jerusalem, Paul withdrew to the remote areas of Syria and Cilicia. Apparently, he did not have further direct contact with the apostles or with the Jerusalem believers for more than a decade. Instead, he lived and ministered in Tarsus. Barnabas eventually brought Paul to Antioch, where they taught in the rapidly growing church (Acts 11:25, 26).

**READ:** Galatians 1:22.

During his time in Antioch, Paul was unknown to the believers in Judea (Gal. 1:22). Some of the earliest converts may have remembered what he looked like from his days as a persecutor. However, those memories would have faded. The believers may have heard him disputing with the Hellenistic Jews during his brief visit to Jerusalem, but he was more a name than a face to them. This fact supported his claim that he had not received his commission or his message from any individuals.

**READ:** Galatians 1:23.

News spread of Paul's dramatic transformation from church persecutor to gospel preacher. His amazing story wowed the believers in Judea.

**READ:** Galatians 1:24.

**ASK:** Why did the churches in Judea glorify God when they heard Paul's testimony? (Q13) *Because only God could change a man in such a dramatic way.*

Everything God does, including saving sinners, falls under His overarching purpose to bring glory to His name. The Judaizers sought glory for themselves. They liked the status of being the bearers of a new gospel. Naturally their gospel resulted in their praise and their names being glorified. But the genuine gospel always glorifies God, for it demonstrates His power and love in unmistakable ways.

**ASK:** How do you respond when someone shares a testimony about being significantly transformed after trusting in Christ for salvation? (Q14)

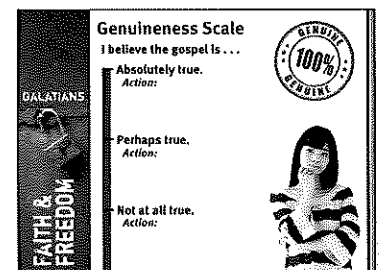
As evidence that he was truly saved and that his gospel worked, Paul didn't hesitate to include that God received the glory for his amazing transformation. As a Pharisee, Paul craved attention and credit for his works. As a transformed believer, he was happy to let God receive all the glory.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Take Action

Because the gospel is from God, it has a power like no other message. But that power stays dormant if we aren't faithful to share it.

**DISPLAY:** Resource 4. Most likely all your learners will readily agree that they believe the gospel is absolutely true.



**ASK:** If a person believed the gospel is absolutely true, what actions might he take? (Record or reveal answers on the resource.) *He would learn to share it; he would take advantage of opportunities to share it; he would be enthusiastic about it.*

**ASK:** If a person believed the gospel might be true, what actions might he take? (Record or reveal answers on the resource.) *He might be willing to discuss it; he might give lip service to it; he might investigate it further; he might find other things to occupy his thoughts.*

**ASK:** If a person believed the gospel is not at all true, what actions might he take? (Record or reveal answers on the resource.) *He might oppose those who believe it; he might try to discredit it; he might ignore it altogether.*

**ASK:** What do your actions suggest about your beliefs concerning the genuineness of the gospel? Would someone observing your life readily agree that you believe the gospel is absolutely true?

Agreeing the gospel is absolutely true is easy for a believer. Living like it's absolutely true is harder. But God will give us His enabling to learn to share the gospel with boldness and enthusiasm. Ask God for both boldness and opportunities to share the gospel every day.

### Unreachable?

Most of the believers who ran from Paul (Saul) when he persecuted the church probably never dreamed about him trusting in Christ as his Savior. He seemed beyond the gospel's ability to save. But God got ahold of him, and Paul responded to become one of history's most successful missionaries.

**ASK:** Who in your life seems unreachable with the gospel? (Q17)

**ASK:** What steps will you take to reach that unreachable person with the gospel? (Q18)

### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Share the genuine gospel frequently and boldly.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 1:11. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

