

free

A STUDY IN GALATIANS

*Christ has made us really free.
So, stay free! Do not let yourselves
be made slaves again.*

— GALATIANS 5:1



Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

2 USING THIS WORKBOOK

5 GALATIANS 1: FREE FROM YOUR PAST

11 GALATIANS 2: FREE FROM LEGALISM

15 GALATIANS 3: FREE FROM STRIVING

19 GALATIANS 4: LIVING FREE

23 GALATIANS 5: FREE TO BEAR FRUIT

27 GALATIANS 6: FREE TO SERVE

30 DAILY DEVOTIONAL

36 APPENDIX



Introduction

Christ has made us really free. So, stay free! Do not let yourselves be made slaves again.
- Galatians 5:1

In the middle of a dispute with His opponents, Jesus made a bold statement: *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* **John 8:31b-32**

His declaration did not sit well with these proud Jews, who placed their confidence in their identity as Abraham's descendants and claimed *"we have never been slaves to anyone."* (v 33)

Despite their sudden forgetfulness that the entire nation had been enslaved in Egypt (which God often reminded them about), their assertion revealed a misunderstanding of freedom. Jesus clarified: *"Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* **John 8:36**

More than 2,000 years later, many people still have a hazy view of freedom, linked to culture and politics instead of biblical truth. We live in "the land of the free and the home of the brave." From our country's inception, we've valued the "unalienable rights" of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." And ever since, we've struggled to preserve and defend freedom, some of us paying the price with our very lives.

But do we really understand what it means to be free?

In the book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul writes to believers whose freedom was in jeopardy. Upon arriving back in Antioch from his first missionary journey, Paul received a report that the churches he had started in the region of Galatia were at risk. A group of Judaizers—those who wanted to make obedience to the Mosaic Law a requirement of the Christian faith—had gained an influence in the Galatian churches. The Galatians were Greeks, but were believing the lie that they needed to first become observant Jews in order to be justified before God. The implication: Faith in God's grace isn't enough. Salvation must be earned.

This was no minor issue. Paul knew exactly what was at stake: the very truth of the gospel and the freedom that is found in Christ. And, like any passionate freedom fighter, Paul used his most aggressive language to call the Galatians to live as free children of God.

If you are a follower of Christ, then **Jesus has set you free**. Over the next six weeks, we'll explore both what we're *free from* and what we're *free to*. And it's my prayer that this deeper understanding and experience of freedom will transform us individually and corporately, allowing us to share the love—and freedom—of Jesus with our relational world.

Using This Workbook

This book is intended to help you encounter spiritual truth, engage with your oikos, and experience meaningful community. It contains a place to take sermon notes, foster group discussion, experience a weekly challenge, and room to record prayer requests and answers to prayer.

While it can be beneficial to anyone, it's designed to be used in the context of a LifeGroup, which is the best place for you to be cared for and challenged to deepen your faith in Jesus. So if you're reading through this right now and you're not in a LifeGroup, find one ASAP at centralsf.org/lifegroups.

Be sure to take time before your first meeting to familiarize yourself with this format, so you can get a sense of where you're heading over the next six weeks.

OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

It can be hard for small groups to answer this basic question: What do we do when we meet? That is why we have tried to provide more than enough content and questions for you. Inside this workbook you will find teaching, discussion questions, and even some material for you to explore on your own during the week.

A typical group session for *FREE* will include the following:

SERMON NOTES - Be sure to take this workbook to our weekly services to jot down notes from that week's sermon. Your sermon notes will help add to the discussion in your weekly group experience. If you miss the weekend message, Central's sermon archive is available online at centralsf.org/sermons and message podcasts are available on iTunes (centralsf.org/itunes) and Spotify (centralsf.org/spotify).

CONNECT - It's essential that we connect with others as we follow God. Relationships are built when we are around trustworthy people with whom we can be real and honest about life. It might be a while before you get to that level, but we encourage you to take the risk and share some of your story with the group. Ideally, everyone will share no more than a few minutes each.

WATCH - Spend a few minutes viewing a brief video introduction from a member of Central's teaching team. Getting a variety of perspectives can lead to more interesting and helpful discussions.

LAUNCH - Read this section aloud to help set up the discussion portion of your time together. This short segment will help introduce the main concept you will be discussing that particular week.

EXPLORE & APPLY - In these sections, you'll read aloud relevant passages of scripture and use the questions provided to discuss the topic. You'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study and into biblical living, moving from observation and interpretation (the Explore section) to life application (the Apply section). Our hope is that you'll progress beyond Sunday School answers and be a little uncomfortable as you pursue deeper faith. Our prayer is that these questions and discussions make a tangible difference in your life and, as a result, the lives of people in your relational world.

CHALLENGE - It's one thing to sit and talk about concepts and quite another to put them into practice. Consider this your homework section, giving you something tangible to study more in depth and put into practice the rest of the week, moving you from head knowledge to genuine change in character and conduct.

DIVING DEEPER - Each week we'll double-click on specific topics that require a little more time and attention. By exploring the historical and cultural context, our hope is that you'll gain a better understanding of concepts that are sometimes glazed over in traditional studies of scripture. (Try to carve out a few minutes to read and discuss this section as a group but don't feel pressure to totally "get it" right away. You might have to explore this on your own as part of your weekly review.)

PRAYER & PRAISE - Praying together helps us to draw closer to God, both individually and as a LifeGroup. Though life can be tough, as we enter His presence with our burdens and requests, He can remind us that we are not alone. Every week it's important to spend around 10 minutes hearing about the things that are weighing on your heart or filling your life with joy. Be sure to use the space provided to jot down your group's prayer requests and praises so you can be praying throughout the week.

THE DAILY - Located in the back of the book, this section provides you with five days of selected scripture passages for each week, relating back to themes from the corresponding chapter in Galatians. As you gain a more well-rounded contextual understanding of the topics explored in Paul's letter, you'll be able to more fully engage in group discussion. And you'll get to spend consistent time alone with God.



Chapter One

FREE FROM YOUR PAST

CONNECT

If your group is new, make introductions. Allow each person to share:

What do you do with most of your time (work, play, volunteering, etc.)?

How long have you been attending Central?

What do you hope to get from this LifeGroup experience?

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer inviting God to be with you as you meet.

WATCH - Week 1 video at centralstf.org/free

LAUNCH

The Shawshank Redemption is generally considered one of the best movies of all time. Released in 1994, the film explores the effects of long-term incarceration on prisoners, using the term “institutionalization.” Also known as Institutional Syndrome, this occurs when convicts have spent so much time in prison that they don’t know how to live in society after being released.

This phenomenon is illustrated powerfully in the life of Brooks, the long-time prison librarian who has known nothing but prison life for fifty years. In fact, when he is finally scheduled to be released, he attempts to murder a fellow inmate so that he won’t have to face life on the outside. Upon his eventual release, Brooks lives alone and works a thankless job at a grocery store. Isolated and without purpose, he no longer knows who he is. Unable to live free, Brooks commits suicide.

Sadly, followers of Christ sometimes experience our own version of Institutional Syndrome. After being set free by Jesus, we somehow find comfort in returning to a variety of things from our past: Religious systems or other institutions based on guilt, shame, or fear. Addictions that help us escape reality. Self-importance from positions or titles we held.

As you read this chapter, pay close attention to Paul’s story — how the gospel set him free from his past and free to bring God glory.

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 1 (It's 24 verses, so you might want to tag-team it.)

Verse 4 gives us a brief glimpse at the gospel. What does it say about Jesus? About us?

Paul calls himself an apostle. What does this mean? Why is it so important?

What is Paul trying to convey in verses 1, 11, and 12 about his ministry and his message? Why would he need to emphasize this?

Paul shares his story in verses 13-24. What was he like before meeting Christ? How did Jesus change his life?

Paul could have been defined by his former life and been riddled with guilt and shame. Why do you suppose he felt free from his past?

DIVING DEEPER: A DIFFERENT GOSPEL (Galatians 1:6-7)

These verses explain the main reason Paul writes this letter: these believers were abandoning the gospel of grace and turning to a distorted version of the Good News, which was really not good news at all. Why? How? As you continue in this study, reading not only the book of Galatians but also the Introduction section and the readings in The Daily, you'll better understand and appreciate the context. So don't just skim over these verses but keep them in mind when reading the rest of the book of Galatians. Just consider this as a word of caution: If we think we've outgrown our need for understanding the gospel (like we've advanced beyond such elementary principles), we too might be susceptible to believing something entirely different than the Good News. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. That's the gospel.

APPLY

Some theologians say that the essence of the gospel answers three questions: Who is Jesus? What has He done? Why does it matter? How would you summarize the gospel using your own words or another Bible verse?

The Galatian believers were turning to a distorted version of the gospel. What distortions of the gospel are prevalent among people today? Which distortions have you been guilty of believing?

At the center of the Galatian controversy was the teaching of a group of legalistic people (called Judaizers) that emphasized obedience to the law over the freedom found in the gospel. They wanted a return to Old Testament rules and regulations to be essential to church membership.

What are some of the common things we return to because we don't understand how to live free? How have you experienced this in your own life?

CHALLENGE

Each session, we'll offer a chance to expand your horizons by going deeper into each topic. Consider this your homework before next week.

Read: Learn about Paul's conversion in the book of Acts. You can find these passages in The Daily on page 30.

Write: In your own words, what is the gospel? Record your thoughts in the space provided.

Go: Initiate a conversation with someone in your oikos. Tell them that Central is curious about what certain religious words mean to people. Then ask, "When you hear the word 'gospel', what comes to mind?"

Turn the page to go over your LifeGroup commitment →

Important Instructions: Before moving on to prayer requests, take a moment and read through the LifeGroup Commitment below. Go around the circle and have each person read a portion. Then take a minute to have everyone actually sign the document in their own books.

LIFEGROUP COMMITMENT (Read Aloud)

LifeGroups at Central Church are designed to be safe places where you are cared for and challenged to become more and more like Jesus. Go around the room, each person reading one expectation. Agreeing to these expectations will help everyone get the most out of this group experience.

I commit to participate and engage in this community by living out the following:

MAKE LIFEGROUP A PRIORITY: I'll prioritize the scheduled group meeting and communicate in advance if I'm going to miss the meeting. I know that inconsistent attendance is one of the major factors that will keep this group from flourishing.

TAKE OWNERSHIP: The group will be as good as I make it. I'll share roles within the group and help challenge everyone to grow.

BE ENGAGED BUT SELF-AWARE: I'll stretch myself to be as open and honest as I can with my perspectives and experiences. I understand some of us are talkers and some are more quiet, so I'll be aware of not dominating the discussion or always leaving the weight of discussion to others.

FACE CONFLICT: Community can often be very messy, and conflicts may arise. I'll offer grace to others and won't leave the group over disagreements, realizing God might use conflict to develop my faith in some way I don't currently understand.

HONOR OTHERS: I'll accept everyone without judgment. I will model James 1:19 in that I will be quick to listen, and slow to speak. I'll listen well and refrain from giving quick answers, simple fixes, or engaging in side conversations.

VALUE CONFIDENTIALITY: I will work to make this a safe space for others to take risks in sharing their story and burdens. I will see their honesty as a gift and honor it by safeguarding it. What I hear and say in the group stays in the group. Period.

MULTIPLICATION: Recognizing the command to "go and make disciples," I will participate in identifying a potential leader or two in our group OR be actively inviting others to join this group. As the Lord raises up such a leader, we will try to grow this group in such a way that a new group becomes established.

Signature

PRAY

An important element of community is sharing each other's burdens and lifting them up to God in prayer. Write down prayer requests and answers to prayer. Be sure to pray for them throughout the week.





Chapter Two

FREE FROM LEGALISM

CONNECT

Share with the group about last week's challenge. Did you do it? What did you learn?

WATCH - Week 2 video at centralsf.org/free

LAUNCH

Over the last few decades, the word "evangelical" has become common in American culture. Unfortunately, in recent years, the label has become more associated with politics and race but at its heart, evangelicalism is theological and spiritual.

So what is an evangelical? Without delving into church history, we can essentially describe an evangelical as a person who affirms the following statements:

1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
2. Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
3. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.
4. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.

So whether you consider yourself a Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or any other -ist or -an, if you agree with those four points, you're an evangelical.²

Within evangelicalism is a strain of belief called fundamentalism. Birthed as a reaction to modernism in the early 20th Century, you can think of Christian fundamentalism as a comfortable space for modern-day pharisees. Some tendencies of fundamentalism include a rejection of mainstream science, the longing for an idealized past, and an unhealthy fixation on End Times prophecy.³ Fundamentalists tend to see the dominant culture not as people for whom Jesus died, but as enemies to be defeated or tempters to be avoided. But perhaps the most significant trait of any fundamentalist is **legalism**: the emphasis on keeping God's rules and avoiding His judgment more than experiencing the freedom of His mercy and grace. (If you grew up in an environment where drinking, dancing, playing cards, and watching movies were all no-no's, you experienced a taste of fundamentalism.)

What's the point of all this? Galatians 2 describes how even sincere Jesus-loving people can be influenced by legalistic, fundamentalist tendencies from time to time. I'm looking at you, Peter.

While Peter was one of Jesus' closest disciples and had a tremendous impact on the spread of Christianity, Paul tells a story about confronting Peter's unChristlike behavior. Peter (aka Cephas) knew the truth and implications of the gospel, but because of pressure from subversive legalists called Judaizers, his actions weren't reflecting the freedom and grace that Jesus offers to anyone and everyone adopted into God's family. He retreated to Jewish rules, traditions, and observances at the exclusion of Gentile Christians. Racist? Maybe. Legalistic and hypocritical? Totally.

This chapter transitions from the story of Paul's early ministry into his conflict with Peter. Try to read this chapter through the lens of the law vs grace. And see why freedom in Christ is worth fighting for.

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 2

Before going any further, let's define some terms:

Circumcised/Circumcision: the surgical removal of a male's foreskin, required of all Jews as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:9-14).

Cephas: the Aramaic version of Peter, meaning "rock" (Matthew 16:13-17).

Justified/Justification: the action of declaring or making a person righteous in the sight of God, achieved only through the work of Christ (Romans 3:21-30).

Why did Paul go to Jerusalem? What were the results?

What issue arose? Why? (see vs. 4)

Verses 9-10 seem to indicate a happy ending. So what happened that caused Paul to confront Peter?

How did Peter "deviate from the truth of the gospel?" How was he being a hypocrite?

Re-read verses 6 and 12. How did Paul's attitude about other people's opinions differ from Peter's?

At the heart of Paul's argument was freedom from the law. Why is it impossible to be justified by keeping the rules? (Does this mean the law is bad?)

DIVING DEEPER: REMEMBER THE POOR (Galatians 2:10)

The only stipulation the Jerusalem church leaders put on Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was that he "remember the poor." What did this mean, practically speaking? Who should they remember, only poor Christians? And what did it mean to "remember" them? For the answer, we have to read other passages of scripture that provide more explanation.

Acts 11:25-26 states that Paul and Barnabas spent a year teaching the believers in Antioch. That same chapter goes on to mention a famine in Judea and how, before leaving on their first missionary journey, the two of them delivered funds to the Jerusalem church collected by the church in Antioch.

Paul writes to the church in Rome about his plans to deliver another offering to Jerusalem, detailing how the churches in "Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem." (Romans 15:26) These were the first documented fundraisers in church history.

So was this a mandate for the worldwide body of Christ or just for those new Greek churches to help out the poor mother church in Jerusalem? A broader examination of scripture will uncover more than 2,000 verses about poverty, most of them imploring people of means to provide tangible help to the poor and oppressed.

How have we (as individuals and a local community of faith) done at remembering the poor? Do you think it's something we are eager to do? Why or why not?

APPLY

It's been said that we all tend to default into one of two categories: self-righteous religious people or rebellious irreligious people. Which of these do you identify with? Based on your answer, how do you respond to legalism? Do you find it appealing or unattractive?

Paul confronted Peter because the integrity of the gospel was at stake. What principles can we learn about the *why* and *how* of confrontation within the body of Christ?

How do you typically handle conflict? How has it impacted your relationships?

Peter's hypocrisy centered on how he acted around Gentiles when the legalistic Judaizers were present. In what ways do you struggle with the fear of what others think of you? (Do you consider yourself a people pleaser?) Has it changed over the years? How does your attitude about other people's opinions affect your relationship with Christ?

CHALLENGE

Discuss: How did last week's challenge go? Did you do it? What happened?

Read: Peter caved to legalism when he should have known better. This week, read his story in Acts 9-11 (The Daily on page 31) to see why his actions described in Galatians 2 were so surprising.

Memorize: Galatians 2:19-20 is one of the most important statements in all of scripture. Commit this passage to memory this week, praying for clarity and understanding of why it applies to your life.

For those who didn't grow up in AWANA, scripture memorization can seem intimidating. But it doesn't have to be. Start small and simple: Read the passage several times a day. Write it down in several places, like your bathroom mirror or the door of your refrigerator. Have a friend or family member quiz you. Eventually, you'll find that memorizing a verse or short passage will help you take God's Word to heart and make you more like Jesus.

Go: Brainstorm some ways that you can "remember the poor." Share them with the group next week and decide on one point of action for your group to undertake.

PRAY

In addition to prayer requests, remember to record answers to prayer.

NOTES

1. The root meaning of "evangelical" comes from the Greek word euangelion, meaning "good news" and often translated as "gospel" in English Bible translations. (For more on this topic, grab a copy of Central's Bible study "What is the Gospel?" at centralstf.org/gospel)

2. The National Association of Evangelicals uses this simplified version of the Bebbington Quadrilateral, which defines evangelical belief and conviction rooted in the following areas: biblicism (a particular regard for the Bible), crucicentrism (a focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross), conversionism (the belief that human beings need to be converted), and activism (the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort). For more information, go to NAE.net.

3. For a fair, informative, and entertaining explanation of evangelicalism, watch Phil Vischer's video at www.bit.ly/vischervideo.



Chapter Three

FREE FROM STRIVING

CONNECT

In what location do you feel the most relaxed, free from worry and stress? How often do you get to this place?

WATCH - Week 3 video at centralsf.org/free

LAUNCH

One of our initiatives at Central Church is to influence the next generation with the gospel. Our focus in Next Gen Ministry is primarily on impacting Generation Z, which includes anyone born after 1996.

While there are several noteworthy characteristics that separate this generation from previous ones, one of the most remarkable is their high levels of stress; many members of Gen Z report anxiety levels equal to that of soldiers coming back from overseas deployment.¹

Why are today's teens and young adults so stressed out? Read this synopsis from the Pew Research Center:

Unlike the Millennials – who came of age during the Great Recession – this new generation was in line to inherit a strong economy with record-low unemployment. That has all changed now, as COVID-19 has reshaped the country's social, political and economic landscape. Instead of looking ahead to a world of opportunities, Gen Z now peers into an uncertain future.²

One financial analyst put it even more bluntly: "The American dream is slipping away from the younger generations."³

Economic uncertainty. Family instability. Cultural upheaval. Many factors in determining their future are outside of their control but the one thing this generation of kids *can* control is their own level of effort. Study harder. Practice longer. Compete. Win.

Gen Z kids feel pressure from all sides (from parents, teachers, coaches, and peers) to get good grades, excel in sports, be involved in as many activities as possible, and get plenty of likes/follows/retweets on social media. And the result is a mentality of striving to do more, achieve more, excel more, be more.

But this way of thinking is not limited to Gen Z. People of all ages are susceptible to a meritocracy mentality; that whatever we get, we need to earn. This mindset can creep into our spiritual lives as well. We want to prove our worth—that we're good, holy, obedient—in order for God to bless us. We feel pressure to perform and show God (and others) how spiritually mature we are. But this is contrary to the gospel.

In this chapter of Galatians, Paul moves from the personal to the theological, making a strong case for justification by faith alone. We are free from striving, free from trying to win God's favor through human effort and self-reliance. We were saved through faith and we can now live by faith. The pressure is off.

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 3:1-9

Paul begins by asking a series of rhetorical questions. What is he trying to convey in the first five verses?

Read verse five using a few different translations (NIV, NLT, ESV, etc). What does it mean to pursue perfection "by the flesh?"

Paul uses some harsh language in this chapter (calling the Galatians "foolish") along with terms of affection (see verse 15). How does this give us a glimpse into his relationship with the believers in Galatia?

Why do you think Paul brings up the example of Abraham?

How was Abraham justified? What makes someone a true child of Abraham?

Read Galatians 3:8-9 and 27-29

How is a diverse church the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham?

How does faith in Christ bring unity in the midst of diversity?

DIVING DEEPER: ONE IN CHRIST JESUS (Galatians 3:27-29)

It's hard for us to understand how absolutely shocking Paul's words about unity and equality were to his audience.

A Jewish blessing (not found in scripture, but prayed daily by some Jewish men) said this: "Blessed be God that he did not make me a Gentile. Blessed be God that he did not make me a slave. Blessed be God that he did not make me a woman."⁴ So it was incredibly jarring for Paul to say, "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In a world where Jews saw themselves as superior to Gentiles, where up to 33 percent of people were slaves, and where people unquestionably believed in the inferiority of women, Paul's statement was revolutionary.

Imagine being a member of the church in Galatia. If you were a Gentile woman or a slave, how would this declaration change your perspective about your own identity?

APPLY

From early on in life, we're taught that we live in a meritocracy, where we (for the most part) are rewarded for our achievements and that if we want to accomplish our goals, we have to work hard and earn them. How does the gospel stand in contrast to this belief system?

Compare the dying words of these religious leaders:

"Strive without ceasing." Gautama Buddha

"It is finished." Jesus Christ (John 19:30)

In what ways do you struggle to rest in the finished work of Jesus? How are you still striving for the unattainable?

In spite of Paul's statement at the end of the chapter about unity in diversity, Sunday mornings are often described as the most segregated time of the week. Why do you think this is true? What are we doing wrong? What can we do about it?

CHALLENGE

Plan: Last week, the assignment was to brainstorm ways your group could "remember the poor." What did you come up with? Decide on one action step that your group can do together.

Read: Learn more about Abraham's journey of faith in The Daily on page 32.

Memorize: Without forgetting last week's passage, commit Galatians 3:28 to memory.

Go: Abraham listened to God's voice and responded with faith, even though it meant uprooting his life. Ask God how you can radically walk by faith this week, especially if it's something uncomfortable or that you've been putting off for a long time.

PRAY

NOTES

1. The American Psychological Association's annual STRESS IN AMERICA™ survey (OCTOBER 2018)
2. Details at pewresearch.org
3. Logan Kane at seekingalpha.com
4. Scot McKnight in the NIV Application Commentary



Chapter Four

LIVING FREE

CONNECT

How did last week's challenge go? What's the most significant thing you've learned or done as a result of this study so far?

WATCH - Week 4 video at centralsf.org/free

LAUNCH

As you're probably aware, this summer marked the recognition of a new federal holiday. Historically known as Jubilee Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day, Juneteenth commemorates the Emancipation of African-American slaves.¹

For many generations, enslaved people in what is now the United States hoped for, prayed for, and longed for freedom. So, in the midst of the Civil War, January 1, 1863, was an incredibly important day. This was when President Abraham Lincoln issued The Emancipation Proclamation, which established that all enslaved people in the rebellious Confederate states "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

But in reality, this Presidential decree didn't instantly free the slaves. Enforcement of the Proclamation relied upon the advance of the Union Army into Confederate territory. And, as the most remote state of the Confederacy, Texas had seen no large-scale fighting or significant presence of Union troops, so implementation was slow and inconsistent.

It wasn't until June 19th, 1865, (about a month after the end of the Civil War) that emancipation became a reality. On that day, federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to take control of the state. U.S. General Gordon Granger stood on Texas soil and read the following: "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free."²

More than two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the 250,000 enslaved people of Texas were finally free.

1,800 years prior, Paul made a similar declaration to the church in Galatia: "You are no longer slaves. You are God's children, and you will be given what he has promised." Galatians 4:7 (CEV)

Galatians 4 is the culmination of Paul's theological arguments against the Judaizers who were trying to enslave people to the Law. He makes the case for the believers' true identity in Christ: They had been adopted into God's family. And God's children shouldn't act like slaves.

The French author Voltaire once wrote, "It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere."³ As we study this chapter and reflect on it the rest of the week, try to be honest with yourself and others. Are you living like an heir or a slave? Are you willing to cast off your chains and truly live free?

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 4:1-11

When someone is adopted, what are some of the practical changes they experience? How is this similar to what happens on a spiritual level when we're adopted into God's family?

What do verses 4-7 tell us about Jesus? About us?

According to verses 8-9, what frees us from slavery to inadequate gods? What are some of the "gods" that enslave people today?

DIVING DEEPER: WEAK AND WORTHLESS FORCES (Galatians 4:3, 8-9)

Depending on the translation, in verses 3 and 9, Paul refers to being enslaved by the "basic principles" or "elemental forces of the world," calling these things "weak and worthless." How do we make sense of this concept? It's all about the context.

Because these were Gentiles, Paul addressed the pagan idolatry that the Galatians practiced before coming to Christ: "...you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods" (v 8). Greek culture was entrenched in the worship of false gods (from Apollo to Zeus). But the truth of the gospel had set them free from this false religion. But now that these Greeks were trying to comply with the legalism of the Judaizers, Paul's question, "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?" implies that observance of the Mosaic law after coming to Christ is no better than their former life of paganism.

This must have been surprising to the Galatians. They didn't want to worship idols, but the one true God. But Paul used this powerful language to illustrate that when legalism takes the place of Christ as the means of relating to God, it is just as bad as idol worship. Neither pagan religions nor strict observance of the Mosaic law can overcome the power of sin or give new life. They are both weak and worthless.

What are you substituting for an authentic, faith-filled relationship with Jesus?

APPLY

After making a theological appeal, Paul returns to a personal one. Read verses 12-20. How would you describe his tone?

Why do you think he appealed to his relational ties with the Galatians?

Have you ever known someone who proclaims faith in Christ but turns away from the gospel? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

How should Paul's example shape the way we treat people who drift from the faith? What would it look like to lovingly call them to repentance?

In what ways do you struggle to live out your identity as a child of God?

What could you do this week to more intentionally pursue freedom while maintaining intimacy with Jesus?

CHALLENGE

Read: Galatians 4 continues to discuss God's covenant with Abraham and mentions people like Hagar and Isaac. Read more about this and more in The Daily on page 33.

Memorize: Commit Galatians 4:8-9 to memory.

List: Thoughtfully and prayerfully make a list of the "weak and worthless elemental forces" that pose as "gods" in your life (money, relationships, food, media, possessions, etc). Then choose a practical step of repentance. (Maybe you need to confess an area of struggle to a trusted friend.)

PRAY

NOTES

1. Learn more about Juneteenth in the following articles from Christianity Today:
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2020/june/juneteenth-answered-prayer-slavery-emancipation.html>
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/june-web-only/juneteenth-truer-independence-day.html>
2. Granger quote: <https://www.history.com/news/what-is-juneteenth>
3. Voltaire quote: <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/303730>



Chapter Five

FREE TO BEAR FRUIT

CONNECT

If there were no obstacles, what would you do that you've been putting off doing? In other words, what is something you've always wanted to do, but have never done?

WATCH - Week 5 video at centralsf.org/free

LAUNCH

As mentioned in the introduction section of this study, Christians often have a view of freedom that is shaped more by history and culture than by scripture. Listed below are a few thoughts about freedom by some relatively important people. Read them out loud as a group. But before you have any discussion about the merit of each quote¹, run it through a mental filter: Is this perspective on freedom shaped by a biblical worldview or a cultural one?

"Is freedom anything other than the right to live as we wish? Nothing else." **Epictetus**

"May we think of freedom not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right."

Peter Marshall

"In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved." **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

"We must be free not because we claim freedom, but because we practice it." **William Faulkner**

"Freedom: To ask nothing. To expect nothing. To depend on nothing." **Ayn Rand**

"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A FEW OBSERVATIONS:

To define freedom as the right to do whatever we want is contrary to the principles found in Galatians 5. (Which you get to read today.)

While most Americans value independence, self-sufficiency, hard work, and rugged individualism, we must also acknowledge that true spiritual freedom doesn't come from self-reliance, but is an undeserved gift that was achieved by the work of Christ on the cross.

While Goethe (quote #6) was no Billy Graham, his statement is very perceptive and accurately describes the life of anyone who relies on anything but the gospel to find true freedom.

We're coming down the home stretch. If Galatians chapters 1-2 were primarily personal and chapters 3-4 were theological, we can label the last two chapters as practical. Pay attention today to how Paul explains how to put our freedom into practice.

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 5:1, 13-26

How do you define freedom? Has your definition changed? Why?

According to verse 1, what was the purpose of Christ setting us free?

How does Paul instruct the Galatians to use their freedom in Christ?

Why does loving your neighbor fulfill the whole law?

What does it mean to “walk by the Spirit?” How does this keep a person from carrying out the desires of the flesh?

What is the difference between “work” and “fruit?”

DIVING DEEPER: WALKING IN THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:16-18)

While we could (and might) do an entire series on the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5 might cause you to ask this important question: What does it mean to walk in (or by) the Spirit?

When we place our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes and makes his home inside of us, giving us new life. The Bible often uses the word “walk” in a figurative sense to mean “way of life.” If life is described using the metaphor of a journey, then each moment is a step that we walk. Those steps, those moment-by-moment choices, are either directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit or by our flesh, the selfish patterns we’ve developed as a means of meeting our needs on our own.

One of the key principles of life is the fact that we tend to do what we *want* to do. But when the Holy Spirit begins to get a hold of our life, He creates a whole new set of desires. And when these desires are stronger than the desires of the flesh, then we are “walking in the Spirit.”

Paul’s letter was written to a church, not an individual. So we must walk in the Spirit together, in community. When we “keep in step with the Spirit” (v 25), it’s like being in a finely tuned marching band—not only playing music but following the choreography and keeping our eye on the drum major to stay in a perfect synchrony of sight and sound, creating a thing of beauty.

APPLY

As you read over Paul’s description of the fruit of the Spirit, where do you see the ripest fruit in your life? Which fruit is still really green and undeveloped? What are some practical steps you could take this week in asking the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in that area?

How do you struggle most to rely on the Spirit, reverting to self-reliance to produce character growth?

What would it look like for you to keep in step with the Spirit this week?

Paul calls us to use our freedom to “serve one another through love.” Who can you serve this week out of the freedom you have received in Christ?

What are some practical changes that have occurred in your life since embracing the freedom of the gospel?

Where do you find yourself most in need of freedom?

CHALLENGE

What's the key to the Christian life? Some might say things like obedience, faith, repentance, discipline, accountability, community, etc. But, when it comes to walking with Jesus for a lifetime, you'd be hard pressed to find anything more important than understanding and experiencing the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Read: This week's installment of The Daily is all about the Spirit. You'll find it on page 34.

Study: Since its founding in 1951 Cru (the parachurch ministry formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ) has emphasized the significance of the Spirit-Filled Life. This week, spend some time reading and applying *Satisfied*, one of Cru's most popular teaching tools. You can find it at cru.org/mycampus/satisfied or just Google "cru satisfied."

PRAY



NOTES

1. All freedom quotes found at brainyquote.com



Chapter Six

FREE TO GROW TOGETHER

CONNECT

This is the last session of *FREE*. If you haven't already, use this time to discuss your next steps as a group. Are you going to keep meeting? If so, how often and what are you going to cover? If not, what are some other options for people who want to try another long-term LifeGroup? (Questions or concerns? Check with the Community Life team: centralsf.org/lifegroups)

WATCH - Week 6 video at centralsf.org/free

LAUNCH

A community that loves Jesus and loves each other is a beautiful thing. When writing about the first few centuries of church history, the secular historian E.R. Dodds said, "The genuine love and unity among Christians was...perhaps the strongest single cause of the spread of Christianity."¹

A prime example of this occurred in the middle of the 3rd Century during a pandemic that swept across the Mediterranean world. At the height of what became known as the Plague of Cyprian, five thousand people died every day—just in the city of Rome. And in Alexandria, Egypt, two-thirds of the population was wiped out.

The Roman Empire was not ready to handle this epidemic. Roman "scientists" knew of no treatment other than to avoid all contact with those who had the disease. Doctors, priests, and nobles fled infected areas in droves.

But you know who didn't flee? The church. This small group of Christians wanted to express God's love by serving people with deeds of compassion. So even before the plagues, the local church in Rome supplied food for 1,500 poor people every day. In Antioch, Syria, the number was 3,000. During the Plague, when nearly everyone else fled, the early Christians risked their lives by doing simple deeds like washing the sick, offering water and food, and consoling the dying.

The believers not only took care of their own, but also reached out to their neighbors. So, at the risk of their own health, they saved an immense number of lives. The basic medical care they provided greatly reduced mortality. The food and water they provided allowed the sick, who were too weak to care for themselves, to recover.

In the midst of chaos, and in an era when serving others was seen as demeaning, Christians served people. And the Empire took notice. "Look how they love," was heard on the streets.

Inspired by these early Christians, author Charles Moore applies their sacrificial love to today: "Instead of retreating from the onslaught of pain and death, the church has the chance to demonstrate that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Instead of fear, which makes it difficult to look beyond the precautionary, followers of Christ can show the world that it is in giving our lives away that we find life."²

Keep this story in mind as you read and discuss the last chapter of Galatians.

EXPLORE

Read Galatians 6:1-17

What are some of the “responsibilities” Paul describes in this passage? What do these have to do with freedom?

Why is gentleness an important aspect of restoration? (Hint: See Galatians 5:23)

What does verse 4 imply about self-sufficiency?

Why do you think Paul encourages self-examination?

How is the principle of sowing and reaping tied to “working for the good of all?”

What is the new creation in verse 15? Why does it matter?

DIVING DEEPER: SHARE YOUR BURDENS, CARRY YOUR LOAD (Galatians 6:2,5)

At first glance, Galatians 6 seems to contain a glaring contradiction. In verse 2, Paul commands people to fulfill the law of Christ by carrying one another's burdens. But a few verses later, after warning against self-deception and comparison, he says that each of us needs to carry our own load. So which is more valuable: Self-sufficiency or serving the community? Are we really supposed to help each other or is it every person for themselves?

The answer comes down to language. The Greek word in verse 5 translated as “load” is *phortion*. This word conveys the imagery of a ship's cargo or a courier's bag: an intentional load designed to be carried by the vessel or person to whom it was assigned. However, the word in verse 2 is *baros*: an excessively heavy weight that would sink a ship should it attempt to carry it. These “burdens” are items that are in excess; picture someone trying to deliver a piano by himself.

The problem occurs when we confuse loads with heavy burdens. Sometimes pride keeps us from asking for help with our heavy burdens. But, on the opposite end of the spectrum, we might be tempted to sometimes abdicate our personal responsibility to care for the daily tasks we've been assigned, whether at home, work, church, or elsewhere.

These verses serve as a reminder to humbly serve one another. Sometimes that means helping when our brother or sister is weighed down. Other times, it means having the humility and wisdom to ask for help to carry our burdens. Both cases display the love of Jesus to a watching world.

APPLY

In your experience, how do most faith communities approach people caught in wrongdoing?

Have you ever been a part of someone's restoration? What was it like?

Which do you find harder to do: carrying other people's burdens or asking for help with your own? Why?

How can we keep from getting tired of doing good? (Hint: It's related to freedom.)

What does this chapter imply about the value of living in a Christ-centered community? How have you experienced a sense of community at Central?

Looking back on this entire study of Galatians, what's the one main thing that you need to apply to your life?

(If your group is going to continue to meet): What can we do as a group...

- ◆ to serve the body of Christ?
- ◆ to help each other engage with our oikos?
- ◆ to grow together in unity and love?

CHALLENGE

Although we've reached the end of this study, try to view this time as a new beginning, a springboard for your next big step of faith. Based on the themes of Galatians, choose to invest in at least two of the following areas over the next two months:

- ◆ Continue to spend daily time in God's Word. Use one of the plans on the Bible App or subscribe to a devotional like *With God Daily*. But first, finish this week's installment of The Daily on page 35.
- ◆ Get more focused on the Good News by reading Central's four-week *This is the Gospel* curriculum: centralsf.org/gospel
- ◆ Equip yourself to effectively share the love of Jesus with your relational world by learning about Oikos Evangelism: centralsf.org/oikos
- ◆ Complete a 14-day devotional on the Holy Spirit: centralsf.org/thirsty
- ◆ Look for ways to use your spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ. Set up a personalized session with our Connections Director, Haley Wiggers, at haley.wiggers@centralsf.org.

PRAY

NOTES

1. E.R. Dodds. Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety
2. Charles Moore at sustainabletraditions.com

The Daily

Reading God's Word to know God's heart.

Each week's passages relate to themes and topics in the corresponding chapter in Galatians. Besides answering the questions listed below, as you engage with each passage, ask God what He wants you to learn about yourself, about human nature, and about Jesus. Be sure to take a few minutes to reflect on the passage, talk to God, and listen to what He might be saying to you.

WEEK ONE

DAY ONE ACTS 6:1-7

What problem was the early church facing? What did they do about it? What were the results?

DAY TWO ACTS 6:8-15, 7:51-53

What was Stephen accused of? How did he respond? How do you handle criticism?

DAY THREE ACTS 7:54-60

Why were the authorities so upset with Stephen? How did he react?

DAY FOUR ACTS 8:1-8

What was Paul's role in the death of Stephen? What were the results of the persecution against the Jerusalem church? Do we see this kind of thing happen today? Why or why not?

DAY FIVE ACTS 9:1-31

This is the story of Paul's conversion. Besides the immediate changes in Paul, what impact did it have on the church? Write down your own story of coming to know Christ.

WEEK TWO

DAY ONE

ACTS 9:36-43; 10:1-8

What is significant about where Peter stayed? (You might have to Google this one.)

How was Cornelius similar to Tabitha? (Compare 9:36 to 10:1-2) What kind of reputation do you have in the community?

DAY TWO

ACTS 10:9-33

What was the point of Peter's vision? Why was this so category-blowing?

DAY THREE

ACTS 10:34-48

What message did Peter preach? Why were the Jewish-background Christians so amazed at the Gentiles' conversion?

DAY FOUR

ACTS 11:1-18

The legalists in Jerusalem were initially up in arms about Peter's interaction with Gentiles. What changed their minds? What was the result? Why don't we see this kind of humility today?

DAY FIVE

ACTS 11:19-30

What were the characteristics of the church in Antioch? How did this group of Gentile believers bless the church in Judea? How is this a model for today?

WEEK THREE

DAY ONE

GENESIS 12

How did Abram demonstrate great faith? How did he prove that he was still very flawed? Describe how you can relate.

DAY TWO

GENESIS 15

What was the covenant God made with Abram? Why was Abram considered righteous? What makes you righteous in God's eyes?

DAY THREE

GENESIS 17

Why did God change the names of Abram and Sarai? Why was circumcision the sign of the covenant? How can people outwardly see that you are a child of God?

DAY FOUR

GENESIS 18:1-15; 21:1-7

Why did Sarah laugh? How did God prove himself faithful in spite of her lack of faith? When has He done the same for you?

DAY FIVE

HEBREWS 11:1-2; 8-19

What does this passage illustrate about the role of faith, even in the Old Testament?

WEEK FOUR

DAY ONE

GENESIS 16

How did Abram and Sarai circumvent God's plan? What were the results? When have you done the same?

DAY TWO

GENESIS 21:1-21

Why did Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away? What stands out about God's character in this passage?

DAY THREE

GENESIS 22:1-18

How was Abraham and Isaac's experience on Mt. Moriah a portrait of the gospel? How has God provided for you?

DAY FOUR

LUKE 19:1-9

Why did Jesus refer to Zacchaeus as a "true son of Abraham?" What is evidence that faith in Jesus has changed your life?

DAY FIVE

PSALM 105:1-11

How does God's covenant with Abraham make Him worthy of praise? How has He been faithful to you?

WEEK FIVE

DAY ONE

JEREMIAH 2:13 AND JOHN 7:37-39

Why did Jesus use the imagery of water to describe the Holy Spirit? How do you try to quench your spiritual thirst apart from the Spirit?

DAY TWO

2 CHRONICLES 6:41-7:3 AND ACTS 2:1-41

The first scene is the dedication ceremony of Solomon's Temple. The second is the day of Pentecost. How were God's power and presence on display in each? Why does it matter that, as a person indwelt with God's Spirit, you are the new temple?

DAY THREE

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

This passage demonstrates the distinct roles the three persons of the Trinity play in your salvation. Describe their differing roles. Which one stands out to you the most?

DAY FOUR

ROMANS 7:7-25

In speaking of the Old Testament commandments, Paul says that they actually increased the desire to sin. How have you experienced this effect with laws and rules? What was the point of God giving us the law?

DAY FIVE

ROMANS 8:1-18

How is living by the Spirit different from living by the law? How does this inner struggle play out in your life? What does it look like to be directed and empowered by the Spirit?

WEEK SIX

DAY ONE

ACTS 2:41-47

On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people became Christians. What were the characteristics of this new group of believers? Do you see this happening much today? Why or why not?

DAY TWO

TITUS 3:1-11

These are Paul's instructions for Titus as he pastors a young church. What stands out to you about how they are to treat each other?

DAY THREE

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

What is Paul trying to emphasize about unity and diversity in the body? How do you contribute to the body of Christ?

DAY FOUR

COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

Make a list of all the "one another" commands in this passage. Which of these do you find most difficult to do?

DAY FIVE

1 PETER 2:9-17

How does Peter say we are to live out our identity as God's people? How does this look different from the values of the world?

Appendix

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

-Matthew 28:18-20

Since these were his parting words, it would seem that making disciples is of great importance to Jesus. So, for over 2,000 years, the church has been trying to figure out how to do this effectively.

At Central, our mission is *"to help you share the love of Jesus with your relational world."*

According to a recent study, one of the key predictors of spiritual maturity is participation in a small group. Real transformational discipleship involves moving from sitting in rows (during a weekend service) where you are simply in proximity to one another, to sitting in circles, being in community with one another. That's why one of our components of building disciples is meaningful *community*.

B. WHAT IS A LIFEGROUP?

A LifeGroup is a Christ-centered group of 8-15 people committed to gather together regularly in an environment of grace and truth to become more like Jesus.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION

Christ-centered: The gospel is at the heart of who we are and what we do, knowing that we're more broken than we care to admit but more loved by God than we can imagine.

8-15 people: Healthy things grow. A group should always be looking to grow in depth, intimacy, maturity, and number. Once it reaches more than 15 people, the group typically seeks to multiply into two groups of 8 in order to have the capacity to involve more people.

Gather regularly: Relationships take quality and quantity time. Meeting weekly (or at least three times per month) helps foster a sense of community.

Grace & truth: Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance & encouragement we need to keep on going. Truth lets people know where you stand. Grace lets people know that you love them.

More like Jesus: Sanctification is a process where we are becoming who God intended—displaying spiritual fruit and doing what Jesus did.

C. LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Hosting a group is not nearly as difficult as you may be fearing it is. No one is expecting you to be a spiritual giant. This workbook is designed so that you can come alongside one another as co-learners. Hosting a group is as simple as opening your home, reading Scripture and questions aloud, playing a video, and having a

conversation from the heart. Trust us, after your first meeting, you'll find that your group will fall into a familiar rhythm and this whole process will become less daunting.

Be sure to use the workbook as a guide, not a straitjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the one in the lesson, ask it! Your group has the freedom to ask the questions that the Spirit is prompting. Sometimes those can lead to the most useful discussions of all.

If you approach each meeting with prayer and a little preparation, you will find this guidebook easy to use. Know that you are not alone on this journey; as a church we want to support you and your group along the way. Feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you have regarding your group. You can email Central's Pastor of Community Life, Neil Downey, at neil.downey@centralsf.org or call the church office at (605) 336-3378.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS FOR YOU AS YOU GET READY FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING:

Lead with hospitality: Creating a warm and welcoming environment is the first step of hosting a group. Who doesn't like the idea that someone is expecting them? Keep in mind that for many people, the thought of going to someone's house to have a "spiritual conversation" can be intimidating. It can trigger all kinds of insecurities. Be mindful of this in all your interactions with your group. From email communication to the way you greet them at the door, a warm and welcoming environment will go a long way toward easing their fears.

Learn names quickly: It's ok to use name tags! For new groups, it's especially hard to remember the flood of new names that come rushing at you and you are embarrassed to ask once you get to week three! So, for this six week journey, have name tags available to deepen connection within the group.

Start with Introductions: Especially for week one, hearing stories trumps getting through content. So take time to go around the circle and have everyone introduce himself or herself. Share some of the raw data from their life (family, occupation, etc.) but also include one significant thing about their life that would be good for the group to know about them.

Group Commitment: The key to getting off on the right foot with your group is to appropriately discuss and set expectations. Before you dive into the week one content, you will read through the Group Commitment on page 8 and have an opportunity to lay out clear expectations.

D. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When should I reach out for help from the Community Life Team?

Anytime you want! Sincerely, we want to hear from you! Don't feel like it has to be something big or really important to contact us. We love to be a sounding board for you. Call us early. Call us often.

Neil Downey	neil.downey@centralsf.org	605-275-1677
-------------	--	--------------

Haley Wiggers	haley.wiggers@centralsf.org	605-275-1665
---------------	--	--------------

Is it okay to invite someone to the group who is not a Central attendee?

The short answer is, of course! If the person does not have a home church or doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus, a group can be a great on-ramp to the Christian faith while providing a good connection to the

local church. Joining a group also provides a way to get to know other church members on a deeper level and develop new relationships with neighbors in your area. If the person has a home church, ideally they would get connected in their own church, however, there are times when it may be appropriate to make an exception.

What should we do if a member misses a meeting (or several)?

Define mutual expectations early on with the LifeGroup Commitment (pg. 8). If attendance becomes an issue with someone in the group, address it with them in person, not via email. Again, in this type of situation, err on the side of grace. Be in a place emotionally where you are more saddened that you didn't get to see the person at group than you are frustrated that they didn't show up.

How long will this group meet?

Your commitment to this group is through the duration of the six-week FREE series. We certainly hope and pray that your group will continue to meet well beyond the length of this campaign, but we are structuring this curriculum so that people who have always been hesitant about getting connected to a group will be able to experience authentic Christ-centered community.

At the end of this study, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some groups may launch relationships for years to come. Others might be stepping-stones into another group experience. Either way, enjoy giving it a try for six weeks and appreciate the journey.

If your group decides to continue meeting, you should decide as a group what the next study should be. There are several good ideas for resources at centralsf.org/lifegroups. If you're having trouble deciding, contact Neil Downey (neil.downey@centralsf.org) for help.

How often should we meet?

During the FREE series, groups meet every week. After the campaign, we recommend that LifeGroups meet three weeks a month and take the fourth week off. This works with busy schedules while also helping to maintain a sense of community. We need an occasional break, but we also need to be intentional with one another.

Some groups choose to meet every other week. One of the challenges of meeting every other week is that if someone misses, it will be a month since you have met with them. Therefore, groups that meet every other week will need to be intentional about looking for additional ways to build a sense of community.

What if this group is not working for us?

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this six-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don't typically buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. However, don't bail out before the six weeks are up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in their lives, too!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate hosts or leaders and homes on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This workbook

and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way. (Yeah, it sounds a little cheesy, but it really is true.)

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home.

A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home for the adults. This works extremely well if the homes are within a few blocks of each other. A final option is to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about solutions.

E. LIFEGROUP CALENDAR

Planning can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes/leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

DATE	SESSION	HOST
Sept. 25-26	Free From Your Past	_____
Oct. 2-3	Free From Legalism	_____
Oct. 9-10	Free From Striving	_____
Oct. 16-17	Free to Bear Fruit	_____
Oct. 23-24	Free to Serve	_____

Christ has made us really free.

So, stay free!

Do not let yourselves be

made slaves again.

Galatians 5:1



CENTRAL CHURCH

3102 W. Ralph Rogers Rd.

Sioux Falls, SD 57108

centralsf.org