



We looked this week at Galatians 4:8-31 and saw how Paul brings his argument through the letter to a head.

In 8-20 we see Paul's concern for the Galatian Christians, and his fear that as they start to add Old Testament style Law to the gospel they will essentially be moving back towards dead religion, away from the gospel they'd received in Christ.

In 21-31 we see Paul using the example of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar to make the point that the Law represents human effort, while even throughout the Old Testament God's blessings to his people always came through his generous promise. Slavery to the Law have no place in God's people... they are to be "children of the promise".

The key idea was that the Galatians needed to see just how wonderful the promise they have in Jesus is, and just how foolish it would be to turn to Law keeping or human effort instead.

Here are some questions which may be useful for your groups:

1. Look over the passage and the language Paul uses... what shows the strength of his feelings for the Galatians churches, and of his fears for them?
2. Reading through verses 8-20, what is it that the false teachers are leading them towards? Why is this bad for them?
3. Verses 21-31 are hard to understand! Why not skim the story of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 15, 16, 21... how does this sad episode illustrate how human effort fails to achieve God's blessings? If it's helpful for your group it might be worth discussing how we can read distressing stories like this, without losing sight of the goodness of God's plans.
4. Why is it important for the Galatians to understand that they are children of promise (verse 28-31)? What space does this leave for the teachers who were telling them they should get circumcised or follow Israelite tradition?
5. Do we believe this of ourselves? Read over Isaiah 54 together (which Paul quotes in verse 27), what difference does it make to us if we see that God looks at us like this?