

## Study Guide

**Monday, June 7. Read Galatians 1:6-7.** Some people in Galatia were teaching a “different way.” They were teaching that to be saved, Gentile believers had to follow Jewish laws and customs, especially the rite of circumcision. Faith in Christ was not enough. This message undermined the truth that salvation is a gift, not a reward for certain deeds. Jesus Christ made this gift available to all people, not just the Jews. Beware of people who say that we need more than simple faith in Christ to be saved. When people set up additional requirements for salvation, they deny the power of Christ. The Bible says there is only one way to be forgiven of sin; by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. No other person, method, or ritual can give eternal life. Attempting to be open minded and tolerant, some people assert that all religions are equally valid paths to God. We are respectful of other people’s ideas but that doesn’t mean their opinions are right. God provided one way – Faith in Jesus Christ. Which gospel are you listening to?

**Tuesday, June 8 – Read Galatians 2:15-16.** If observing the Jewish laws cannot justify us, why should we still obey the Ten Commandments and other Old Testament laws? We know that Paul was not saying the law is bad, because in another letter, he wrote, “The law itself is holy and right and good.” Instead, he is saying that the law can never make us acceptable to God. The law still has an important role to play in the life of a Christian. The law 1) guards us from sin by giving us standards of behavior; 2) convicts us of sin, leaving us the opportunity to ask for God’s forgiveness; and 3) drives us to trust in the sufficiency of Christ, because we can never keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. The law cannot possibly save us. But, after we become Christians, it can guide us to live as God requires. What is guiding you?

**Wednesday, June 9 – Read Galatians 5:16-18.** If your desire is to have the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23, then you know the Holy Spirit is leading you. At the same time, be careful not to confuse your subjective feelings with the Spirit’s leading. Being led by the Holy Spirit involves the desire to hear, the readiness to obey God’s Word, and the sensitivity to discern between your feelings and his promptings. Live each day controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. Then the words of Christ will be in your mind, the love of Christ will be behind your actions, and the power of Christ will help you control your selfish desires. There are two forces fighting for control of our lives – the Holy Spirit and our sinful nature. Paul is not saying these forces are equal – the Holy Spirit is infinitely stronger. But if we rely on our own wisdom, we will make the wrong choices. If we try to follow the Spirit by our own human effort, we will fail. Our only way to freedom from our evil desires is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Where are you getting your power?

**Thursday, June 10– Read John 15:1-17.** Christ is the vine, and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit. But those who become unproductive – those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment – will be separated from the vine. Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) cutting off and (2) cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometime discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don’t bear fruit are cut off at the trunk not only because they are worthless but also because they often infect the rest of the tree. The only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Jesus. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ the vine?

**Friday, June 11– Read John 15:12-17.** We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more. Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love and support. Do you allow small problems to get in the way of loving others? Jesus commands us to love them and He will give us the strength to do it.