## Watch the following video from the Bible Project for an overview of the letter to the Galatians. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmx4UjRFp0M> (9 minutes long)

## Introduction to Galatians & Fruit of the Spirit Studies

## The book of Galatians is a passionate plea by Paul to the church in Galatia to not to drift from the Gospel. False teachers (Judaizers) insisted that the Christians followed the Jewish Law *in addition* to placing their faith in Jesus. They claimed this was necessary to be saved.

## Paul’s letter quickly reveals his shock at what’s happening in the Galatian church. He argues for the legitimacy of the Gospel he had already taught them (1:10-2:14), pointing to the source of the Gospel (Jesus himself) (1:10-24); and the Gospel’s endorsement by the Apostles in Jerusalem (2:1-14).

## Paul makes his argument through various contrasts, that merge into each other:

1. Faith and ‘works of the Law’ (2:15- 3:15)
2. Promise and Law (3:15-3:29)
3. Freedom and Slavery (4:1-5:15)
4. Spirit and Flesh (5:16-26)

From Galatians ‘the True Gospel’ is the merging of Faith, Promise, Freedom and Spirit.

The ‘False Gospel’ is a merging of: Works, Law, Slavery and Flesh.

The first two studies of this series unpack the contrasts to set the foundation for growing the ‘fruit of the Spirit’.

# Study 1: Living by the Law vs Living by the Spirit

## Talk About

A meritocracy is a system where people advance because of their talent, effort, and achievement, rather than their wealth or social class. What have been some of your experiences of merit or meritocracy in your life and how did this impact you?

## Scripture

Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians to correct a problem that was spreading through the church. Some believed that to be a follower of Jesus, you also had to follow the Jewish law. In this study we’ll explore Galatians 2:15-3:14 where Paul explains why living by the law is incompatible with the gospel.

## Discussion

**Read Galatians 2:15-21**

1. What do you personally think it means when we say someone is “justified”?

Note: The biblical term “justified” is a legal term which means “declared innocent” or “not-guilty”.

You may wish to look up these other scriptures where justification is mentioned

* Isaiah 53:11
* Luke 10:29, 16:15, 18:14
* Acts 13:39
* Romans 3:24,28,30, 4:2,25, 5:1,9,16,18, 8:30, 10:10
* 1 Corinthians 6:11
* Galatians 3:8,11,24, 5:4
* Titus 3:7

1. Paul explains there is one way that will **never** lead one to be “justified”. How would you describe this one way?

Note: “Legalism is any attempt to gain acceptance or forgiveness from God through our own works or merits”.

1. According to this passage, what is the **ONLY** way that any one will ever be ‘justified’ before God?
2. If we believe we can be made right with God through the law, what happens to the grace of God in our lives and what does that mean for the sacrifice Jesus made? (v21).

## Read Galatians 3:1-9

1. In verses 2-5, Paul asks the following rhetorical questions (See below). Discuss each of the following. What is the answer Paul is expecting and why?
   * Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
   * Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
   * Does he who supplies the Spirit to you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
2. In verses 6-9, Paul uses the example of Abraham to illustrate that righteousness does not come by works of the law. What led God to declare that Abraham was righteous? Who are the true children of Abraham? Why do you think this is important?

## Read Galatians 3:10-14

1. In verses 10-12, Paul explains that it’s not possible to rely on/live by the law and live by faith simultaneously. In your own words, why are these two ways of living incompatible with each other?
2. Through Jesus death, He accomplished two amazing things for us:
3. Redeemed us from a curse. Describe the curse Jesus rescued us from.
4. Made a way for us to receive a blessing. Compare this blessing/promise to the curse.

What does this reveal to you?

1. What are some ways you’ve noticed ‘legalism’ seep into your life or community? Where do you think it comes from?
2. What are steps you can take to cooperate with the Spirit to drive out legalism and live by faith?

## Prayer

Ask the Spirit to reveal any legalism in your life, if things are revealed, confess them to God and ask for His freedom.

Pray for your group and also for the congregation, that the Spirit will transform us and set us free from all legalism, and lead us into life.