

May 22, 2022

Youth Topic:
**Love One
Another**

Unit III. Liberating
Letters

General Lesson:
**The Nature of
Christian Freedom**

Lesson
12

Background Scripture: Galatians 5:1-15

Print Passage: Galatians 5:1-15



The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (*Galatians 5:14*)

PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, pens, a board or flip-chart paper, markers
- Select a "Word of the Day."

LESSON OVERVIEW

Sometimes, people feel bound by laws and desires that keep them in chains. Where can we find freedom to experience life in transforming ways? According to the book of Galatians, God calls us to a freedom that is guided by love for others.

today's text. Share the photos and together create a PowerPoint presentation set to a song about freedom. Offer the PowerPoint to be viewed during worship, or post on your church's social-media page. "Freedom" by Eddie James is a good song about freedom. It can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGHdUillvXI>.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.

Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "Share about the last time that you served God by serving others."

It's Go Time! (illustration)

Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.

Using a smartphone camera, send the students on a brief, photo scavenger hunt in pairs to bring back photos in response to the idea of "freedom" in

REFLECT (10 minutes)

Have the students read this week's contemporary story and relate it back to the main points of this week's lesson.

Have the students read the contemporary story and then read and respond to the statement posed at the end of the story. As a transition to the lesson, say, "In today's lesson, Paul will help the Galatians understand that we can use our freedom as Christians to love and serve others, which actually fulfills the spirit of the Law of loving our neighbor."

INSPECT (10 minutes)

Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.

Back Up! (background)

Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.

The church in Galatia was founded by Paul during his first missionary journey. The church in Galatia was growing spiritually, and the Galatians respected Paul's teachings. Paul learned that the growing church was being penetrated by the Judaizers, and their false teachings interrupted the spiritual "race" of the Galatians. In Galatians 5, Paul dealt with this issue by arguing against mixing Jewish laws and circumcision with Christianity. The "yoke" (verse 1) was a common metaphor in reference to the Jewish Law (see Acts 15:10). Jesus' offer of an "easy" yoke (see Matthew 11:29-30) precedes Jesus' battles with the Pharisees over their rigid view of the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:1-14).

The Judaizers taught circumcision as one of the marks of a person's faith in God. Circumcision is the visible mark identifying a male as part of the Abrahamic covenant (see Genesis 17:9-14). Today, circumcision is a common procedure for newborn boys and is also still practiced as a religious ritual by some families. The mark identifying followers of Christ is the circumcision of the heart—that is, one that is cleaned by the purifying blood of Christ (see John 13:35). In the Old Testament, keeping covenant rituals was often viewed as essential expressions of faith. Paul spoke intensely against it for Christians. Christian legalism is when Christians believe that we earn God's favor by performing good works and performing certain requirements of the Law, or we will get God's approval the more we do good—even possibly affecting our salvation. Paul cautioned the Galatians against legalism, as we are saved by grace (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Legalism can be viewed as a disregard of the grace of God.

Finally, the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" is central to the Levitical holiness code (see Leviticus 19:18). This code demanded practical steps to show that love—including provision for widows, orphans, and resident aliens; respect for those with physical disabilities; and justice in the courts. Jesus said that this kind of love is what makes it one of the greatest of all commandments (see Mark 12:31). Paul makes his case that Christian liberty is not

for selfish reasons, but for us to love and serve God by serving others.

It's Text Time! (Scripture)

Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.

(Galatians 5:1-15)

1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. **2** Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. **3** Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. **4** You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. **5** For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. **7** You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? **8** That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **9** "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." **10** I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. **11** Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. **12** As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves! **13** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

INTERSECT (10 minutes)

Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?

Despite Paul's teaching the Galatians about their new freedom in Christ, a group of Judaizers came and taught that salvation was defined by their rituals. Paul cleared up that false teaching by delivering a dissertation on the Christian's statement of independence. Paul used solid doctrine, metaphors, and even Old Testament Scripture to show the Galatians that the Judaizers were holding on to the yoke of the Law, but those who have a relationship with God through faith in Christ enjoy the freedoms of that relationship. Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not abolish it (see Matthew 5:17-18). In fact, Jesus' death on the Cross freed us from sin that condemned us. Encourage the students to choose freedom in Christ rather than be yoked and enslaved trying to follow the Law. We are saved through faith, justified by grace and not by the works of the Law. We are free!

Inside Out (*interpretation*)

Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.

Allow time for the students to complete the puzzles in this section of the student book; then review.

Answers: Puzzle #1: (1) speech; (2) religion; (3) assembly; (4) press—freedoms; **Puzzle #2:** (1) circumcise; (2) baptism; (3) prayer; (4) communion—religious rituals; **Puzzle #3:** (1) discipline; (2) preparation; (3) endurance; (4) focused—things to do or have when preparing for a race; **Puzzle #4:** (1) satisfy; (2) please; (3) gratify; (4) cater—indulge

There's an App for That! (*application*)

Show how this Scripture applies to present day.

In this section, study the idea of freedom in this text. Create two columns on the board (or on a large sheet of paper): "**Freedom**" and "**Self-Indulgence**." Invite the students to call out actions or practices that fit under one

of the two columns. If something could fit under both categories, then invite the students to add a word to make clear in which column it fits. Discuss how freedom and self-indulgence are the same and different.

CONNECT (10 minutes)

Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.

Invite a volunteer to read the text in this section of the student book and allow time for comments. End by saying, "Salvation is God's gift to all believers. You have been set free to live in Christ, to serve God, and to make an impact in this world for Christ."

Stepping Out! (*challenge*)

Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!

This week, the students are challenged to select and research a modern example of Christian legalism and then write a short summary about it. Then, the students are to write how they will avoid tumbling into the pit of legalism.

MEDIA MISSION (*after you meet!*)

Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.

Instruct the class to research together different religious rituals that are observed by different religious groups. Discuss their significance to the followers and how some religious rituals are still part of our lives today. If you have a video, song, movie clip, or Web site that relates to this lesson, share it with the class as time permits.

NOTES
