

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Nothing Else Like It
Galatians 1:6-24

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Leader:

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Nothing Else Like It -- 07-21-01-en

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If you have some youth in your group, they will be writing a dramatic interpretation of Paul's conversion. Check with them to see if they want to present their interpretation during the Sharing Time today or on another occasion.

Music Sources:

Amazing Grace. Various sources. *The Worship Hymnal* # 204, CCLI # 22025 Public Domain

He is Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #277, CCLI #5178348

Glory to the Lamb, *The Worship Hymnal* #266; CCLI # 18558

Grace Greater than Our Sin, *The Worship Hymnal* #105; CCLI # 31690 Public Domain

Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* # 112; CCLI # 2335524

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI #5077724 or 22151540

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Nothing Else Like It

Focal Text

Galatians 1:6-24

Background Text

Galatians 1

Main Idea

The unique gospel of the grace of Christ is divine in its origin and deserves our complete loyalty.

Questions to Explore

Is the gospel unique? How? What does this mean for us?

Teaching Aim

To help the class explain why the gospel of the grace of Christ deserves our complete loyalty.

Gathering together:

Sing **Amazing Grace** and ask the group to share reasons that this song is meaningful to them. “How do you feel when it is sung?” “What memories does it evoke?” “Do you remember a time it was sung which was special to you?” might be questions to ask.

Amazing Grace is one of the almost universally accepted Christian songs. People sing it and may not even understand it’s meaning. We sing it this morning as an introduction to our study about grace. Grace is God’s unmerited favour to us – his goodness which is manifest in our salvation and in a multitude of ordinary ways in our life.

Repeat the first stanza of **Amazing Grace**.

First thoughts:

Kittens are cute. They seem so helpless. However they do grow up! Cats with their shedding, clawing, and other annoying habits consider you not as an owner but personal staff. A cat has its own agenda that you are unable to influence. It is also oblivious to yours. You learn quickly that you can not teach your cat a new way of thinking. You are just the one who provides the food and water. Everything will be all right if you deliver it on time.

People are different. We can make choices that will change our lives. When God enters the picture, He can change our way of thinking. A wonderful example of such a change is Paul himself. Today we will look at his life choice that changed his way of thinking.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Nothing Else Like It

Focal Text

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Background Text

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Teaching Aim

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Introduction to your personal study:

“It doesn’t matter what you believe.” “All religions lead to heaven.” “A loving God will not send a person to everlasting hell.” “Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, and all teachers are giving the truth.” “Any church is ok.” We have all heard statements something like these. This study helps us examine the Gospel of faith in Jesus Christ versus the keeping of the law.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Greeting the Galatian Believers Galatians 1:1-5

Paul follows the tradition of the author of a letter by giving his name even before the greeting. He also identifies himself again in Galatians 5:2. We further know that Paul was the author of this book by reading his testimony in Galatians 1:11-2:21. He begins the defence of his apostleship by claiming that he was not sent by one or several men but that he was appointed by Jesus who was raised by God from the dead.

This letter was written about seventeen years after his conversion and following the Jerusalem conference. Three years after his conversion he went to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18) and then he went back to Jerusalem fourteen years later for that conference. The occasion of the letter was the fact that some believers had succumbed to the Judaizers. The Judaizers believed that not only did a person have to trust Christ as saviour but that they must observe the Jewish law. Some did not feel Paul was a legitimate apostle since he had not actually seen Jesus during Christ's earthly ministry. Paul in his defence reminded them he saw Jesus in his resurrected body and then seeks to prove himself not only independent from the twelve but to prove his equality with them. He denied that his apostleship had a human origin but that he was an apostle by the will of God.

Paul includes his traveling companions in the heading of the session. The letter was addressed to the churches of Galatia. In this letter Paul uses the word "church" to indicate local bodies of believers seeking to worship and serve Christ. There is discussion as to the location of the "churches in Galatia." Galatia was a part of modern day Turkey. One view is that the churches were in North Galatia because it was thought that Paul's missionary work was done in that area (Acts 16:6, 18:23). A second view was that it was in South Galatia. This view holds that Paul spoke in terms of the Roman province. The location of the churches does not change the understanding and meaning of the book.

Paul continues the usual pattern of a letter. He identifies himself (Paul), he addresses the receivers (ie: the churches of Galatia) and now he comes to the greeting. He uses the words "grace and peace." These words are the same words he uses in all his epistles except in 1 and 2 Timothy he adds the word "mercy." Grace is God's kindness to undeserving sinful people. Peace is the outcome of grace when the individual has received it. Paul greets the believers even though he will soon find fault with them.

This grace resides in Christ's giving himself for our sin and rebellion. Paul emphasizes in this letter the substitutionary death of Christ. He preached this at the beginning of his ministry with them (3:1). Several times in this letter he then reiterates this truth. The expression "present evil age" can be understood in a couple of ways. A person becoming a Christian has been delivered from evil and sin. He has been liberated. "Evil age" also can be speaking of this present existence and looking forward to the heavenly kingdom. This delivery from sin is brought about by the will and purpose of the eternal God.

In light of this great truth, *salvation provided by God through Jesus*, Paul ends the greeting with a doxology of praise to God.

Focusing on the Meaning:

From Greetings to Chastisement Galatians 1:6-9

Usually Paul started his letters with gratitude for those receiving the letter. He departs from this pattern by immediately chastising the Galatians. He is dumbfounded that the Galatians so soon after receiving Christ as Saviour immediately are susceptible to teachings that would add requirements to the gospel. The requirement to fulfill the Jewish law, as well as to trust in Christ as Saviour, Paul calls a "different gospel." By adding the requirements of the law they change the gospel of grace.

What they advocate is no longer the gospel. The Judaizers' teachings had confused the Galatians by trying to alter the gospel of Jesus. Paul defines the "gospel." It is salvation by grace and not by doing works or observing law. They perverted the gospel by exchanging undeserved grace for bondage to the law.

Paul states that anyone, even himself or angels, who preached any message other than undeserved grace should be eternally condemned. Any renegade who claimed any good news other than grace revealed in Jesus should be eternally condemned. Outward qualifications of the messenger were not important. The truth of the message is not validated by the messenger. It is the reverse. The messenger who delivers the message is validated by the truth of the message itself.

The warning in v. 8 is repeated in v. 9. Anyone preaching a gospel other than the one they had accepted should be everlastingly condemned. Paul was not inhibited by political correctness. He was determined that the gospel not be diluted, changed, or altered. Undeserved grace through a personal faith in Christ was the gospel.

Paul Defends the Gospel As Revealed to Him Galatians 1:10-14

Paul was not seeking the approval of men in this disagreement. He was not trying to make them happy. He was not seeking popularity. He states that if he was trying to satisfy men he would not be a servant of Christ. His goal was to please Christ. Paul had not learned the gospel from human leaders. He did not hear it from the apostles in Jerusalem. He was not subject to them. He was not responsible to them. He did not need their support or approval. His message was one directly from God.

Paul in his communication with the Galatians lets them know that the gospel he preached was not a man-made gospel. It was not a human invention. It was a message revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Paul continues his defense of his teaching and actions. The gospel he preached was not handed to him by men. He was not taught by a teacher. Paul had received his education in the Jewish law from learned men. However he did not get the gospel from anyone. He states that it was revealed to him by Jesus Christ, the son of God.

He recounts his life as a Pharisee and a teacher of the Jewish law. Remember how he gave approval to the stoning of Stephen in Acts 8:1. He went house to house to capture Christians and put them in prison (Acts 8:3). He received letters from the high priest to take to the synagogues in Damascus so he could discover believers and take them back as prisoners to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Paul is demonstrating that before his Damascus road experience he was not sympathetic to the gospel. He was against it. He aggressively was battling it. Because of his extreme zeal for the law and traditions of the Jews he was advancing fast in the Jewish ranks.

Paul's Conversion and Events Following Galatians 1:15-24

Paul then talks about the autonomous and kingly actions of God in his life. Paul had been set apart. He was called by God. God used Paul to reveal the gospel. Paul had been set aside to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. God worked in his life to change him from persecutor to proclaimer; from antagonist to defender.

Paul reiterates his insistence that he did not talk or converse with man about the gospel. He tells us that following his conversion that he did not go to Jerusalem to see the apostles. Following Jesus' appearance on the road Paul went to Damascus for three days after which he received his sight. Then Paul tells the Galatians he went directly to Arabia. Then later he went back to Damascus. He was making the case that his preaching message did not come from men.

Paul did not have the help of Ananias or other believers in Damascus. In the solitude of the country he sought to comprehend the truths of his experience and the continuing working of God's spirit speaking to him. His understanding was not based on teaching and counsel of men.

Paul went to Jerusalem after three years to get acquainted with Peter. He stayed with Peter for fifteen days. This was too short a period of time for him to have received extensive teaching from Peter. Paul was also busy in those fifteen days speaking to people about Christ (Acts 9:28-29). In recounting his experiences he mentions that he did not see any of the other apostles except for James, the brother of Jesus. He continues to make the case that he did not receive the gospel from men or their teaching.

Paul states emphatically that his testimony about how he received the gospel was true. In this solemn statement he states that it is not a lie. He stresses that his message was directly revealed to him by the resurrected Jesus.

In continuing to make his case that his message was directly from God he mentions he went to Syria and Cilicia. He had no contact with the churches of Judea. The only knowledge they had of him were the reports that came to them telling that Paul the persecutor had become the proclaimer of Jesus. Again, in his defence, Paul is saying that he was not influenced by these Judean churches about his message. As a result of these reports, these churches praised God.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The heart of the passage reveals a passion to learn the true nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ; avoid any temptation (from others or from within oneself) to add demands on people to be saved; and share the gospel with the kind of passion modelled by Paul. As a teacher, your task is to develop that same passion and share it with your church.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Nothing Else Like It

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Galatians 1:6-24

Background Text

Galatians 1

Main Idea

The unique gospel of the grace of Christ is divine in its origin and deserves our complete loyalty.

Questions to Explore

Is the gospel unique? How? What does this mean for us?

Teaching Aim

To help the class explain why the gospel of the grace of Christ deserves our complete loyalty.

Suggestions for the teacher:

Watch the time! Interaction is good. So are questions, lists, case studies, and other aids for teaching. However, if you go over your time limit, you will jeopardize the time needed for developing the worship experience yet to come. Therefore:

Remember that you are teaching people—not just content. You don't have to include every verse, idea, or discussion.

Make judicious use of lists used in teaching. They can take a lot of time. You may want to shorten the lists or even eliminate them.

Learn how to help those who are zealous talkers to be briefer, to the point, and to share the response time with others who may be shy or more “thinkers” than “talkers”.

Stay with the study. This is not an appropriate time to just talk about everything that seems of interest in the moment.

The Bible study for today is extremely important. It interprets the very heart of the Gospel. However, it may also prove to be too long for some situations. Read the above suggestions and remember that you are trying to teach people this concept. You are not trying to cover every teaching question or activity.

Connect with Life:

Introduce the study with this: Political correctness vs. rigidity. Toleration vs. bigotry. Acceptance of all ideas vs. exclusiveness. There is a battle in today's society between values, beliefs, and actions. The person that says that two plus two equals four is called an absolutist and is accused of having no tolerance for people who believe otherwise.

In another area there is a struggle of belief about what a person has to do to be a Christian. Some would say that a person has to trust Christ as Saviour and Lord in a personal commitment. Others say to be a Christian is to believe in God and do good, obey the ten commandments, belong to a certain church, etc. Today we are going to begin a study of Galatians and see Paul's teachings about this.

Guide the Study:

Comment: In Paul's letters the openings usually followed this pattern; the name of the writer, name of the receiver, greeting, and words of gratitude or approval.

Have someone read Galatians 1:1-5.

Say: Let's examine this introduction to this document.

Encourage an answer: Who does the letter say is the sender? (Paul and the brothers with him).

Now ask: Who is the letter written to? (Churches of Galatia).

Question the learners: What is the greeting? (vv. 3-5).

Place this question before the group: What are the words of approval or commendation? (There are none. This is the only letter Paul wrote where there is none).

Say: Why doesn't Paul commend them? Let's look in v. 6-7 to see what Paul does. Ask someone to read Galatians 1:6-7.

Then ask: What does Paul accuse the believers of doing? (Deserting the one who called them by the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel).

Explain: The Galatians had become Christians by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul was surprised that soon they forgot how they became Christians and wanted to change what the gospel was.

Look for ideas on this: What did Paul say other people were trying to do to the Galatians? (Confusing them and perverting the gospel of Jesus).

State: Paul indicated that these teachers were attempting to change the gospel.

Encourage members to voice answers to this: What does Ephesians 2:8 say about how people are saved?

Read Ephesians 2:8 and comment. It is through the undeserved grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Ask: What changes have people made in what they believe a person must do to be saved? Get responses. (Believe and be baptized. Believe and be good to your family. Believe and go to a certain church. Others leave out the belief aspect and say: obey the ten commandments, observe the civil law, do good things, love your neighbour, give an offering, belong to a certain denomination.)

Tell the group this: Paul is saying in the strongest way possible that that salvation comes from a personal faith in Jesus Christ, that salvation comes because of the undeserved grace of God, not of works. Paul is not condemning Jewish tradition in itself. He is condemning tradition where it would conflict with the gospel truth. Not all tradition is condemned. The day we worship, the food we eat, the songs we sing, the posture of our prayers do not change the truth of the gospel. He condemns practices we hold that change the gospel itself.

Say: Look in v. 8-9 and discover what Paul says should happen to a person who wanted to change the gospel. Let someone answer. (They should be accursed, eternally condemned.).

Now say: Paul then defends where he received the gospel he preached. In Galatians 1:10-24 he seeks to prove that he did not get it from others, apostles or believers, but directly from God.

Read Galatians 1:10-24.

Invite an answer: Whose approval is Paul trying to obtain? (God, not men).

Say: Let's look and see the proofs Paul gives to show that his message was from God and not man.

Write on newsprint or board: "**Reasons Paul gives proving message was from God not man.**" As members search the passage ask them to give the reasons as you write them on the board.

Note to teacher: Write their answers. If those are too limited, you may suggest some of the following. Please don't write all of these on the white board or paper. It will take far too long!

(He was seeking God's commendation, not man's acclaim).

(His life as a Jew and defender of the law was extremely zealous).

(He observed the traditions of the fathers).

(He did not consult any man after being set aside by God).

(He did not go to Jerusalem to see the apostles).

(He went directly to Arabia).

(He returned briefly to Damascus).

(He went to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter for fifteen days).

(He did not see the other apostles other than James the Lord's brother).

(He went to Syria and Cilicia).

(He was unknown to the churches of Judea. They knew only that he had turned from persecution of Christians to preaching the Gospel).

Continue: In v. 24 what was the response of the Judean churches to the news that Paul was now preaching the faith he had tried to destroy? (They praised God that the one who so diligently had persecuted the young church and its believers was now publicly and aggressively preaching faith in Jesus).

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Ask and discuss these questions:

Is the gospel different from other religions?

How is it different? Be sure that this is mentioned: it has a living Saviour while other religions go to a grave to see its founder.

Does the fact that Christianity is unique have meaning for us? How? (It means all people need to know and trust Christ; we can have a power and strength because of a living Saviour; we have a hope not only for this life but life after death, etc).

What can I begin to do today to express the uniqueness of the gospel? (I can pray to a living Saviour; I can yield myself to his leadership in righteous living; I can share this experience with others).

Pray. Pair off class members. Ask each person to pray individually for the other person—that they will express through attitude and behaviour the spirit of Jesus this week.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Nothing Else Like It **Galatians 1:6-24**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

A Dramatic Event Makes Opportunity for a Dramatic Interpretation

Read the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:1-22. Write a dramatic interpretation of this experience. It could be a monologue with just Paul talking about what happened to him. Or it could be a drama with a narrator, Saul, Jesus, and Ananias.

If you are comfortable presenting the drama today or on another day, let the worship leader know so that it can be included as a part of the Sharing Time.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Nothing Else Like It***
Galatians 1:6-24**Beginning the Service:**

Choose one or more of the following to sing:

He is Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #277, CCLI #5178348

Glory to the Lamb, *The Worship Hymnal* #266; CCLI # 18558

Grace Greater than Our Sin, *The Worship Hymnal* #105; CCLI # 31690 Public Domain

Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* # 112; CCLI # 2335524

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Isaan or Isan (pronounced something close to “E-san” in English) is the Northeast area of Thailand. The people of the area are bi-lingual and bi-cultural. The second language-culture of most of the population is Laotian. There are also pockets of Khmer (Cambodian) culture. The overall population is about 25 million and the area represents about a third of Thailand.

Even though the vast majority of Isaan people are farmers (about 85%), the soil is poor. Farmers are dependent on rainfall to grow their crops, but rain in Isaan is highly unpredictable. While the average annual rainfall is about 1.2 meters, the area suffers from frequent droughts or flooding. Water buffalo are still used for farm work but small tractors are becoming more common.

To supplement their incomes, many farmers (especially the women) weave silk, make baskets, or do other handicrafts. Men often make fishnets by hand.

Isaan is the poorest area of Thailand. The average per capita income is about \$400.00 USD per year.

The people of Isaan have maintained, to a large degree, their own culture. This is predominantly Laotian but there are pockets of Khmer culture as well.

About 95% of the population practice Buddhism but it is strongly influenced by animism and belief in assorted spirits.

Fewer than 1 percent of the Isaan living in Thailand are Christians. Pray that Christians there may be able to share their faith by creating meaningful ways to tell others about Jesus.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Paul's Ultimate Choice: the Gospel Galatians 1:11-17

Introduction:

Modern day movies and television seem to increase the action, animation, color and sound with every new production. Old stories are redone with more of the elements just mentioned – action, animation, color and sound. Isn't it amazing that one of the most dramatic stories is an old, old one – the story of Paul's conversion. It has all the elements of great drama and it amazes us today just as it amazed the early Christians.

On the road to Damascus, Paul met Jesus. By receiving Christ as his personal Savior, his life changed forever. He went from being a persecutor of the church to being a slave to Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to change each one of us. Our personal wills give way to the will of God. Jesus helps us to move from selfishness to selflessness and from the temporal to the eternal. We, like Paul, can learn to believe ***“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).”*** What were some of the things the gospel did for Paul?

1. The Gospel gave Paul a new life.

What is the gospel? It is the good news about Jesus. He is God. He chose to be born of a virgin, live a sinless life, die on a cross for our sins, was buried and on the third day he rose from the dead as the Living Lord of everything. He will save anyone who will

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accept Him as Lord and Saviour. Paul learned that when He met Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). Paul says in Verse 12 of our text that Jesus revealed the gospel to him. Paul received Jesus and a new life. The gospel became a passion for Paul because he experienced its power.

The gospel gives new life that must be experienced. To enjoy snowboarding you must give it a try. To catch a fish, you must go fishing. To love swimming you must get into the water. Paul's experience on the Damascus Road was just the first event in a lifetime of finding Christ sufficient in every circumstance.

2. The Gospel gave Paul a new life style.

In verses 13-17, Paul as a Jew destroyed churches and Christians. He plundered the churches like Attila the Hun plundered his world. When Paul received the gospel message and became a Christian, He became a church planter throughout the Gentile world. He started churches everywhere he went. He gave his life to that task.

When a person becomes a Christian, he no longer lives as he did but lives to please God. That is a whole new life style.

3. The Gospel gave Paul a new orientation for life.

In verse 14 Paul says he was ***“advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”*** He knew the Jewish Law and enforced it with enthusiasm, and perhaps sadistic glee. That was his way. It is hard to imagine that such a person could change. However, the Gospel oriented his entire life to God's way. The difference lay in his new ability to see things from God's perspective.

4. The Gospel gave Paul a new understanding of life.

Paul had been concerned with building his own career. The Gospel made it clear to him that God had set him apart for something special. In verses 15-16 Paul explains the call of God and the reason for that call: ***“God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace...that I might preach him among the Gentiles.”*** God has a plan for each of us. He reveals it when we respond to the Gospel. He calls us to be the best we can be for his kingdom. Paul had been called to a task, a service, not for his satisfaction but for the spiritual battles of winning a lost world. A ball coach will send in the best, most prepared players he can. An army commander will send in the best-trained, most obedient soldiers at his disposal. God calls us to specific tasks for which we are prepared. Notice that Paul spent three years training so he could serve God (v.17). The Gospel gives an understanding of life: we are to prepare ourselves to serve God and then wait for specific orders.

5. The Gospel gave Paul a new occupation for life.

Paul was to proclaim the Gospel (v.16-17). God called him to change his occupation to become a missionary to the Gentiles. Many of us are called to remain in our occupations with an understanding of the priority of the Gospel. Some people will only hear the Gospel of Jesus from you. You have relationships at work and in recreational pursuits that no one else will have. You will have the opportunity to share the gospel with those people by faithful Christian living as well as by verbal testimony. Like Paul, your life will have meaning because of the opportunities you have to share the gospel. That will give you a life worth living.

Call to Commitment:

Let us pray together for a deeper understanding of God's call in our life. We may never experience the dramatic life change which Paul experienced. But each one who has responded to Christ's call to salvation through faith in him is given a new understanding and a new occupation. We live our lives responding to the grace of God to us.

Concluding the Service:

Sing **I Have Decided to Follow Jesus**, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI #5077724 or 22151540.