

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Galatians 3:1-14

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. According to Paul in Galatians 3:1-14, how do we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives? Why do we need the Holy Spirit in our lives?

“you receive the Spirit. . .by believing what you heard” (Galatians 3:2). “by believing what you heard” (Galatians 3:5). “so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). Among many other things, the Holy Spirit helps us interpret, apply, and teach the Bible. The Holy Spirit guides us and empowers us to do right according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit helps us pray according to the will of God so God will answer our prayers, even when we do not have the words we need to express our needs or concerns.

2. In Galatians 3:1-14, how many times does Paul use some form of the word “believe” (such as, believe, believed, believing)? Look up the word “believe” in a dictionary. What does the word “believe” mean?

A form of the word “believe” is used 6 times in Galatians 3:1-14 (unless I missed 1 or 2 times).

Prior to reading a dictionary definition to your class, you may want to ask people how they would define the word “believe” or what they mean by “believing.” Underline any similarities between their definitions and the dictionary definitions below and write in the margin of this study hints any of their definitions that are not included in the definitions below.

Two dictionary definitions — “Believe” : “to have confidence in the truth, the existence, or the reliability of something, although without absolute proof that one is right in doing so.” OR “Believe” : “1.a. to have a firm religious faith. b. to accept something as true, genuine, or real. 2. to have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something. 3. to hold an opinion.”

3. Why is believing important? What does Paul say people should believe or need to believe?

To “believe in God” means to believe that God exists. Many people believe in God, but their understanding of God may be radically different from what the Bible teaches. To “believe God” means to have confidence in God and in the truths that God has revealed in nature, in the Bible, and in the life and words of His Son, Jesus Christ. The word of God in the Bible is superior to what God has revealed in nature, partly because nature is no longer as it was when God first created the world—human actions and the results of sin have changed nature as first created by God. God is reliable, as we learn from the Bible [and often from our own experiences and from what we know of the experiences of other believers]. If we truly believe anything, we should live in accordance with what we say we believe. Unfortunately, someone may believe that exercise is good to promote health, but not exercise. Or, someone may say that they believe trusting in and following Jesus is the best way to live, but choose instead to do everything in their own way (see Galatians 3:3). The Galatians said they believed in Jesus, but they had added doing the works of the law as the way to be right with God [which Paul said was foolish].

Paul said that people need to believe the gospel that he preached; the Galatians needed to believe what they had heard from Paul. Just as Abraham believed God, so we need to believe God. God spoke to Abraham, and Abraham believed what God said, and he trusted and acted accordingly. [On the road to Damascus, Jesus spoke to Paul, and Paul believed what Jesus said, and Paul trusted and acted accordingly.] God has spoken to us in the Bible, and we need to trust God and the Bible and act accordingly. God blessed Abraham for believing, and God will bless us for believing. If we believe God, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are descendants of Abraham, and God will reckon us righteous and we will receive the Holy Spirit into our lives.

4. Look up the word “faith” in the dictionary. What does the word “faith” mean? In Galatians 3:1-14, how does Paul use the word “faith.” How are the meanings of the words “believe” and “faith” similar or different?

The word “faith” is used 4 times in Galatians 3:1-14, and Paul’s *Letter to the Galatians* focuses on faith and believing. You might ask your class to define the word “faith” or what they think when they hear the word “faith” or what they mean when they use the word “faith” to see how their ideas compare with the dictionary definitions below.

Two dictionary definitions — “Faith” : “1. confidence or trust in a person or thing. 2. belief that is not based on proof. 3. belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion. 4. belief in anything, as a code of ethics, standards of merit, a system of religious belief.” OR “Faith” : “1.a. allegiance to duty or a person. b. fidelity to one’s promises: sincerity of intentions. 2.a. belief and trust in and loyalty to God: belief in the traditional doctrines of religion. b. firm belief in something for which there is no proof: complete trust. 3. something that is believed especially with strong conviction.”

Faith is a belief that cannot be proved according to the rules of a logical system, but logical systems also vary according to philosophical beliefs. However, the Bible (including the teachings of Paul) gives good and sufficient reasons for why we should believe the Bible, have faith in God, and trust what the Bible reveals. In his *Letter to the Galatians*, Paul appeals to what the Galatians experienced after they came to faith (see

Galatians 3:4, which included receiving the Holy Spirit and miracles). Prior to their coming to faith, Paul reasoned with them from the scripture and exhibited and explained the meaning and value to them of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. There may be little difference between “belief” and “faith.” Regarding the definition of faith, faith includes allegiance to God, trust in God, loyalty to God, and a desire to live according to the promises of God and according to your promises to God as a believer.

5. What happens to people when they rely on the works of the law in order to be justified or right with God? How can you recognize people who do this, and how might you help them?

Paul called the Galatians [any person] foolish and bewitched to rely in their doing the works of the law in order to be justified. They trusted or “ended with” the flesh [what they could do in their own body instead of what the Holy Spirit could do through them as He indwelt them]. To rely on your doing the works of the law will put you under a curse instead of being blessed along with Abraham, who believed. You will live by trying to do works of the law instead of living by faith in Jesus Christ and following Him. People who live by the works of the law will focus on what they are doing instead of focusing on Jesus Christ, thanking Jesus Christ for saving them by His crucifixion, and learning more of Jesus Christ so they may follow Him more faithfully.

To help those we see living by their own works, we can try to help them focus or refocus their attention on Jesus Christ by sound teaching and comments in discussions with them. In their hearing, we can praise and thank Christ for what He has done and express our love for Christ, along with praying that they will come to love Christ, trust in Christ, and put Christ first in their lives instead of trying to do things their way to please God or gain favor with God. They need to learn that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

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