



Galatians

Set Free to Live

GAYLE SOMERS



West Chester, Pennsylvania

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CONTENTS

Welcome to <i>The Great Adventure</i>	v
About <i>Galatians: Set Free to Live</i>	vii

QUESTIONS AND TALK NOTES

Session One – Introduction	1
Session Two – Galatians 1: An Urgent Appeal	7
Session Three – Galatians 2: The Threat of Compromise	13
Session Four – Galatians 3:1-12: The Righteous Shall Live by Faith	21
Session Five – Galatians 3:13-29: “Why the Law?”	29
Session Six – Galatians 4: “No Longer a Slave but a Son”	37
Session Seven – Galatians 5: A New Kind of Freedom	45
Session Eight – Galatians 6: “Let Us Not Grow Weary in Well-Doing”	53
Some Points to Ponder About the Importance of the Cross.	59

RESPONSES TO THE STUDY QUESTIONS

How to Use These Responses	61
Session Two – Galatians 1: An Urgent Appeal	63
Session Three – Galatians 2: The Threat of Compromise	67
Session Four – Galatians 3:1-12: The Righteous Shall Live by Faith	73
Session Five – Galatians 3:13-29: “Why the Law?”	79
Session Six – Galatians 4: “No Longer a Slave but a Son”	85
Session Seven – Galatians 5: A New Kind of Freedom	91
Session Eight – Galatians 6: “Let Us Not Grow Weary in Well-Doing”	97
What’s Next?	105

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Welcome to *The Great Adventure*™



“To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek him, the greatest adventure.”
– St. Augustine of Hippo

The Bible is at the heart of our Catholic Faith—and our relationship with God. It is the living Word of God, where our Father meets with us and lovingly speaks to us. Reading the Bible should bring us closer to Christ, but understanding it is not always easy. Many people tell us they have tried time and again to prayerfully read Scripture, but they get frustrated because they “just don’t get it.”

The Great Adventure is designed so that anyone can make sense of the Bible and experience the life-changing power of God’s Word. At the core of *The Great Adventure* is the concept that there is a story running through the seventy-three books of the Bible that ties all of Scripture together and makes sense not just of the Bible, but of our lives as well.

That story is God’s plan as it has unfolded throughout salvation history and continues to unfold today. Once we grasp this “big picture,” the readings at Mass begin to make more sense, our Scripture reading and study come to life, and we see how our lives fit into God’s loving plan.

Hundreds of thousands of participants have discovered the riches of Scripture by experiencing one or more *Great Adventure* Bible studies. It is our prayer that you will gain a newfound understanding of God’s Word that will transform your life and bring you closer to Christ.

Jeff Cavins, creator and president, *The Great Adventure*
Sarah Christmyer, co-developer and author, *The Great Adventure*

About *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program

At the core of *The Great Adventure* is *The Bible Timeline*™ Learning System: a simple way to get the “big picture” of the Bible by focusing on the story that runs throughout Sacred Scripture. *Great Adventure* Bible studies explore the biblical narrative in light of Catholic teaching and the historical, cultural, and literary context of the Scriptures to discover what Scripture reveals about God’s plan and our place within it. Studies of individual books of the Bible are supplemented by thematic and “life application” studies.

Every *Great Adventure* study is designed to foster:

- Familiarity with the Bible and ease of reading it
- Bible study habits consistent with the guidelines of the Catholic Church
- Personal engagement in the Word of God
- Faith-sharing based on the Word of God
- Growth in knowledge about Scripture and the Catholic Faith

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About *Galatians: Set Free to Live*



Paul's letter to the Galatians speaks directly to the heart of Christians and addresses the most important question we can ask: "What must we do to be saved?" This fascinating letter reveals the merciful love that God the Father has for us, his children. It speaks of the extraordinary gift of salvation that Jesus has won for us, and it explains how we can unite ourselves to Christ's redeeming sacrifice through faith and love. *Galatians* is a study that will reignite your love for God as you learn of the astonishing love God has for you.

Materials

Materials for *Galatians: Set Free to Live* include

- **Workbook:** contains session summaries, home reading assignments, engaging study questions, talk notes for the video presentations, and responses to the questions as well as a helpful map and charts. (*You will need one workbook for every participant, study leader, and small-group facilitator.*)
- **Video Presentations** (eight 40-minute sessions): presented by Jeff Cavins, these eight video presentations provide comprehensive teaching and commentary on Galatians. (*You will need one DVD set.*)

In addition, every participant, leader, and small-group facilitator should have a Catholic Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For this study, we recommend *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible that incorporates the same color-coded *Bible Timeline* Learning System that you will use throughout this program.

How the Study Works

Every *Great Adventure* study includes four essential steps, which are designed to fit together and build upon each other. Following these steps in order will help you to get the most out of each session.



STEP ONE: HOME PREPARATION

NOTE: There is no home preparation required for Session One.

Each session begins with personal study that involves reading Scripture and answering a series of questions that will help you understand and think more deeply about what you have read. Some questions will include additional reading from other parts of the Bible or from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to help you consider the passage in light of the bigger picture of salvation history and Catholic teaching.

We recommend that you allow at least 90 minutes to complete the reading and answer the questions for each session. We also suggest that home preparation be done in several sittings over the course of a week. This will help you create a habit of daily Bible reading and prayerful meditation.

STEP TWO: SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

The small-group discussion is one of the most effective components of a *Great Adventure* Bible study. During this discussion, members of your small group will have an opportunity to share their insights into the Scripture reading. The goal of the small-group discussion is to help participants obtain a richer understanding of the readings and apply them to their lives. Trained facilitators guide the small-group discussion and keep it on track. To learn how to facilitate a small-group discussion, visit ascensionpress.com. Be sure to follow the “Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion” on page xi.

STEP THREE: VIDEO PRESENTATION

Jeff Cavins wraps up each session with a video presentation that offers unique insights and profound connections to help you gain a deeper understanding of the Bible and its relationship to the Catholic Faith, with a special emphasis on ways to apply what you have learned to your life.

STEP FOUR: REVIEW OF RESPONSES

NOTE: There are no responses for Session One.

The final step—reviewing the responses at the back of this workbook—is done at home prior to beginning the reading for the next session. These responses will help you read the Scripture passages for the next session in the proper context.

For the most effective study experience, complete these steps in the following order: (1) Read and answer the questions; (2) discuss them in your small group; (3) view the video presentation; and (4) review the responses. During the discussion, your small-group facilitator will incorporate points found in the responses, but the richness that comes from individual insights can be lost when participants view the responses prior to the discussion.

For more information about how to plan and promote a Bible study and how to facilitate a small-group discussion, visit ascensionpress.com or call 1-800-376-0520.

Session Outline and Reading Guide

Each session in this workbook has the following sections. (Note: Session One follows a different format.)

1. Session Questions (used during Step 1: Home Preparation and Step 2: Small-Group Discussion)

- A. Establish (or review) the Context
- B. Read the Story
- C. Take a Deeper Look
- D. Application

2. Session Talk Notes (used during Step 3: Video Presentation)

3. Session Responses (used during Step 4: Review of Responses)

The following chart offers an overview of the home preparation readings assigned in each session of the study. The main reading is provided in section **B. Read the Story** and should be read before you answer the session questions. Additional Bible readings and *Catechism* readings are provided in section **C. Take a Deeper Look** and should be read as you answer the study questions for each session.

Session (Video Time)	Main Reading	Additional Bible Readings	Catechism Readings (CCC)
1. Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Galatians (35:41)	—	—	—
2. Galatians 1 – An Urgent Appeal (44:46)	Galatians 1	Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 1:4-6; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3-5; Colossians 1:3-4	81–87, 299
3. Galatians 2 – The Threat of Compromise (41:41)	Galatians 2	1 Corinthians 16:1-3	1394
4. Galatians 3:1-12 – “The Righteous Shall Live By Faith” (40:44)	Galatians 3:1-12	Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6, 17:9-27; Deuteronomy 27:9–28:14	706
5. Galatians 3:13-29 – “Why the Law?” (41:37)	Galatians 3:13-29	Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Isaiah 44:3; Acts 5:30, 7:53, 10:39; Colossians 2:11-12	527, 791, 1963
6. Galatians 4 – “No Longer a Slave, but a Son” (41:32)	Galatians 4	Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:1-5	526, 683
7. Galatians 5 – A New Kind of Freedom (42:16)	Galatians 5	1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:6-8	1468–1470
8. Galatians 6: – “Let Us Not Grow Weary in Well-Doing” (40:23)	Galatians 6	Luke 18:11; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 1 Peter 5:8	1446–1448

What to Do for Each Session

1. Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Small-Group Discussion (40 minutes)
Note to Study Leaders: There is no small-group discussion for the first week. Instead, use this time to divide participants into small groups of eight to twelve people, ensure that everyone has the study materials, and explain how the study works. Each small group should be led by a trained facilitator.
3. Video Presentation (40 minutes)
4. Closing and Prayer (5 minutes)

Getting the Most out of This Study

This study will help you understand the Bible in a new way. The “head knowledge” you gain will help you grow in “heart knowledge” as you follow up on what you have learned. The Bible will always remain a mystery, though, and that is part of the beauty of it: We can never exhaust the treasures of Scripture. Fortunately for us, the Bible is not a subject to master; it is a place to encounter the living Word of God.

Whenever you open your Bible to read, *start with prayer*, and place yourself in God’s presence. You might take Samuel’s prayer as your own: “Speak, for your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10). When you read, adopt an attitude of listening. Try not to treat Scripture as a text, but as a personal message from God. What is he saying? What does it mean? What does it mean for my life? If you come to the Word focused on having an encounter with the Lord, he will speak to your heart, and you will be transformed.

An Important Note About the Responses to the Study Questions

Responses to the study questions are provided in the back of this workbook. These responses do not exhaust the meaning that can be found in the Scripture reading. People will have unique insights. The responses have two important functions:

1. The first purpose of the responses is to provide participants with a review of each session, which will help establish a context for the reading and questions in the following session. The best time to read the responses is just before starting on the next session.
2. The second purpose of the responses is to provide guidelines for the small-group facilitators.
Facilitators: Complete the Scripture reading and answer the questions on your own before reading the responses in preparation for facilitating the small-group discussion.

Participants should not review the responses for each session until after the session is completed. Although it might be tempting to look at these responses in advance, it is important to wait for the following reasons:

1. Bible study is not about simply watching a video presentation or reading a Bible commentary. It is just as important to immerse yourself in the Word of God itself and engage it with your heart and mind. The questions in *The Great Adventure* studies are designed to draw you into the Scriptures so that the Word of God will be planted and grow in your heart. Reading a response written by someone else may satisfy your mind for a moment, but it will not result in the kind of growth that will occur if you attempt to answer the question on your own first.
2. The success of a small group depends on a good discussion. A group of participants who have spent time pondering the Scripture passages on their own will have more varied insights to discuss.

For these reasons, please wait to read the responses until after the session. When you follow the steps of this study as intended, you will explore the Word of God in different ways—in the reading, the small-group discussion, the video presentation, and, finally, in the responses. Follow these steps over time, and you will be more than fed—you will learn to feed yourself.

Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion¹

- 1.** Enjoy yourself!
- 2.** Speak with respect and charity.
- 3.** Do not ridicule or dismiss what others say. Keep comments positive.
- 4.** Come prepared.
- 5.** If you were not able to prepare, let others speak first.
- 6.** Stick to the topic and questions at hand.
- 7.** Start and end on time.
- 8.** Allow silence. Give people a chance to think.
- 9.** Listen to others without interrupting.
- 10.** Keep personal matters within the group.

¹ Adapted from Thomas Smith's original "10 Commandments of a Small Group."

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Session One

Introduction



Ruins in ancient Turkey

Galatians: Set Free to Live

Galatians is a letter written by St. Paul to the churches he had established on an earlier missionary journey through Galatia (modern-day Turkey). St. Paul, the “apostle to the Gentiles,” had announced to the people of this region the Good News that through the work of the Lord Jesus, God calls all men, Jews and non-Jews alike, into a family relationship with himself. The Galatians had eagerly received this gospel, been baptized, and had begun living this new life in Christ. However, some people (probably Jewish Christians known as “Judaizers”) arrived on the scene after Paul had departed and insisted that in addition to being baptized and living by faith in Christ, the Galatians also had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses with all its ceremonial and dietary requirements. St. Paul saw this as a dangerous error, so he dashed off this epistle to set his friends straight.

The question of whether Gentile converts to Christianity had to be circumcised (essentially becoming Jews) was a serious source of confusion in the early Church. In some ways, this seemed like a reasonable suggestion. After all, circumcision had been the sign of God’s covenant with his people since the time of Abraham. This issue was of such importance that the very first Church council, the Council of Jerusalem, was called to confront it. As you will see in Galatians, this question consumed St. Paul with its urgency.

Galatians speaks directly to the central question of faith: What must I do to be saved? And so, the apostle Paul’s writing reflects the passion of a convert and is full of pastoral concern for his spiritual children.

ABOUT ST. PAUL

The author of the letter to the Galatians identifies himself in verse 1 as “Paul,” and at the close of the letter he claims to be writing in his own hand (see Galatians 6:11). No one has seriously questioned that the author of this epistle is in fact St. Paul, the “apostle to the Gentiles.”

The best way to learn about the apostle Paul is to read the account of his conversion and work in the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles. Known as Saul prior to his conversion, Paul was a strict and zealous Pharisee. He was born in Tarsus, a Roman city, but he was educated in Jerusalem, studying under Rabbi Gamaliel, one of the most famous teachers in all of Israel’s history. He impressed his peers with his intellect and dedication. He also ferociously persecuted the Jewish Christian converts of the early Church.

Through a supernatural encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, St. Paul's entire life was redirected (see Acts 9). Upon his conversion, all his energy was poured into preaching the gospel and refuting those who opposed it. Eventually, Paul was commissioned by the Church in Antioch (see Acts 13:1-3) to embark on missionary journeys throughout the Greco-Roman world, preaching the Good News. His pattern was to establish churches, appoint elders to lead them, and then encourage the new Christians in their growth by follow-up visits or personal letters. The epistle to the Galatians is such a letter, written about twenty years after his conversion.

THE AUDIENCE OF PAUL'S LETTER AND THE DATE OF COMPOSITION

Galatia was a large area in northern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Paul established churches in southern Galatia during his first missionary journey and may have founded more in northern Galatia during his second journey. It is not clear whether his letter was directed to one or both of these groups, so dating the letter depends primarily on the date of his visit to Jerusalem, which he mentions in Galatians 2. Assuming Paul refers to the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15, which took place in AD 49, many scholars date the letter in the early 50s.

St. Paul's Early Travels (Galatians 1:15–2:1, 11)



THEMES AND PURPOSE

Paul's letter to the Galatians was occasioned by the problem of the Judaizers, who were Jewish Christians that insisted Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law. Paul saw this "different gospel" as undermining the very essence of the gospel—that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, come to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Essentially, the letter to the Galatians explains how the New Covenant relates to the old.

STRUCTURE

The epistle generally falls into two parts: (1) an ambitious scriptural and theological explanation of how people receive God's blessing and how we preserve that blessing; and (2) pastoral direction to help this Christian community heal the divisions that always come with controversy. Galatians is of particular interest to Catholics, since it was Martin Luther's erroneous interpretation of Galatians (and Romans) that convinced him that "justification" (i.e., being in the state of God's grace and thus ready to enter heaven) is by faith "alone."

This study uses *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible that incorporates the same color-coded *Bible Timeline* Learning System that you will use throughout this program.

SESSION ONE TALK NOTES

Introduction

I. Some Initial Thoughts

- A. Key verse: Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ”
- B. Understanding Jewish background is helpful to grasping Paul’s message
- C. Paul spoke to everyday people
- D. Importance of “finishing strong”
- E. Purpose of Paul’s epistles
- F. Approaching difficulties with the strength of Christ

II. How Galatians Fits into *The Bible Timeline*

- A. Coming of kingdom in the Old Testament; establishment of the kingdom with Christ
- B. Twenty years since Jesus’ resurrection – what has been happening?
 - 1. Church has grown in the midst of challenges
 - 2. Response of Judaism to the emergence of Christianity
 - a. New temple, new *Torah*, new authority
 - b. Faith and grace rather than the Law (circumcision)
 - c. Nervousness, envy

III. Paul’s Background

- A. Born Saul, raised in Tarsus
- B. A strict Pharisee, educated in Jerusalem, studied under Gamaliel
- C. Tribe of Benjamin, Roman citizen
- D. Persecuted Christians out of zeal for Judaism
- E. Powerful conversion experience on the road to Damascus
 - 1. Acts 9:3 – suddenly saw light (Isaiah 9:1-2)
 - 2. Acts 9:4 – “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”
- F. Influence of Stephen’s martyrdom on Paul (Acts 7:54–8:2)
- G. Becomes apostle to Gentiles

IV. Galatians

- A.** Galatia located in northern Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)
- B.** Paul's three missionary journeys
 - 1.** AD 45–49 (Acts 13:1–14:28)
 - 2.** AD 50–52 (Acts 15:36–18:22)
 - 3.** AD 53–58 (Acts 18:23–21:16)
- C.** Paul's letter to Galatians written early to mid-fifties
- D.** Themes and purpose of Galatians
 - 1.** Everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, called to relationship with God
 - 2.** "Agitators" are requiring circumcision
 - 3.** Paul's response
 - a.** No need to go back to Mosaic Law
 - b.** Receive Christ in faith; walk in love and in the Spirit
 - 4.** Circumcision – major issue throughout Galatia
 - 5.** An all-out defense of the gospel; moment of crisis

V. Explanation of Galatians Study

- A.** Materials
 - 1.** Bible (*The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible, recommended)
 - 2.** *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)
 - 3.** Reading assignments (workbook)
- B.** Process
 - 1.** Read assigned text on your own
 - 2.** Answer questions
 - 3.** Small-group discussion
 - 4.** Video presentation

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