

MIND

session page

Prepositional Problems

Galatians 2:15-21 | Session 8.24

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have several English translations of this passage available (Note: we use [this site](#) for our Bible passages, but [this one offers](#) some very promising tools as well.).
- Have an English dictionary available.
- Have a flipchart or board and markers available.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).

Context

Begin by asking questions like:

- What do you think we mean when we use the word "saved" and why?
- How does someone come to be "saved," as you understand it?
- What is a more important factor in becoming "saved:" what you do or what you believe?
- We might truly claim to believe we are saved ... but in what ways do our actions sometimes tell a different story?

Content

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and Tell the group:

Remember what's going on in these Galatian churches: Paul is fighting against the idea that these non-Jewish believers must first live by the Jewish law (including circumcision and dietary restrictions) if they want to be Christians.

Ask:

- What does the English word "justify" mean?
- What kinds of things do we justify and why?
- What does it mean to be justified or "made right" with God?
- According to Paul, how are we justified?
- Compare some different translations for verse 16 – how do each of them translate the phrase, "faith of/in Christ," and what do you think that means?
- Why do you think Paul feels that no one can be justified before God through following the Law?
- What might it mean to die "through the Law" or "to the Law" and why has this happened?
- What do you think Paul is really saying in verse 20 and why?

Closure

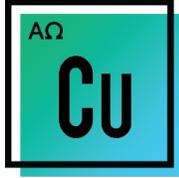
Continue by using the chart/board and markers to come up with a chart or drawing that demonstrates the believer's old and new relationships to the Law, listing, from memory, in one column the Old Testament requirements for "righteousness," and in the other how this obligation might be viewed in light of this scripture. After the group has run out of ideas, ask:

- What is our relationship, as believers, to the Law, according to Paul, and how do you feel about that?
- This passage has a lot of theological terms and arguments... but what is the simple Good News it proclaims?
- Despite our insistence that our salvation comes through faith in (or of) Jesus, we often act as if our works were all we need. Why do you think people still cling to the idea of justification through their actions?

- In what ways do we understand this issue, when we take both Paul's words here and [James 2:14-26](#) into account?
- What responsibilities might these two passages, viewed together, place upon us and why?
- In what ways might our understandings of this issue affect the way we witness to others who may struggle with their faith?

Close with prayer.

Writer: Jon Parks



CURRENT

session page

Prepositional Problems

Galatians 2:15-21 | Session 8.24

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).

Context

Optionally share this eighteen-second video: ["I don't think that means what you think it means"](#) then ask:

- I understand that this is an invitation to be a bit assiduous about other people's impecunious vocabulary, but what are some words that you think people commonly misuse?

Share this list of [words whose usage has changed](#) then continue by asking:

- Which of these changed meanings most surprised you and why?
- What are some words whose original meaning you might use anyway, despite the way everyone else seems to use them, and why?
- To what degree does the original usage of a word matter if it is widely used to mean something else?

Content

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- What words stand out to you in this text and why?
- What do you understand when you hear the phrase “through faith in Jesus Christ”?
- What is the difference the idea of “faith in Christ” and “faith of Christ,” as you understand the terms?
- To what degree do you think it is useful to study the wording of these texts so carefully and why?
- In what ways does knowing that this passage stems from Paul responding to an argument with Peter over the nature of salvation affect the way you wrestle with the difficult wording?
- What message of “good news” do you find when you read this passage?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- What scriptural words carry a lot of theological weight, in your opinion and why?
- What are some ideas in scripture with which you have wrestled?
- At what points do you tend to cautiously avoided wrestling with certain ideas found in scripture and why?
- What do you think of this quote and why: *What if the Christian faith is supposed to exist in a variety of forms rather than just one imperial one? What if it is both more stable and more agile—more responsive to the Holy Spirit—when it exists in these many forms? And what if, instead of arguing about which form is correct and legitimate, we were to honor, appreciate, and validate one another and see ourselves as servants of one grander mission, apostles of one greater message, seekers on one ultimate quest?* - Brian D. McLaren

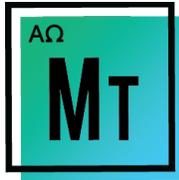
Close the conversation with this challenge from [Nadia Bolz Weber](#):

**People of God, do not worry because we have this Word. **

That there is a God who created us and all that is, this same God spoke through prophets and poets, claimed a people to be God's own and freed them from the shackles of slavery. This same God led those people through the wilderness to a land of milk and honey, and told them to always welcome the stranger and protect the foreigner so that they could remember where they came from and what God had done for them. Then in the fullness of time, and to draw ALL people to himself, God came and broke our hearts like only a baby could do and made God's home in the womb of a fierce young woman as though God was saying, from now on this is how I want to be known. And as Jesus, God the Son kissed lepers and befriended prostitutes and baffled authority. Jesus ate with all the wrong people and on the night before he died, he gathered with his faltering friends for a meal that tasted of freedom. He held up bread and told us to do the same thing and he promised us so much: that he would be with us, that forgiveness is real, that we are God's, that people matter and that death is done for and that after a tough resurrection, grilled fish makes an awesome breakfast.

Pray together to end the session.

Writer: Erin Hall



MYSTIC
session page

Prepositional Problems

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Before the Session

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- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
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Context

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Reflection Discussion

Invite people to share their experiences on the following topic:

Describe what it was like to experience "falling in love" for the first time.

Invite people to imagine Jesus in the gospel stories as you read Isaiah 53:2-9. Tell them to picture Jesus as he was in whichever gospel story comes to mind. Invite them to "observe" him and notice what he's like and what he does. Give them five minutes of silence to reflect.

Invite people to discuss the following:

Some people have talked about their relationship with Jesus as “falling in love” with God. What is it about Jesus that captivates your soul? (Note: Give persons time to think. Encourage them not to be uncomfortable with any silence)

Close with sentence prayers to Jesus.

Writer: Joy Yee



MEDIA

session page

Prepositional Problems

Galatians 2:15-21 | Session 8.24

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).

Context

Start by asking:

- What do you think of on-line dating sites and why?
- How do they know the people are actually who they say they are on such sites?

Play the [Christian Mingle video](#) and ask:

- How would you like your Christian faith questioned and why?
- How did you feel about the test questions for the applicants?
- Why do you think the male candidate passed the inquisition and the female candidate did not?
- In what ways do you think people are examining other's faith in reality?
- What is your reaction to the idea that different people may judge folks by different standards?

Content

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- What is Paul so upset about?
- Who is his disappointment directed towards besides the Galatians?
- What does “justified” mean and by what means are we justified?
- What is Paul worried about being destroyed and how he convey that concern?
- What do you think about the preposition issue that Nikki mentioned in her video?
- Why might people find specific word use so important in such passages?
- How do you feel about the irony in such a close focus on a preposition or in a passage that is pressing people to move beyond legalism and why?

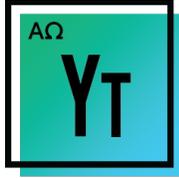
Closure

Play [... it's what you do that defines you](#) and ask:

- In light of today's scripture, how do you feel about what Rachel tells Bruce in this video and why?
- What do you think should shape your life and why?
- By what means can we enable Christ (or the faith of Christ) to live in us?
- To what degree do you feel you are defined by either what you are against or by your consistent actions towards citizens in God's Kingdom?
- If not through works, in what ways do we show faith in/of Christ by our attempts to act in a manner consistent with what we believe?

Close in prayer

Writer: Jon Self



YOUTH

session page

Prepositional Problems

Galatians 2:15-21 | Session 8.24

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.
- Have pencil and paper ready.
- Have a pencil and piece of paper available for each person.
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session ahead of their gathering.
- Be prepared to show a web site to the group (see below).

Intro

Show the [Abbot and Costello Clip](#) and ask:

- What is so funny about his clip?
- When have you been in a discussion what you simply could not understand?
- Why do you think some people feel this way when it comes to reading the Bible?
- What parts of scripture leave you confused and why?

Context

Form two teams and have each team sit in a line, side by side, facing their opponent on the other team. At one end of the lines, put some kind of item for the teams to grab. It could be a stuffed animal, a ball, or even a bar of soap in a bucket of water. At the other end, place a leader with a coin, and have the members of each team join hands.

Tell the group:

We are going to flip this coin so that the first person in each line can see the result. If the result is tails, the teams will do nothing except flip again. If the result is heads, the first person should squeeze the hand of the person beside them, who squeezes the next hand, and so on, until the last person has their hand squeezed, and they try to grab the item before the other team. If a team successfully grabs the item first, they receive ten points. If a team squeezes hands and grabs the item when the result was a "tails," or if they "skip" a member. they will lose ten points.

After making sure that everyone knows the rules, start play, having the first player move to the back and play until everyone on each team has had a chance to be first in line, then ask these questions:

- What was the most difficult part of this game?
- How did your team respond when it made a mistake and why?
- How did it feel to have to rely on other people to be successful at this game?
- How often do you have to rely on other people in real life, and for what?
- In what ways is your spiritual journey reliant on the actions of other people?
- In what ways is your faith reliant on the actions of God?

Content

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- What does it mean to be “justified?”
- What do you think is the difference between being justified by “faith in Christ,” as opposed to be justified by “faith of Christ?”
- Why is such a thing important to some people?
- To what degree is justification dependent upon our own actions and how much is dependent upon God’s actions and why?

Closure

Give each person a piece of scrap paper and something with which to write and ask:

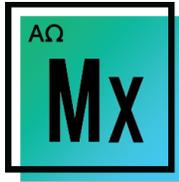
- To what degree do you feel alright about wrestling with scripture and why?
- How do you feel about wrestling with people’s thoughts about God and why?

On the pieces of scrap paper, have each person list a question that they have about God or a struggle they have in understanding scripture. It may be appropriate to give them some examples and time to think.

Collect the questions, and read them aloud to the group, encouraging the group to share their answers, after cautioning them to respect differing opinions and ideas. Some questions may lead to answers, some to no answers, and some may simply lead to more questions. Remind the group that the struggle is as valuable as the answers.

Close this session in prayer that you all may have the strength to wrestle with difficult questions and the courage to hear difficult answers.

Writer: Don Breeden



MIX
session page

Prepositional Problems

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Before the Session

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Context (From the Current Session Page)

Optionally share this eighteen-second video: ["I don't think that means what you think it means"](#) then ask:

- I understand that this is an invitation to be a bit assiduous about other people's impecunious vocabulary, but what are some words that you think people commonly misuse?

Share this list of [words whose usage has changed](#) then continue by asking:

- Which of these changed meanings most surprised you and why?
- What are some words whose original meaning you might use anyway, despite the way everyone else seems to use them, and why?
- To what degree does the original usage of a word matter if it is widely used to mean something else?

Content (From the Mind Session Page)

Read [Galatians 2:15-21](#), then watch the Bible Background Video and Tell the group:

Remember what's going on in these Galatian churches: Paul is fighting against the idea that these non-Jewish believers must first live by the Jewish law (including circumcision and dietary restrictions) if they want to be Christians.

ask:

- What does the English word "justify" mean?
- What kinds of things do we justify and why?
- What does it mean to be justified or "made right" with God?
- According to Paul, how are we justified?
- Compare some different translations for verse 16 – how do each of them translate the phrase, "faith of/in Christ," and what do you think that means?
- Why do you think Paul feels that no one can be justified before God through following the Law?
- What might it mean to die "through the Law" or "to the Law" and why has this happened?
- What do you think Paul is really saying in verse 20 and why?

Closure (from the Media Session page)

Play [... it's what you do that defines you](#) and ask:

- In light of today's scripture, how do you feel about what Rachel tells Bruce in this video and why?
- What do you think should shape your life and why?
- By what means can we enable Christ (or the faith of Christ) to live in us?
- To what degree do you feel you are defined by either what you are against or by your consistent actions towards citizens in God's Kingdom?
- If not through works, in what ways do we show faith in/of Christ by our attempts to act in a manner consistent with what we believe?

Close in prayer