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JUNE 2009 TEACHING PLANS

THE LETTERS OF GALATIANS AND JAMES

LETTER WRITING MAY BE AN ANCIENT ART THESE DAYS, but to Paul and James, it was the only way to connect with long-distance friends. Together, these two books assert the importance of knowing what you believe and living what you know. Too often we're caught up in the busyness of life and forget that, as Christians, we're called to live out our faith in practical ways on a daily basis. So, have you been slacking off? Make it a priority this summer to meet God wherever your life has taken you — to your parent's house, to an internship in another state, or even on mission across the globe.

THE SKINNY: Galatians, written by the apostle Paul specifically to Jewish Christians, refutes the claim that anything other than faith is necessary for salvation. In his letter Paul asserted his authority as an apostle, declared the true gospel, and encouraged his readers about the Holy Spirit's work in helping Christians apply the gospel to their daily lives. James, likely Jesus' half-brother, continued Paul's thesis by writing to scattered Jewish Christians living in various nations beyond Judea. He urged his readers to seek a genuine faith that illustrates Christ's example on a daily basis.

WHAT'S INSIDE ...The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: Getting Started helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. Need to Knows highlights the main characters, historical context, and key verses of each lesson. Explore the Bible leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. Apply to Life gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided (threadsmedia.com/collegiate) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons.

COLLEGIATE GOES DIGITAL You can now get all the recommended music from *Collegiate* in one quick bunch. Go to iTunes, Music, iMix, and search for Summer 2009 *Collegiate* iMix.

As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

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→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 28 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "THE GOOD CONFESSION (I BELIEVE)" BY ANDREW PETERSON, FROM THE ALBUM *RESURRECTION LETTERS, VOL. 2*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

THIS LESSON IS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF THE GOSPEL PAUL PREACHED. THE EMPHASIS IS ON BEING CLEAR ABOUT THE TRUE GOSPEL. THE LESSON ENCOURAGES ADULTS TO DEMONSTRATE THEY HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL.

FOCAL PASSAGES

GALATIANS 1:6-16; 2:1-6

KEY VERSES

GALATIANS 1:6-7



INSTANT ACCESS ... CONNECTING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "The Good Confession (I Believe)" by Andrew Peterson playing in the background as students arrive.

Conduct a "Find the Fake" test:

- Fill one cup with Pepsi, and one with Coke. (Mark an A and a B on each to keep them separate).
- Order pizza from Dominos and Pizza Hut. Place two slices on different paper plates. Label one plate A, the other B. (After the game, share the rest of the pizza with the class.)
- Bring one Starbucks cappuccino and one from McDonald's. (Disguise the cups and label A and B.)

Divide students into three groups. Give each group two items to compare. Instruct group A to find the real Coke, B to find Dominos, and C to find the Starbucks. The catch: Only two people in each group may actually taste the items. After tasting, the students must describe the taste to the rest of the group until the group votes.

After each group has finished, reveal the real answers, and lead a discussion:

- Was it difficult to distinguish the two products?
- How did you describe your item to the group?
- Was it hard to get your group to trust your tasting ability?
- Would it have been helpful if another person supported your opinion?

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 28 in the Summer 2009 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for more stats, related verses, and further study ideas.



EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Today's lesson centers around confusing opinions on one issue: the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote the Letter of Galatians to the churches of Galatia because they were about to abandon the gospel. Like today, fake versions of the gospel were circulating around Christians. These imitation gospels often looked and sounded a lot like the real thing, and the people had trouble telling the difference, especially when convincing people argued both sides. Because Paul founded the Galatian church, he was personally invested in its spiritual growth and was angry to see people slipping.

- Name a few world religions and discuss how they try to attain salvation.
- Describe a time when someone you trusted began to deviate from Truth.

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). GOSPEL CONFUSION (GALATIANS 1:6-9)

READ GALATIANS 1:6-9.

“I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel—⁷not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to change the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him!⁹ As we have said before, I now say again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!

Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, and Romans 10:9. Then have someone read “Gospel Confusion” on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- How are we saved according to these verses?
- How does Paul describe salvation in the Ephesians and Romans verses?

- What's the key verb in John 3:16 that leads us to salvation in Jesus?
- How is the Christian gospel different from other religions' means of salvation?
- Why does Paul strongly criticize false teachers?
- How do you think Paul would define a teacher? How are we all teachers in certain ways?

2). DISPLAYING PAUL'S CREDENTIALS (GALATIANS 1:11-13,15-16)

READ GALATIANS 1:11-13,15-16.

¹¹Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not based on a human point of view. ¹²For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation from Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I persecuted God's church to an extreme degree and tried to destroy it.

*.....
¹⁵But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, so that I could preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.*

The phrase “a revelation of Jesus Christ” refers to Paul's Damascus Road experience where he encountered Christ.

Ask a volunteer to read “Displaying Paul's Credentials” on page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Why did Paul list his credentials for the Galatians?
- How does God sometimes have to remind us He's God?
- Are you easily swayed by a convincing argument?
- Why is it important to verify opinions and ideas through God's Word?

- How can you verify others' ideas without becoming cynical or skeptical?

3). UNWAVERING COMMITMENT (GALATIANS 2:1-6)

READ GALATIANS 2:1-6.

¹Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ²I went up because of a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles—but privately to those recognized as leaders—so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. ³But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴This issue arose because of false brothers smuggled in, who came in secretly to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us. ⁵But we did not yield in submission to these people for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain for you. ⁶But from those recognized as important (what they really were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism)—those recognized as important added nothing to me.

Ask someone to read “Unwavering Commitment” at the bottom of page 28 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- Circumcision was the big legalistic sign in Paul's day. How do people try to earn salvation today? What are the outward signs Christians sometimes like to brag about?
- What's the difference between doing godly things to earn salvation and doing them *because* you're saved?
- Describe someone you know who does not compromise his or her beliefs.
- Why do some people call the Christian gospel “close-minded”? How do you respond to this?

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 30 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "HOW HE LOVES US" BY JOHN MARK MCMILLAN, FROM THE ALBUM *THE SONG INSIDE THE SOUNDS OF BREAKING DOWN*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson discusses how salvation occurs through faith and not as the result of works. The emphasis is on becoming a Christian through faith in Jesus.

FOCAL PASSAGES

GALATIANS 2:14–3:9

KEY VERSES

GALATIANS 2:19-20



SUMMONING FALSE PERFECTION

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "How He Loves Us" by John Mark McMillan playing in the background as students arrive.

Option 1: Bring several items to class that represent earning points. Examples: credit card, football, report card, video game, board game.

Ask students to guess what the items have in common. Explain that each object represents our attempt to earn points with money, sports, school, and our free time. Society programs us to operate on a point system. The harder we work (play, spend), the more we want to earn.

Option 2: "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" Clip — "Where the points don't matter." The game randomly awards points based on Drew Carey's whims. (Other examples of randomness include the "International" in International House of Pancakes, the surveillance camera in the 99 cent store, the movie *Blair Witch II*, or any movie that began as a "Saturday Night Live" sketch.)

This section in Galatians addresses the believer's need to earn "points" with God. Once again circumcision was the religious symbol for the Jewish people. Jewish Christians thought that non-Jewish believers needed to undergo the medical procedure in order to guarantee their salvation. Paul adamantly warns against linking circumcision with salvation.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 30 in the Summer 2009 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for more insight into this lesson.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). I OBJECT! (GALATIANS 2:14-16)

Ask a volunteer to read “I Object!” on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

READ GALATIANS 2:14-16.

¹⁴But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, “If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?” ¹⁵We are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners”; ¹⁶yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.

Both Peter and Paul helped establish the early Christian church. In this passage, Paul publicly challenges Peter’s wavering views on circumcision. Once, Peter ate with Gentiles in their homes until he was criticized by self-righteous Jews who boasted in their circumcision. Peter let others’ criticism dictate his behavior, and now he again avoided Gentiles and flip-flopped his view of circumcision. Paul was sick of his friend’s hypocrisy.

- Have you ever had a friend who bounced back and forth about what he or she believed?
- How did you confront that friend?
- According to Paul, what justifies us before God? What does Paul teach about works?
- How does religious legalism keep us in bondage just like our old sin?

- Why was it so important to Paul to get rid of circumcision in the early church?
- What’s a modern-day example of something Christians have wavering opinions on?

2). OBJECTION, OVERRULED (GALATIANS 2:17-21)

READ GALATIANS 2:17-21.

¹⁷But if, while seeking to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also found to be sinners, is Christ then a promoter of sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I have died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Have someone read “Objection, Overruled” on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- If works don’t save us (or earn us spiritual points), what’s the value of doing good?
- What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ”?
- How do believers try to earn points with God today?
- Why is spiritual point-keeping dangerous to our relationship with God?
- How does legalism usually cause us to look down on other people?
- If we could earn our own salvation, how would that negate the cross?

- How does works-based religion ruin a relationship with Christ?

3). VERDICT: NOT GUILTY (GALATIANS 3:1-5)

READ GALATIANS 3:1-5.

¹You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified? ²I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing? ⁵So then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Ask a volunteer to read “Verdict: Not Guilty” on page 30 of *Collegiate* magazine.

Paul was frustrated with the Galatians for their lack of obedience. They were easily swayed and charmed by the Jewish leaders — false teachers who were preaching salvation by works.

- How would you describe Paul’s tone in this passage?
- Why does Paul say false teachers have the power to “bewitch” their audience? How is this true today?
- Paul sarcastically asks several questions, but what is his overall point about the Holy Spirit?

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 32 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "THE BLESSING CURSE" BY ANDREW OSENGA, FROM THE ALBUM *LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, VOL. 1*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about the Galatians' turning back to salvation by works rather than growing as believers. The emphasis is on growing as Christians.

FOCAL PASSAGES

GALATIANS 3:26-29; 4:8-20

KEY VERSE

GALATIANS 4:19

Part of growing in Christ is learning to recognize propaganda, especially when it comes from passionate, compelling sources.



HEIR STYLE ... GROWING UP CHRISTIAN

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "The Blessing Curse" by Andrew Osenga playing in the background as students arrive.

Find one or two adoptive parents in your church and interview them in front of your class. The point is to let your students see parents who sacrificed in order to bring the child into their family. Now the child is exactly like their own. Even parents who adopt children from different races or nationalities see no difference in their biological children and their adoptive children.

- What started you thinking about adoption?
- What were some of the emotional and financial obstacles that may have stood in your way?
- What was it like to hold your new child for the first time?
- How does your new son/daughter fit into your family?
- Is it possible to love your adopted child like a biological child?
- How has adoption affected your relationship with God?

Note: If discussing adoption doesn't seem to relate to your college students, consider starting today's discussion with any of these topics:

- What does it mean to leave a legacy?
- What experience did you have with labels in high school or so far in your college experience?

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 32 in the Summer 2009 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for more insight into this lesson.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). ERASING LABELS (GALATIANS 3:26-29)

This section in Galatians deals with our adoption in Christ. God watched His Son be crucified so we could be adopted into His family. Like the above interview, God sees us as His sons and daughters. He gives us all the blessing, status, inheritance, and love that goes along with being a child of God.

READ GALATIANS 3:26-29.

²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

Have someone read "Erasing Labels" on page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- How does the world try to label people? (intelligence, appearance, athletic ability, wealth, successful)
- According to verse 28, what is the only label that matters to Christ?
- How does it encourage you to know that God doesn't see nationality or gender as it pertains to our status as heirs of Christ?
- How does today's church sometimes violate these verses?
- If we are one in Christ, does that mean our nationality or gender doesn't matter to God? Why would He create entities like color, gender, or race if He doesn't notice them? (Obviously, God doesn't favor anyone. We're all equally loved by God. The point of this question is to promote discussion about loving our differences.)

- What does it look like to be clothed with Christ?
- How is our promise like Abraham's promise?

2). THE HEART OF JOY (GALATIANS 4:8-14)

READ GALATIANS 4:8-14.

⁸But in the past, when you didn't know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods. ⁹But now, since you know God, or rather have become known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and bankrupt elemental forces? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? ¹⁰You observe special days, months, seasons, and years. ¹¹I am fearful for you, that perhaps my labor for you has been wasted. ¹²I beg you, brothers: become like me, for I also became like you. You have not wronged me; ¹³you know that previously I preached the gospel to you in physical weakness, ¹⁴and though my physical condition was a trial for you, you did not despise or reject me. On the contrary, you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

Ask a volunteer to read "The Heart of Joy" on page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- How were the Galatians living beneath their "adopted" status?
 - According to verse 10, what were the people participating in that made Paul angry?
 - Why would observing feasts and special days infuriate Paul?
- The Galatians were returning to old Jewish customs that no longer had any purpose for salvation. It's interesting that Paul becomes angry at former "good" practices.
- How are "good works" actually destructive apart from God?

- As Paul teaches in verse 9, how do legalistic "good" works enslave us "all over again"?
- What opinions or viewpoints are you and your friends tempted to be legalistic about?

3). GRADING THE TEACHERS (GALATIANS 4:15-20)

READ GALATIANS 4:15-20.

¹⁵What happened to this blessedness of yours? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷They are enthusiastic about you, but not for any good. Instead, they want to isolate you so you will be enthusiastic about them. ¹⁸Now it is always good to be enthusiastic about good—and not just when I am with you. ¹⁹My children, again I am in the pains of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you. ²⁰I'd like to be with you right now and change my tone of voice, because I don't know what to do about you.

Have someone read "Grading the Teachers" at the bottom of page 32 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- In verse 15, what does Paul notice about the peoples' joy?
- How had teachers played a role in the Galatians' confusion?
- How do false teachers today drive a wedge between us and other believers?
- In verse 18, what does Paul allude about the Galatians' behavior when he's not around?
- How is it tempting to grow complacent when your spiritual leader is absent?

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 34 OF THE SUMMER ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "LOVE IS HERE" BY TENTH AVENUE NORTH, FROM THE ALBUM *OVER AND UNDERNEATH*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is about Christian freedom. The lesson emphasizes that because Christians are saved by faith alone, they are freed from other requirements to receive salvation and freed to serve God.

FOCAL PASSAGES

GALATIANS 5:1-15

KEY VERSE

GALATIANS 5:1



LET FREEDOM RING ... LOVE, SERVE, GIVE

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Love Is Here" by Tenth Avenue North playing in the background as students arrive.

"Prison Break":

The NBC drama "Prison Break" centers on the life of former engineer Michael Scofield. In Season One, his prison is a literal cell. While trying to stop his brother's execution, Scofield experiences many horrors in the American prison system.

- If you've ever seen the show, describe some of the other inmates Scofield deals with.
- What would be the worst thing about going to prison?
- Do you think that real friendship is possible in prison?

Galatians 5 also deals with breaking out of prison. The bars that bind believers usually aren't literal metal bars (at least in America), but they restrict us just as efficiently.

- What "prisons" trap believers today?
- How might someone be trapped relationally, intellectually, or financially?

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 34 in the Summer 2009 issue of *Collegiate* magazine for other media and study options for this lesson.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). FREEDOM FROM CHAINS (GALATIANS 5:1A)

READ GALATIANS 5:1A.

¹Christ has liberated us into freedom.

Ask a volunteer to read “Freedom from Chains” on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- According to verse 1, why did Christ set us free?
- How does the enemy blind us to our freedom?
- What has Christ freed you from?
- How do believers experience freedom that the world doesn't understand?

In Christ, we're free from any additional requirements for receiving salvation from sin and death. Instead of serving any other god — including serving ourselves — we are now free to live for Christ and serve Him alone.

2). FREEDOM FROM THE LAW (GALATIANS 5:1B-6)

READ GALATIANS 5:1B-6.

Therefore stand firm and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery. ²Take note! I, Paul, tell you that if you get circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all. ³Again I testify to every man who gets circumcised that he is obligated to keep the entire law. ⁴You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace! ⁵For by the Spirit we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness from faith. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what matters is faith working through love.

Have someone read “Freedom from the Law” on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What things were keeping the Galatians from experiencing freedom? What prison captured them?

Ironically, Galatians were enslaved to good things. They tried hard to keep the law, but their legalism actually became their spiritual prison.

- Describe a time something “good” turned out to be a prison for you.
- How does Christ free us from keeping the law?
- Why is our salvation about more than following rules?
- Does that mean we return to our old sinful nature?
- What does an intimate relationship with God look like?

3). FREEDOM FROM THE EXTERNAL (GALATIANS 5:7-12)

READ GALATIANS 5:7-12.

⁷You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion did not come from Him who called you. ⁹A little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough. ¹⁰In the Lord I have confidence in you that you will not accept any other view. But whoever it is who is troubling you will pay the penalty. ¹¹Now brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. ¹²I wish those who are disturbing you might also get themselves castrated!

Ask a volunteer to read “Freedom from the External” on page 34 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What should define our lives as believers?
- Why is Paul so passionate about the subject of circumcision?
- What kind of persecution does he endure (from other believers) because of his stand?

- How can you help prevent legalism from creeping into your life? How do you keep legalism from creeping into your church?

4) FREEDOM FROM OURSELVES (GALATIANS 5:13-15)

READ GALATIANS 5:13-15.

¹³For you are called to freedom, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in one statement: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

Have a volunteer read “Freedom from Ourselves” on page 35 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- How do we use our freedom in Christ to serve each other?

People in prison can't serve other people. Prison has a way of making people 100 percent selfish. Their chains cause them to be inwardly focused on their own problems. Usually, people in prison drag others down with them. We've all known people who struggle in a relationship, and drag everyone else into their drama. They are impossibly fixated on their own “crisis” and cannot pour themselves into others. Paul says “You're free! Use your freedom to help other people.”

- How do emotional, social, or intellectual prisons make you selfish?
- What freedom is found in serving other people?
- How can you lean on other believers without becoming selfish?

