

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER GUIDE –

Galatians Series: *Free in Christ* “Standing Firm in Freedom” - Galatians 5:1-6

FELLOWSHIP

“Standing firm in freedom” could be a slogan in America that feels more political than spiritual. But really it was the lure of religious freedom that drew the first European immigrants, the Puritans, to this continent. Liberty was first a plea from those who wanted to worship and practice their faith according to their convictions and what they felt the Bible modeled rather than the ritual and form that the church-state institutions had decreed. This biblical idea of freedom was so important that it became the context for the birthing of our nation. The opening statement of the U.S. Constitution includes in its purpose to, “Secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” The words of Christ in John’s gospel, regarding his mission to break the bondage of sin, have created a country that beckons the world to its shores, “Therefore if the Son makes you **free**, you shall be **free indeed**.” As we exercise our free expression of religion and peaceable assembly tonight, perhaps we might get to reflect and share who in our family was first drawn to this land and why, whether multiple generations ago or maybe you are the first generation.

PRAY, READ, DISCUSS

Read **Galatians 5:1-6** out loud together regarding Paul’s plea to stay connected to Christ. If one has Jesus as the object of their spiritual attention it will result in liberty, faith, grace and love. What could be better than that? Apparently, it is not that obvious to everyone hence Paul’s passionate argument. Remember Paul is a Jewish theologian and lawyer by trade. And circumcision was *the* sign of the Abrahamic covenant, and *the* symbol of the specialness of God’s people. These facts add to the weight of his exhortation to not entangle their faith in Christ with religious rites. The yoke of bondage (Grk. δούλος) is better translated “slavery.” Maybe a simple metaphor to us today, but a vivid image of chains and stocks to a first century person living under Roman rule. Religious, ritualistic piety will cut the life line of Christ’s grace. It feels cold, callous, and indifferent. On the other hand, faith and reliance in him results in a holiness that is motivated by God’s best attribute, love.

- Another religious leader like Paul came to Jesus at night and asked about knowing God. Jesus’ response to him was he had to be born-again. (cf. John 3) What was your journey like to being born-again? What were some of the things that you remember Jesus liberated you from?
- Some might associate the church with an institution that does the very thing Paul’s warns against. But what is the real function of the church? How can the “body of Christ” help its members “Stand fast in liberty by which Christ has set us free?” When have you had another Christian, maybe with good intentions, try to saddle you with extra rules for a supposed deeper Christian life? How did you handle it?
- Slavery was imbedded in the first century. As western trade expanded, trafficking humans spread across the globe. It took some strong Christians such as William Wilberforce to expose and fight against this injustice. It might be hard to believe, but modern slavery is still an epidemic. Though much more covert and anonymous it is a tragic reality. January was Human Trafficking Awareness month and the media has begun to preach for attention to the problem. The U.S. State Department published a report that estimated 27 million people are victims of trafficking at any moment. What can we do in our communities to bring the gospel and freedom in Christ to bear on this problem?

PRAY



Community Group Leader Guide
Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen’s message on February 26, 2017
Watch: <http://cccm.com/teaching/galatians/video/standing-firm-in-freedom/>