

▶ GLENSTONE CHAPEL ◀
Community Group Bible Study Guide

Passage: Galatians 3:26-4:7

For use May 11-17, 2008

**QUESTIONS TO USE IN GROUP
OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

LAUNCHING (Choose one or two to introduce passage.)

1. Have you ever been named in someone's will and received some inheritance as a result? What did you learn about the meaning of "heirship"?
2. Have you ever had a job in which you felt no better treated than a *slave*? What were your reactions to this situation? Choose as many as apply. **Share if you wish:**
 A. "I really resented being pushed around, treated like an animal or a machine."
 B. "I was trapped. I wanted to quit but couldn't."
 C. "The feelings of powerlessness really depressed me."
 D. "If I could get away with it, I'd kill the boss."
 E. "I dreaded going to work each day and was glad when it was time to go home."
 F. "No comment."
 G. Another option? _____
3. If anyone in the group has experienced the child adoption process (either being adopted or having adopted), perhaps they will share how they look at the Biblical teachings about being adopted into God's family.

UNDERSTANDING Galatians 3:26 - 4:7

1. Read aloud the passage in the NIV version and possibly in a modern English paraphrase also. Note the repeated word, "all!"
2. What does this passage teach about Jesus as the Son of God? About Christian believers¹ as *children of God*?
- 3 "How does being 'clothed with Christ' (vs. 27) eliminate major cultural barriers (v. 28)?"²

4. "In verse 28, Paul lists several ways in which people have been categorized. How have these categories sometimes functioned as barriers? In light of the context, how have these barriers been broken down in Christ?"³
5. Compare and contrast the circumstances of (a) a slave, (b) heir when a minor child, (c) the heir when s/he comes into majority age.
6. From your background knowledge, explain how 6 (or 4) B.C. was the best time for Jesus to come into the world?
7. What are some of the "full rights of son," as indicated in 4:5?
8. "How has God entered time to change human history and made us adult heirs?"⁴

REFLECTING on Galatians 3:26 - 4:7⁵

1. What does it look like for me to think and act like a "spiritual orphan"? What in my life seems to reflect being an orphan instead of a child of God?
2. How am I being a "spiritual orphan" when I depend on the approval of others?
3. How might my adoption into God's family change how I view my present and future circumstances?

FURTHER REFLECTION (on your own)

What makes it hard for me to believe that I am a child of God in my daily life? In what ways do I still live my life as a "spiritual orphan"?

FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

Passage: Galatians 3:26-4:7

¹"through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

²*Serendipity Bible for Groups*, page 1521.

³*NIV Quiet-Time Bible*, page 1432.

⁴*1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 50.

⁵Questions adapted from *Sonship Course*, World Harvest Mission.

1. To ponder: What are some of the implications of a Christian's special relationship with God, in Christ? What does it mean to "clothe oneself" with Christ? What is involved in a father-son kinship, in life, in death?

2. "You are all sons of God" (3:26).

- "God is the Father of all men as Creator, but the spiritual Father only of those who by faith in Christ Jesus receive '*adoption*' into His family. . . ." ⁶
- "With the advent of faith (v. 25) came a whole new possibility; to become a child of God in a real immediate way." ⁷
- "Believers are first of all children of God by adoption. . . . This **adoption** is a legal act, whereby God places the sinner in the status of a child, but does not change him inwardly any more than parents by the mere act of adoption change the inner life of an adopted child. . . . By virtue of their adoption believers are as it were initiated into the very family of God, come under the law of filial obedience, and at the same time become entitled to all the privileges of sonship." ⁸
- ". . . by an act of God's rich and sovereign grace, putting them among the children. In saying this the apostle directs himself to the Gentiles for their comfort . . . they being under a profession of faith. . . ." ⁹

3. ". . . baptized into Christ. . . ." (3: 27).

- "He sets forth baptism, as opposed to circumcision, which the false apostles bragged so much of." ¹⁰
- Some Christians use this verse to support the water baptism of infants. An alternative view states that being adult-baptized into Christ is a sign of a believer's allegiance to Christ.
- "In baptism we put on Christ; therein we profess to be His disciples. Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death, that as He died and rose again, so we should die unto sin, and walk in newness and holiness of life." ¹¹
- ". . . they are led by faith to behold . . . the remission of their sins by His blood, and their justification by His righteousness; how He . . . died for their sins, was buried in the grave, and their iniquities with Him, and rose again for their justification; of all which, baptism, performed by immersion, is a lively emblem. . . ." ¹²

4. ". . . clothed yourselves with Christ." (3: 27).

- As a badge or uniform of service like that of the soldier . . . in the sense of putting on garments. " ¹³

5. ". . . neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

- ". . . the believer is . . . united to every other believer in a Christian 'brotherhood,' in which the significance of certain common social distinctions of Paul's day is greatly reduced." ¹⁴
- All, without regard to race, blended into one whole. " ¹⁵
- This verse provides ". . . a basis for a far-reaching sense of respect and appreciation for the value of each member of the body of Christ." ¹⁶
- "From the first century Jewish perspective, the cleavage between Jew and Greek was of the deepest sort. Jewish contempt for non-Jews was immense. Gentiles, they said, had been created by God as fuel for the fires of Hell. For that barrier to have fallen simply incredible. . . . Although the some 60 million slaves virtually ran the Roman Empire, they were generally regarded as mere things, without rights, subject to any whim of their master. This was another barrier broken down by Christ. . . . A woman had few if any rights in either first century Judaism or Graeco-Roman culture. She belonged to her husband and he could treat her as he chose, including divorcing her with ease. This barrier, too, Christ removed so that in the same way a Gentile or a slave could exercise leadership in the church, so too could women." ¹⁷
- "This radical statement marks out the path along which Christianity was to come in the sphere and spirit and power of Christ. . . ." ¹⁸

6. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (3:29).

- "The seed is not limited to Christ, but includes all believers." ¹⁹
- The covenant of grace ". . . is essentially the same in all dispensations, though its form of administration changes." ²⁰
- "Israel was the Church of the Old Testament and in its spiritual essence constitutes a unity with the Church of the New Testament." ²¹

7. "What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child . . . subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. (4:1-2)

- "In his will, a Roman father appointed a guardian who looked after the child until he came of age at fourteen.

⁶ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

⁷ *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

⁸ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, pages 515-516.

⁹ *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

¹⁰ *Geneva Bible*.

¹¹ *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, by Matthew Henry.

¹² *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

¹³ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

¹⁴ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 97

¹⁵ *People's New Testament Commentary*.

¹⁶ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 98.

¹⁷ *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

¹⁸ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

¹⁹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 274

²⁰ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 279

²¹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 409

Then a curator looked after the child's affair until age twenty-five." ²²

- "... the patrician child during his minority, who is still a son although he cannot exercise the rights of his sonship until the proper time. It is a sonship experienced in immaturity. . . . but it is a degree of sonship." ²³
- "The child is heir to the whole estate but in fact he is no better off than a slave (because he is under the strict control of his guardian and has no access to the inheritance)." ²⁴
- It is needful that he be controlled, even as though he were a servant. ²⁵
- *Trustee*. "... manager of a household whether freeborn or slave . . . manager of an estate . . . treasurer. . . ." ²⁶

8. "... slavery under the basic principles of the world." (4:3)

- "Under the typical observances of the Law, which were like the first elements of grammar, the A B C of children. . . ." ²⁷
- "Paul has in mind the rudimentary character of the law as it applies to both Jews and Gentiles, to all the knowledge of the world. . . . All were in the elementary stage before Christ came." ²⁸

9. "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law," (4:4).

- The world was prepared in every way for the Messiah's coming. Roman rule insured relative social stability. A common language was spoken throughout the Roman Empire; major cities were linked with an excellent network of roads; devout Jews had synagogues everywhere. What an ideal environment it was for the spread of the Gospel!
- "Finally the long history of God's revelation reaches a culminating point; Jesus is sent." ²⁹
- "The pre-existent Son of God assumes human nature and takes to Himself flesh and blood, a miracle that passes our limited understanding." ³⁰
- "Jesus . . . assumed human nature by being born of a woman, and then entered into temporal relations . . . it was absolutely essential that He should become one of the human race." ³¹ [in order to secure the redemption of humankind]
- "Not only did the Son experience the humiliation of Incarnation . . . but also the frustration of bondage to

the very law from which He came to free humanity." ³²

- "... under the law; under the civil and judicial law as a Jew, to which He was subject . . . and which was necessary; that it might appear He sprung from that nation, to whom He was promised . . . as a son of Abraham. He was made under the ceremonial law . . . and He was made under the moral law . . . was subject to all the precepts of it, and bore the penalty of it, death, in their . . . stead, and thereby . . . delivered them from its curse and condemnation." ³³

10. "... to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (4:5).

- Jesus was able to redeem sinful human beings because He took the place of sinners by His death on the cross. "... their guilt was imputed, and their punishment transferred to Him." ³⁴
- "... God's Old Testament people were . . . His sons and daughter, yet they could not enjoy to the full their status of sonship because of the restrictive function of the ceremonial law. Now that those restrictions have been removed . . . God's people can enjoy their full rights as sons." ³⁵
- "... adoption, a widespread practice in the Graeco-Roman world whereby a child became a member of a new family with equivalent rights to those born in the family." ³⁶

11. "God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" (4:6).

- "... after the coming of the Messiah, believers experience a Spirit who had by then already been experienced by the Messiah Himself as God-man." ³⁷
- "That Spirit regenerates and sanctifies us and prompts us to address God full of confidence as Father." ³⁸ [*Abba Father*] Cf. John 1:12 Rom. 8:15-16.

12. "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (4:7).

- Christ's active obedience in choosing to die for the sins of humankind set His adopted sons/daughters free from the Law and also caused them to become heirs of eternal life.
- "... the enjoyment of that privilege [of being a child] is dependent on any number of factors. These could include, among other things, the quality of the parenting, the age of the child, the nature of the relationship between parent and child and the external circumstances under which the relationship

²² *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

²³ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, pages 109-110

²⁴ *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

²⁵ *People's New Testament Commentary*.

²⁶ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson.

²⁷ *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, by John Wesley.

²⁸ *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

²⁹ *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

³⁰ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 333.

³¹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 269

³² *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

³³ *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.

³⁴ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 376

³⁵ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 109.

³⁶ *1 John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 51.

³⁷ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 111

³⁸ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 516

exists. . . . even in less than ideal situations, there is still an unrivaled uniqueness about being a child."³⁹

- "The privileges entailed in this 'sonship' are at least two fold: inheritance and intimacy. . . . The inheritance is primarily the blessing of justification by faith (3:14) and the gift of the Spirit (3:14;4:6). . . . the position of sonship is itself part of the inheritance. Sonship . . . allows intimacy [*Abba Father*] "⁴⁰

- "Not only is sonship a privilege, but there are attendant duties as well. . . . We need to recognize and honor others in the family of God as equals before God (3:28), whatever their social or ethnic status."⁴¹

- ". . . God . . . is their portion and exceeding great reward; His perfections are . . . engaged for their good; . . . all His promises belong to them; they are heirs of all the blessings of grace and glory, of righteousness, of life, of salvation, and a kingdom and glory; and shall inherit all things, and all 'through Christ.' He is the grand heir of all things; they are joint heirs with Him; their **sonship** is through Him, and so is their heirship and inheritance; their inheritance is in His possession, it is reserved safe in Him; and by Him, and with Him they shall enjoy it."⁴²

³⁹ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, pages 106-107.

⁴⁰ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 108

⁴¹ *Galatians, The Gospel Acc. to Paul*, by David Huttar, page 109

⁴² *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, by John Gill.