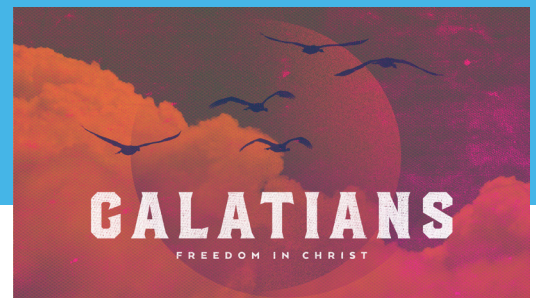


Discussion Questions

June 28, 2026



Galatians 4:21-31 - Whose Child Are You?

This week we concluded our Galatians series in 4:21–5:1 by looking at two different ways to live in God’s house: like a nervous, performance-driven employee, or like a secure, beloved child. Paul takes the Old Testament story of Abraham’s two sons and turns it upside down. Ishmael (born of human effort) represents the old covenant of law and slavery, while Isaac (born of God’s promise) represents the new covenant of grace and freedom. Paul challenges us to “cast out the slave woman.” Which means evicting the system of earning our standing with God, not throwing away a person. When we secretly believe we’re on probation with God, we start acting like probation officers toward everyone else, pushing people we disagree with to a “side table.” But when we truly grasp our freedom in Christ, we drop the scorecard and can finally live, love, and welcome others to the Kingdom table as beloved children of God by the power of the Spirit.

1. Read Galatians 4:21–26 alongside the backstory in Genesis. Paul contrasts Ishmael (born of a “human attempt”) with Isaac (born of “God’s promise”). Why is the difference in how they were born so central to Paul’s argument? Why would the law of God, represented by Mount Sinai, end up producing slaves rather than free children?
2. Read Galatians 4:28–29. Paul says we know we belong “by the power of the Spirit,” the same Spirit who cries “Abba, Father” in us. How is that different from the ways we usually try to measure whether we’re okay with God? Why is the Spirit, rather than our record, the real “receipt” of our adoption?
3. Read Genesis 16:13. When Paul says “cast out the slave woman,” he’s talking about a system of earning, not throwing away a person. And in Genesis, God meets the real Hagar in the desert as El-Roi, “the God who sees me.” How does holding God’s tenderness toward Hagar together with Paul’s theological point change the way we read this passage?
4. James described “Gospel Plus” Jesus plus my effort, the right rules, the right politics, the right spiritual experiences. Where do you most often catch yourself adding a “plus”? What does the voice of the “slave woman” sound like when she knocks on your door on a Tuesday, telling you you’re not doing enough?
5. The sermon pointed out that when we believe we’re on probation with God, we become the probation officer for everyone else. Who have you quietly moved to the “side table?” Someone deconstructing, voting differently, or struggling with sin? Read Galatians 5:1: how does embracing your own unearned grace help tear that dividing wall down?
6. We stay free not by working harder but by shifting from “have-to” to “get-to” obedience. What would it look like this week to approach your prayer life or Bible reading “like a child reading a letter from their Dad” instead of an employee studying a handbook so they don’t get fired?

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for the Spirit He’s already given you as the proof of your adoption. Where you’ve been living like the nervous employee, ask Him to help you cast out that voice and live as a beloved child this week, and pray for the people you tend to keep at the side table.

Galatians 4:21–31 (NLT)

Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says? The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise.

These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. She is the free woman, and she is our mother.

As Isaiah said,

"Rejoice, O childless woman,
you who have never given birth!

Break into a joyful shout,

you who have never been in labor!

For the desolate woman now has more children
than the woman who lives with her husband!"

And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit.

But what do the Scriptures say about that? "Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son." So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.

Galatians 4:19 (NIV)

"I feel as if I'm going through labor pains until Christ is fully formed in you."

Galatians 4:21 (NLT)

"Tell me, you who want to live under the law do you know what the law actually says?"

Galatians 4:22–23 (NLT)

"The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise."

Ishmael = a "human attempt" at God's promise

Isaac = "God's own fulfillment"

Galatians 4:24–26 (NLT)

"These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia because she and her children live in slavery to the law. But the other woman, Sarah represents the heavenly Jerusalem, she is the free woman and she is our mother."

 HAGAR THE SLAVE WOMAN	 SARAH THE FREE WOMAN
 THE OLD COVENANT	 THE NEW COVENANT
 ISHMAEL - born of human effort	 ISAAC - Born of God's Promise
 SLAVERY	 FREEDOM
 PRESENT JERUSALEM	 JERUSALEM ABOVE



Galatians 4:27 (NLT)

"Rejoice, O childless woman, you who have never given birth! For the desolate woman now has more children, than the woman who lives with her husband!"

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

Galatians 4:28–29 (NLT)

"And you are children of the promise, just like Isaac. But you are now being persecuted just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort persecuted Isaac the child born by the power of the Spirit."

Galatians 4:30 (NLT)

"But what do the Scriptures say about that?
'Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son.'"

Genesis 16:13 (NLT)

"You are the God who sees me."

What do we cast out?

- 1. Any voice that says "you need to earn what Jesus has freely given"**
- 2. Tribalism: Anything that divides the Kingdom Table**

Galatians 4:31–5:1 (NLT)

"So we are not children of the slave woman, we are children of the free woman. So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law."

Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

"I will write them on their hearts."

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (NLT)

"I will put my Spirit in you and give you a tender, responsive heart."

We are to be a family learning to actually live and love like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit together at one table