



Sermon Questions

Date: *October 29, 2023* | Scripture: *Galatians 4:12-31*

1. This is a long and complex passage. Which parts make most sense, and which parts are hardest to understand or accept? Write down difficult questions to revisit at the end.
2. Throughout the book, Paul has been speaking about people teaching a different gospel. What does he add to our understanding of *their* motivation, and its contrast with *his*, in verses 16-19?
3. Outline the Hagar/Mount Sinai idea (4:21-31) for someone who is not familiar with Genesis 16 and 21, and Exodus 19-20. If possible, use visual aids! *If you're feeling eager, you could use the extract on the next page to help with this. Bonus points if you can connect it to Hebrews 12:18-29.*
4. How has Christ been formed among the members of your group? Reflect on ways you have seen the Spirit at work in one another.
5. How might the freedom of knowing that you are a child of the promise, born according to the Spirit, free you to make decisions that glorify your heavenly Father this week?

Inward Grace in Action

6. Another dynamic this passage reminds us of is how we may have been passionate believers in our early days of belief, but moved away from those who nurtured us in the truth. Is there anyone from those days whom you need to reconcile with, thank, or encourage?
7. Alternatively, are there voices you are listening to who draw your gaze away from Christ, so you would make much of them? Ask the Spirit to convict you, and to free you from false teaching you have taken in.

WORSHIP THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Here are some other ways you can meet with God throughout the week:

Reflect on these Scriptures:

- Genesis 16, 21:8-21
- 2 Kings 6:15-23
- Isaiah 51
- Matthew 20:1-16
- Hebrews 12:18-29

Serve: Seek out a member of your CG to visit and serve in a tangible way this week.

Pray for those baptized this past Sunday, and for those discipling them.

Reach out if you need assistance:

- Call our church office at 703.821.0800
- Request aid from our Deacons' Fund at deaconsfund@mcleanpres.org

Bonus extension resource:

What's going on in 4:21-31?

“Paul follows this personal appeal with an illustration drawn from Genesis 21—the account of Hagar and Sarah (Gal. 4:21–31). What is unusual about this passage is Paul’s statement that the two sons of Sarah and Hagar “may be interpreted allegorically” (4:24). This description, unique in Paul’s letters, suggests that Paul is distinguishing his reading of this text from his other readings of Old Testament passages (cf. 3:6–14). The Greek term rendered “allegorical” by the ESV is better translated “figurative,” since the term does “not have the technical sense often associated with the word in later centuries.” What Paul intends by this word is best gleaned from observing the way in which he here handles the text of Genesis.

Paul relates Hagar and Sarah to “two covenants” (4:24), that is, the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant, respectively. To Hagar correspond “slavery,” “flesh,” and the “present Jerusalem”; to Sarah correspond “freedom,” “Spirit,” “the Jerusalem above,” and inheritance (4:23, 25–26, 29–30). New covenant believers are “not children of the slave but of the free woman” (4:31; cf. 4:1–7). With the assistance of Isaiah 54:1, which Paul quotes at Galatians 4:27, and in light of Christ’s finished work, Paul employs the text of the historical narrative of Genesis 21 in order to reinforce the redemptive-historical argumentation of Galatians 3:1–4:7 and to apply it to the circumstances in Galatia.”¹

¹ Guy Prentiss Waters, “[Galatians](#),” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 262.