

# Galatians

## IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

### Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Paul and His Letters* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



### Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



### Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



### Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,\* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup>but emptied himself,<sup>†</sup> taking the form of a servant,<sup>‡</sup> being born in the likeness of men.<sup>§</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>¶</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,<sup>||</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>|||</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Shinin**  
12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.  
14 Do all thi tioning,<sup>15</sup>that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

**2:7 emptied himself:** The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

**2:8 death on a cross:** The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

**2:9 exalted him:** By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

**2:10 every knee should bow:** An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

**2:11 confess:** I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

*A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel*

## Prepare

Read the Introduction to Galatians, paying particular attention to the *Purpose* and *Themes and Characteristics* of the book. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Galatians to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

## Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Galatians, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.*

## Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Galatians as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

### *For understanding*

1. **1:1–10.** What makes the opening of this letter different from those of most other Pauline letters? How is this difference corroborated by the contents of this letter?
2. **1:8.** In the Greek OT, what Hebrew term is the Greek *anathema* used to translate? What does the Hebrew word mean? How does the NT use the term? How does Paul use it here, and why?
3. **1:10.** What are the Judaizers accusing Paul of doing with the requirements of the original gospel? What does Paul accuse them of doing?
4. **1:18.** How soon did Paul travel to Jerusalem after he became a Christian? What does the Greek (not the English) wording indicate that he did during this time? Whom did Paul visit?

### *For application*

1. **1:6–7.** How well do you know your Catholic faith? How committed to it are you? How willing would you be to defend your commitment to it if a non-Catholic evangelist were to try to “disprove” the Catholic understanding of the gospel?
2. **1:8–9.** Since even Catholic preachers, teachers, and theologians may differ in their view of what is authentic Church teaching, how is it possible to recognize whether they are preaching a “different gospel” or not? How often do you consult a trustworthy adult catechism to answer questions you may have about your faith?
3. **1:13–14.** If you were ever lukewarm about your faith, or even fell away from it for a while, how did you relate to friends or relatives who were still active? What brought you back to a serious practice of your faith?
4. **1:18.** Who has had the greatest influence on your understanding of the faith? What did that person (or those persons) do or say to make such an impact? How has that example influenced the way you encourage others?

## Chapter 2

### *For understanding*

1. **2:3.** What historical events in Jewish history provide a background for the expression “compelled to be circumcised”? How are the Judaizers acting in an analogous way?
2. **2:9.** What might be the reason Paul names James before Cephas (Peter) in this verse? What is James’ position?
3. **Essay: Works of the Law.** What do several modern Scripture scholars think Paul was referring to in using this expression? How is this new understanding actually an old one? What is the theological meaning of these “works”?
4. **2:20.** To what did Paul die when he was “crucified” with Jesus? In what sacramental context does this union with Christ take place?

### *For application*

1. **2:2.** If you teach others the faith, who oversees what you do? What is the link between your role as a catechist or teacher and those who represent the Magisterium?
2. **2:11–14.** When someone in authority over you acts in a way that appears inconsistent, insincere, or even morally dangerous, what do you do about it? When someone confronts you with such an accusation regarding your own conduct, how do you respond?
3. **2:15–21.** If one is not justified by works of the law, what is the point of the Church’s Code of Canon Law and other religious precepts?

## Chapter 3

### *For understanding*

1. **3:15–18.** How does Israel’s failure to keep the Mosaic covenant affect God’s self-imposed obligation? What is the reason for this?

2. **3:19.** Why was the Torah inserted into history between the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant? Explain both reasons given in the note.
3. **3:20.** What does the fact that Moses is a mediator between God and the chosen people imply? How is the Abrahamic covenant different from the Mosaic covenant in this regard?
4. **Word Study: Custodian (3:24–25).** What was the role of a tutor in Hellenistic society? How does Paul apply this role to that of the Mosaic Law? What does the coming of Christ do to the function of the Law?

*For application*

1. **3:2–5.** How would you apply these verses to developments in your own life? Is it possible to have a life-changing experience of God through faith, only to end up as a good “keeper of the rules”?
2. **3:10.** Most rule books come with lists of consequences for infractions of the rules. How do you feel when you deliberately break a rule you know to be reasonable? What does it mean to say that, by breaking one rule, you break them all? What is the “curse” in that?
3. **3:23–25.** How do these verses reflect the normal process of growing up? If you are a parent, how do you know when it is time to relax certain forms of discipline? How does one grow from too narrow a focus on keeping rules and into a life of faith?

## Chapter 4

*For understanding*

1. **Word Study: Adoption (4:5).** In what stages does adoption as a *process* take place, according to Paul? From what does divine adoption *result*? What is the main difference between Christ and the Christian?
2. **4:6.** Why does Paul say the Father sent the Spirit? What is the joint mission of the Son and the Spirit? With what does the Spirit fill us? What does the word “Abba” suggest about the Spirit’s mission?
3. **4:8.** What does Paul mean by saying that the Galatians “did not know God”? How did the gospel change that situation?
4. **4:24–31.** How do Hagar and Sarah symbolize the Old and the New Covenants, respectively? What contrast is Paul setting up between the sons of the earthly Jerusalem and those of the heavenly Jerusalem?

*For application*

1. **4:1–7.** Have you ever received an inheritance? What made you an heir? What did inheriting money or property say about your relationship to the one who left it to you? What does it mean for you to inherit what God owns?
2. **4:10.** What do you think Paul might say of the Christian calendar, which includes feasts, solemnities, and penitential seasons? What is the purpose of Christian liturgical seasons? How is that purpose different from what Paul says about the Old Covenant calendar?
3. **4:17–19.** Why do the Christian media make much of a celebrity who adopts the Christian faith? What effects can the resulting publicity have for the Church? What is the danger in that kind of publicity for the celebrity?

## Chapter 5

*For understanding*

1. **5:1.** Why does Paul regard the Mosaic Law and faith in Jesus Christ as mutually exclusive? What did the Council of Florence (1422) say about Jewish Christians observing Mosaic ceremonies as necessary for salvation? Why?
2. **5:13.** What is Christian freedom for? Why can the Christian who is free from sin in Baptism and from the Law through faith not simply go and do whatever he feels like? What would be the consequence of that kind of license?
3. **5:14.** What is the chief aim of the Torah, and who fulfilled it to perfection? What makes it possible for us to fulfill the Law’s intention in our own lives?
4. **5:16–24.** What, according to Paul, is going on in the heart of every Christian? What is meant by “flesh”, here? What are the consequences of following the flesh and (by contrast) of following the Spirit?

*For application*

1. **5:1–6.** Although modern Catholics are unlikely to be tempted to yield to the slavery of the Mosaic Law, scrupulous persons may look on disobeying any of the Church’s disciplinary regulations as mortally sinful, whereas lax Catholics

may blithely disregard all regulations with no qualms of conscience. What is your position? What really is necessary for salvation? What are the ramifications of that position for how you live your life as a faithful Catholic?

2. **5:16–22.** Think about the “works of the flesh” that Paul lists that have been problem areas in your own life or for others you have known. What other “works of the flesh” are there that Paul did not include in his list? How do people tend to “gratify the desires” of fallen nature in these areas? What does Paul say is the consequence for those who indulge themselves in these ways?
3. **5:22–23.** Read the note for v. 22. How have you seen the development of this “fruit” in your own life? If you do not think you are growing in holiness, what do you think is the reason? Would others agree?
4. **5:24.** What does this passage mean for you? How do you “crucify the flesh”?

## Chapter 6

### *For understanding*

1. **6:2.** What is “the law of Christ”? What does Christian charity prohibit, and to what does it encourage us?
2. **6:7–9.** To what does the principle of sowing and reaping apply? What do those who sow in the Spirit reap? What do those who sow in the flesh reap? When does the reaping take place?
3. **6:14.** In Christ, what happens to our sins? For Paul, what is the real sign of our salvation?
4. **6:17.** As a slave of Christ, what brand does Paul bear on himself?

### *For application*

1. **6:1.** What do you typically do when you notice a fellow Christian engaged in a pattern of sinful behavior? According to this verse, what should you do? What does it mean for you to be “spiritual”? (Hint: Look at 5:22–23.)
2. **6:6.** How do you “share all good things” with those who instruct or pastor you? Is Paul encouraging merely financial sharing or something more? When was the last time you invited a priest or a missionary to your home for dinner? What kind of fellowship do you think the clergy in most parishes have with their parishioners?
3. **6:10.** To whom does Paul primarily urge you to do good? Why them?
4. **6:14.** How important to you is your relationship to the Cross of Christ? How is this manifested in the way you live? Has the Cross of Christ truly “crucified” the world to you and you to the world? In what ways does the world still exercise an influence on your daily life? (What is your understanding of the term *world* here? What does it mean for it to be “crucified”?)