



New City Church: Sermon Discussion Notes

“The Gospel and Shame” – Galatians 4:21-31

Purpose: These discussion questions are designed to help you apply the sermon to your personal life, church life or your city’s life. You can use these for personal, family, or small group reflection. To review the sermon, go to www.newcitychurch.ca/sermons.

Introduction

Pray – Take a moment to pray, asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture.

Read – Galatians 4:21-31

Sermon Summary – This section opens with a question that sets the tone for the passage: “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?” To help the Galatians to see (even more) clearly what it means to be “under the law”, Paul goes back to the Old Testament, this time to the story of Sarah and Hagar (see Genesis 16, 21). Paul tells the Galatians that the story is not only literally true, but also symbolically shows us two different ways of living – one is the way of the slave, Hagar, and one is the way of freedom, Sarah. If you take two different coloured highlighters and highlight the terms Paul uses to describe Hagar and Sarah, then you will get a good idea of what he is getting at.

Paul tells us that Hagar is the symbol of human effort to gain what God has already promised. When the promised son was slow in coming, Sarah decided to have Abraham sleep with her slave, Hagar and have an heir through her. This was not uncommon in the ancient world, but, it was a clear display of a lack of trust in God’s promise. For this reason, Paul tells the Galatians that if they persist in their efforts to earn their salvation through their good works, then they will become slaves, like Hagar. Conversely, when they trust in the gospel’s promise (that they are saved by grace and not by their works), they show themselves to be free children of God.

The underlying issue at work here is the way people deal with shame. Sarah knew that to be barren was to be subject to shame and ridicule in her culture. Her scheme to have an heir through Hagar was a poor attempt to cover that shame. The hope was that if she had an heir, her shame would be gone. But this doesn’t prove true. The Bible makes it clear that when humans try to cover their own shame it only leads to broken relationships. Because she didn’t trust God, Sarah found her relationship with her servant and her husband strained, and the relationship between the two children (Ishmael & Isaac) fractured as well.

In bringing this specific story to the Galatians, Paul is showing them that the false teachers are trying to get them to cover their own shame. While the Galatians were not all infertile, the point is that *everyone* is trying to cover their shame. Be it a workaholic covering his shame for being a poor father and husband, or the stay at home mom who feels ashamed that he is not working and tries to cover that shame with social media posts that make her

seem busy and productive. Until we see that Christ took ALL of our shame, we will keep trying to cover it ourselves.

Questions

1. Review the passage (Gal 4:21-31) How does this speak to your life?
 - Abraham and Sarah relied on themselves to make God's promises come to pass. Have you ever done something similar? What were the results?
 - When have you seen God do something that seemed impossible in your own life of that of someone around you?
2. What implications does Galatians 4:21-31 have for us as a church community?
 - We speak of individual shame often, but what about corporate shame? How might New City better model the truth that we are a community that has had all its shame covered by Jesus?
3. How does this text speak to our city?
 - Think about Calgary. If Paul is right and *everyone* is covering their shame in some way, what evidence do you see of it in our city?
 - How might New City (or your Life Group) help people in our city to see and stop covering their shame?

Concluding Question

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

Prayer

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