*divING DEEPER* **Discussion Guide**

**TEXT SUMMARY**

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Today’s text, **Galatians 4:21-31,** is the last in Paul’s theological arguments for the true gospel, the good news he preached to the believers in Galatia.

The false teachers loved to point to Abraham as proof of their contention that circumcision should be required for Gentile Christ-followers. If God gave circumcision as the sign of His Covenant with His people, then Gentiles must submit to circumcision if they want to join the Covenant Community of Christ.

Throughout the third and fourth chapters of Galatians, Paul repeatedly turns that argument on its head. He tells the false teachers, “You’re not reading Abraham right. He is actually the prototype of justification by faith instead of works.”

In this text, Paul makes his argument from the lives of the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac.

**INTRODUCTION** (observation):

This text lays out multiple contrasts between Isaac and Ishmael. *What are those contrasts?* If you want, you can create a chart with two headings (Ishmael and Isaac) to show the contrasts.

**READING**

Before you read the text (**Galatians 4:21-31**), read through the discussion (interpretation) and application questions below.

This text parallels Paul’s argument in 3:26-4:7, where Paul already explored the sonship v. slave explanation.

**DISCUSSION** (interpretation):

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To tease out Paul’s argument, answer these questions:

1. *In what ways does Isaac son of Sarah represent confidence in the promises of God?*

*2. In what ways does Ishmael son of Hagar represent distrust in the promises of God?*

Some scholars think Paul is suggesting church discipline in v. 28-31. *What do you think Paul wanted the Galatians to* ***do*** *with his arguments for the true gospel and against the false gospel?*

**SO WHAT?** (application)

The sermon opened with a comparison of two church guys, Ike and Izzy. From the outside, they were nearly identical. They both professed Christ and were faithful in both church attendance and private spiritual practices (Bible reading and prayer); they both used their gifts to serve the body. Yet their motives and their internal experience of their faith was drastically different.

The sermon concluded by laying out four indicators that can help us discern whether we are living out our faith legalistically (like the miserable Izzy) or in grace (Ike).

*Which of the following indicators of a legalistic mindset struck close to home?*

*If I am trusting in my own devices and schemes,*

1. *…prayer will be my last resort.*
2. *…my spirituality is all about metrics.*
3. *…I will hesitate to share my faith with others because my faith doesn’t seem like good news to me.*
4. *…I will try to manage my sin and guilt by hiding, blame-shifting, and comparing myself with others.*