

A study through the book of Galatians

BE FREE

Why Make It Difficult?

Galatians 2 (ESV)

1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. 2 I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

Galatians 2 (ESV)

*4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—
5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. 6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.*

Galatians 2 (ESV)

7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised 8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

Galatians 2 (ESV)

9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

The background is a dark, textured image of a globe. Overlaid on the globe is the text 'United Church of Christ' in a large, serif font at the top, and 'Preaching the Gospel' in a smaller, similar font below it. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The overall color palette is dark brown and black.

Church Authority

Church Authority

- Paul traveled to Jerusalem to address the Judaizers'
- Jesus is the ultimate authority
- Church authority
 - Derived from their fidelity to the teachings of Scripture, which guide their beliefs, decisions & actions
 - Rooted in apostolic tradition, which includes the teachings, practices & beliefs passed down from the apostles to subsequent generations of believers

Church Authority

- Local churches authority
 - Vested in its spiritual leaders, including pastors, elders & deacons, who are called & ordained to shepherd the congregation ensuring faithfulness to God's Word & mission
 - Exercise authority in harmony with the broader Body of Christ, seeking to fulfill its mission of proclaiming the gospel, making disciples & advancing God's kingdom



Abusing Church Authority

WC SCS W4D

Abusing Church Authority

- Doctrinal Legalism: Rigidly enforcing doctrinal positions or theological interpretations, leading to legalism & spiritual oppression
- Authoritarian Leadership: Authoritarian leaders may prioritize their own agendas or personal interests over the well-being of the congregation

Abusing Church Authority

- Financial Mismanagement: Misuse of financial resources or financial impropriety, such as embezzlement, fraud, or excessive spending on lavish facilities or personal enrichment
- Spiritual Abuse: Exerting undue influence or coercion over members' beliefs, behaviors & personal lives including manipulation, guilt-tripping, or shaming tactics to control congregants & maintain conformity to certain standards or expectations

Abusing Church Authority

- Lack of Accountability: Lack mechanisms for accountability & transparency in leadership, creates opportunities for abuse & misconduct to go unchecked
- Exclusivism & Sectarianism: Promoting exclusivist or sectarian attitudes can foster division, prejudice & hostility towards other Christian groups or denominations

Abusing Church Authority

- Political Entanglement: Aligning themselves with political ideologies or agendas at the expense of their prophetic witness & spiritual mission



**THE
GOSPEL
MISSION**

The Gospel Mission

- Proclaim the good news of Jesus & discipleship
- Make disciples who follow Jesus, grow in spiritual maturity & bear fruit in their lives
- Administer the sacraments of baptism & communion as visible signs of initiation into the body of Christ & participation in His death & resurrection
- Teach & equip believers for ministry, providing spiritual nourishment, guidance & training in the Word of God

The Gospel Mission

- Shepherd & care for the spiritual, emotional & physical needs of their members, demonstrating Christ's love & compassion
- Cultivate authentic fellowship, mutual support & unity in Christ
- Engage in acts of mercy & compassion, advocating for the marginalized

The Gospel Mission

- Engage in mission & outreach efforts, both locally & globally, to share the love of Christ & meet the spiritual & practical needs of others
- Local churches are called to be houses of prayer, seeking God's guidance, empowerment & intervention in all aspects of ministry & life
- Recognize, cultivate & deploy the diverse spiritual gifts of their members for the edification of the body & the advancement of God's kingdom

Questions

- How has the leadership of the churches that you have attended exercised their authority to enhance or impede your spiritual growth to accomplish the Gospel mission?
- How have the traditions & practices of the churches that you have attended positively or negatively impacted your faith journey?

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