

## PERSONAL STUDY

### Study Option 1

Your first option for a Personal Study this week is to use one of the Inductive Study Method sheets from your packet to study Galatians 3:1-9 on your own. So take some time to do that and then come back to this study to further explore another section of scripture from this week's teaching.

### Study Option 2

There are many different ways to study and engage with God's Word. This guide will provide you with an example of what using commentaries to further explore a specific passage, verse, or word can look like. This isn't a method you need to use for every verse you read, but it can be a good exercise every now and then. When looking to do more than just read a passage, a study Bible is a great first step in acquiring tools to help you study God's Word. Reading commentaries is the step you can take after that. You can find several commentaries online on sites like biblehub.com and biblegateway.com/plus.

### Galatians 3:23-25

*Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.*

*Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.*

What sticks out to you from these verses? What do you think they mean? What is your understanding of the imagery used?

What does the word "guardian" mean to you? What do you think the original audience's understanding of the term was?

### What we don't know and what we can learn

Galatians was written to a specific group of people at a specific time. And it wasn't us. And it wasn't today. But it is still beneficial for us. What this means is that we have to put in extra work beyond just reading verses. We come to the text with our own histories, opinions, and issues. What we can't do is try to read our baggage into the text. We have to push ourselves aside to see what the text actually says and then try to apply it to our lives.

By using commentaries and other study tools, we can better understand the context of what we're studying. In discovering the context, we can better understand how the original audience would have interpreted the author's words.

Below you will find two selections from commentaries on Galatians 3:24. There are two options so you can have a taste of the different types of commentaries available. The first is just a paragraph taken from the main text of William Barclay's *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*. The second is a lengthier selection entitled "A Closer Look: Pedagogues" from Craig Keener's *Galatians: A Commentary*.

William Barclay's *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*

*Paul is still thinking of the essential part that the law did play in the plan of God. In the Greek world there was a household servant called the paidagogos. He was not the schoolmaster. He was usually an old and trusted slave who had been long in the family and whose character was high. He was in charge of the child's moral welfare and it was his duty to see that he acquired the qualities essential to true manhood. He had one particular duty; every day he had to take the child to and from school. He had nothing to do with the actual teaching of the child, but it was his duty to take him in safety to the school and deliver him to the teacher. That--said Paul--was like the function of the law. It was there to lead a man to Christ. It could not take him into Christ's presence, but it could take him into a position where he himself might enter. It was the function of the law to bring a man to Christ by showing him that by himself he was utterly unable to keep it. But once a man had come to Christ he no longer needed the law, for now he was dependent not on law but on grace.*

"A Closer Look: Pedagogues" from Craig Keener's *Galatians: A Commentary*

*Although a translation occasionally renders παιδαγωγός as "disciplinarian" (NRSV), this is not the primary feature of a pedagogue's responsibilities that Paul emphasizes. Pedagogues were sometimes harsh, keeping their charges in line with corporal punishments, but they were often gentle and well loved. The image is not a negative one per se; pedagogues' wards often continued a fond relationship with them after reaching maturity, sometimes even manumitting them. If some children resented their pedagogues for correcting them, they displayed the same attitude toward teachers. But wrong-minded pedagogues and teachers could also instruct in vice.*

*More generally, pedagogues were (usually) slaves who escorted boys, especially to school, carrying their bags and keeping them out of trouble along the way. Pederasty was widespread, so pedagogues remained with the child en route to and during school to ward off potential molesters. Pedagogues were guards (φρουροί) and protectors of youth, just as Gal. 3:23 depicts the law as having guarded (εφρουρούμεθα) God's people in their youth. They were usually older men, perhaps so chosen to reduce pederastic temptation but also to avoid wasting a young, healthy slave whose services might be better directed elsewhere.*

*Sometimes pedagogues walked behind their wards, but both texts and artwork reveal that they also sometimes would literally lead (ἄγω) younger boys – hence the name παιδαγωγός. One might contrast Paul's understanding of the law as pedagogue with the Spirit's leading in the current era in Gal. 5:18, although Paul ultimately has stronger reasons for his choice of words in 5:18.*

*A pedagogue ruled the youth, keeping him in check morally. Pedagogues were proud and received compliments where the boys did well, and were criticized when the boys performed poorly. Many ancient thinkers stressed age-appropriate moral instruction; adolescents required special attention, so that they would continue to pursue reason rather than passion once they were free from the pedagogue. Just as pedagogues protected boys from sexual predators, one of the law's roles was to protect God's people from pagan practice around them; the mature could discern more critically with less oversight.*

*Although pedagogues sometimes cared even for babies, usually they took charge of a boy from his nurse around age six. Ancient sources often emphasize that the pedagogue's role was temporary, lasting only until the boy became a young man after puberty. Once reaching maturity, a young man was no longer under the pedagogue's authority. The young man now followed "his own laws." Norman Young's research on ancient pedagogues concludes that Gal. 3:24-25 highlights two important aspects of the role of pedagogues: it was temporary, and it included restrictive guarding of the boy.*

*There may be more. The author who can plan on multiple Greek senses of διαθήκη as both "will" and "covenant" in 3:15 surely can consider multiple roles for a παιδαγωγός here. In view of the parallel with guardians in 4:2, the restrictive role should also include a protective dimension. Moreover, Paul emphasizes in 4:1 that heirs who are youths are no different from slaves, so he undoubtedly also considers the usually slave status of pedagogues. In a famous passage in Plato, Socrates highlights the irony of the free son being controlled by the pedagogue, a slave!*

*Some Greek thinkers also envisioned law as a custodian. A later Stoic emperor compares a wise sage to a pedagogue. Hellenistic Jews regarded the law as an instructor rather than a mere pedagogue, although Judeans were ready to apply the image more freely. In contrast to Paul's claim that the Torah was to guard Israel's maturity – that is, Christ's coming – some Jewish traditions depicted Israel's maturity at the time when Israel received the Torah.*

*Pedagogues did sometimes play a role in youths' basic education, at least in Roman circles. By accompanying the master's son to his school, a pedagogue could learn and become proficient in the subjects himself. Certainly, everywhere they influenced children. If Paul envisions anything of that character here, his contrast elsewhere between fathers and pedagogues (1 Cor. 4:15) is apropos; Paul probably viewed even his own earlier, "advanced" training in the law (Gal. 1:14-15) as merely elementary learning associated with slavery when compared with the advanced and experiential revelation available for those free in Christ.*

### **Reflect**

First, if you made it this far, pat yourself on the back. That excerpt from Keener's commentary is a lot to work through. But hopefully, you saw the benefit of reading it. While commentaries, especially more academic ones, may not be something you add to your regular time of Bible study, they can be great tools to help you dig into trickier passages or help you better understand verses you don't really get on the first read.

Now, take some time to reflect on what you learned from those two commentaries using the questions on the next page:

What stuck out to you most from Barclay's commentary?

What stuck out to you most from Keener's commentary?

Overall, how has your understanding of Galatians 3:24 grown?

What value do you see in commentaries or other additional tools when studying God's Word?