

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 102** and ask **Question #1: What comes to mind when you hear the word “royalty”?**

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life** on **PSG, page 103** to tell about the wealth of the British royal family. Being third in line to the throne, Prince George had great wealth on the day he was born.

SAY: “Today we will look at the reality that we have great value and worth because we are children of the King of kings.”

Reinforce **The Point** on **PSG page 103: Jesus makes us full members of His family.**

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to teach us what it means to be children of the King and the great value we have in Your eyes.

SESSION 2

I AM A CHILD OF THE KING



The Point

Jesus makes us full members of His family.

The Bible Meets Life

Parents generally love their own children to a greater degree than they love other children. Parents may wish the best for others, but they will take care of their own first.

God desires the best for us, even when we are outside His family. Through Christ, He made it possible for us to become a part of His family. Those who trust Jesus are no longer on the outside looking in; they are His children.

The Passage

Galatians 4:1-7

The Setting

Paul wrote Galatians, probably from Syrian Antioch, after he completed his first missionary journey, including southern Galatia (Acts 13–14). He had preached in key cities. People had believed in Christ. Churches had been established. After Paul departed, questions had arisen over whether conversion to Judaism and the Jewish law would improve the new believers’ standing with God. The Book of Galatians gives Paul’s answer to these questions: by faith in Christ alone we are full members of God’s family

Galatians 4:1-3

1 Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything.

2 Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world.

KEY WORDS: Guardians and trustees (v. 2)—These words refer to the first-century protectors, overseers, managers to whom a father would have assigned decision-making authority over an underage son.

1 ▶ **Verse 1.** We were “far away” from God (Eph. 2:12-13). Our sins had built barriers between us and God (Isa. 59:2). We were in bondage under a sentence of guilt and condemnation. Can you remember when you were on the outside looking in? Can you also remember when you came to know that in His love for you God had provided for your rescue from bondage? Jesus “gave himself for our sins to rescue us” (Gal. 1:4)!

The Galatian believers had been outsiders and had experienced the rescue. When Paul preached to them, it was as if “Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” before their very eyes (3:1). Hearing with faith, they received forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

Who were these Galatians?

Although scholars have alternative theories regarding where the recipients of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians lived, I believe evidence points to new believers who were living in southern Galatia around AD 49. Acts 13–14 tells us about Paul and his missionary companions leaving Syrian Antioch and proclaiming Christ in the Galatian cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. New believers turned to Christ eagerly.

After Paul and his team returned to Syrian Antioch, teachers of a “different gospel” influenced the Galatians toward circumcision and the Jewish law (1:6-9; 5:1-7). Perhaps these teachers reasoned like this: “You’ve turned to the Jewish Messiah. Why not go the full distance? Receive circumcision and commit yourselves to observe the law. Then you will fully be God’s people. You’ll be real insiders.”

Do Gentile believers in Jesus need to convert to Judaism and come under the law to be truly God’s people? Is Jesus only the Savior of the Jews (and those who become Jews)? Or is He the Savior of the world? These are huge questions.

STUDY THE BIBLE

Galatians 4:1-3



10 minutes

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 108.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 1** on this page and page 110 to provide background information about who the Galatians were and some of the unique issues Paul addressed in this letter.

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Galatians 4:1-3.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 104** to the author’s story of his family’s Thanksgiving dinner and the first time he was invited to eat at the “grown-up table.” Lead a brief conversation with group members about their similar experiences and feelings.

DISCUSS: Question #2
(PSG, p. 104): When did you feel like you were transitioning out of childhood?

(Alternate: What kinds of slavery are described in these verses?)

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG pages 104-105** and the explanation of how the heir and the children of slaves grew up together and were treated the same.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **DIGGING DEEPER** on **PSG page 105** on the Heir, to provide more information about the status of an heir while still a child.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 2** to help explain the term *heir*.

GUIDE: Use **KEY WORDS** on page 109 (**PSG, p. 104**), to provide explanation to the phrase *guardians and trustees*.

Paul's answer was that "a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ" (2:16). Further, there are no Jewish and non-Jewish distinctions among believers, "since you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

In Acts 15, we read of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem wrestling with these same questions. Paul was present for the meeting. The answer of this Jerusalem "council" was in keeping with what Paul wrote to the Galatians. The council took place about AD 49. Since Paul did not mention the favorable decision of the council in the Galatian letter, it seems likely he wrote Galatians before the council took place, perhaps earlier in AD 49. ◀

2 ▶ As Galatians 4 begins, Paul emphasized that apart from Christ, people are outsiders looking in. He compared an **heir** who is still a **child** with a **slave**. Although the heir of a rich man is, in one sense, the **owner** of great wealth, in the sense of actual rights and privileges during childhood he is like a slave. ◀

3 ▶ **Verse 2.** The heir is not his own man with practical authority over what he is destined to inherit. **Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.** In a wealthy first-century home, a trusted household slave was often the heir's guardian. He functioned as a body guard. The guardian was also in charge of the heir's activities and made many decisions about his schedule.

The trustee's role was to oversee financial resources. Trustees were prudent managers. They were the decision makers regarding resources. The heir was not yet prepared to make decisions maturely and prudently. So, the trustee, not the heir, had the practical authority. ◀

4 ▶ **Verse 3.** Paul applied the "heir—slave" analogy by saying that **in the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world.** With the words "we also" Paul grouped himself (a Jew) together with the Galatians (many of whom were Gentiles).

What kind of slavery was Paul talking about here? "Slavery under the elements of the world" probably includes two closely related realities. First, the "elements" likely involved basic principles or rudiments of religion. Paul linked these with special days and seasons (Gal. 4:9-10; Col. 2:15-20), occasions when religious rituals would take place.

Second, the “elements” probably also involved spiritual forces that exploited religious systems and rituals to enslave persons (or “elemental spirits of the universe.”). They were “things that by nature are not gods” (Gal. 4:8), though they may have been “gods” to their devotees. For Paul, idol worship involved sacrifice to demons (1 Cor. 10:20). Real spiritual forces can be at work to enslave people in ritualism.

Before turning to Christ, many of the Galatians had probably performed countless pagan rituals to avoid malice from and curry favor with “gods” and spirits. They had believed good fortune depended on performing the right rituals at the right times.

It is unsurprising that Paul described former pagans as having been in slavery to basic religious principles and the spiritual forces exploiting these principles. What is stunning is that Paul implied he and fellow Jews were under the same kind of bondage apart from Christ. The forces that enslave persons through ritualistic effort are willing to use either pagan or Jewish rituals. The “elements” of the world keep Jew and Gentile alike vainly running in their own strength rather than resting in Christ’s sufficiency.

The teachers who entered Galatia after Paul and taught “a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6) were apparently saying circumcision and coming under the Jewish law with its rituals would lead to status inside God’s family. After all, Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. He said He came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17). Knowingly or not, the teachers were peddling fear that Christ was not enough.

Of course, Paul knew Jesus came to fulfill the law. He also knew that Jesus came to deliver from the law by rescuing people from the guilt and condemnation they shoulder under it. Jesus came to fulfill the law in our place, not to place us under the impossible demand of earning God’s favor by our own efforts. Circumcision and taking on the law would not mean drawing nearer to God. It would mean falling away (Gal. 5:4). ◀

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 3** on page 110 to give more background information on the terms *guardians and trustees*.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 4** on page 110 and this page to explain the phrase *we . . . were in slavery under the elements of this world*:

1. The “elements” likely involved basic rudiments of religion, such as special days, seasons, and occasions when religious rituals would take place.
2. The “elements” involved spiritual forces that exploited religious rituals to enslave persons. They were “things that by nature are not gods,” though they may have been “gods” to their devotees (idol worship). Spiritual forces can be at work to enslave people in ritualism.

SAY: “Former pagans in the church at Galatia probably practiced these types of idolatry. But Paul said that those with a Jewish background who reverted back to the Jewish law were being enslaved in the same way.”

STUDY THE BIBLE

Galatians 4:4-5



10 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Galatians 4:4-5.

SAY: “At just the right time, God sent Jesus into the world.”

GUIDE: Refer group members to **PSG page 107**, to the author’s “Man-Up Challenge” with his son. Share “rite of passage” moments that were a part of your transition to adulthood or that you used with your children.

LEADER PACK: Display **Item 8: Fullness of Time** to show why the first century was the ideal time for Jesus to accomplish His mission in our world. Encourage members to share items they find interesting.

FULLNESS OF TIME

- ▶ Consolidated rule led to “Pax Romana” (Roman peace)
- ▶ Roman roads and shipping lanes made travel widespread
- ▶ Many religions were tolerated
- ▶ Greek language was universally known and used
- ▶ Jewish Temple still stood
- ▶ Messianic fervor swept over Israel
- ▶ Spiritual hunger and thirst for knowledge throughout the empire

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:6)

Galatians 4:4-5

4 When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

5 ▶ Verse 4. God made provision in Christ for adoption **when the time came to completion**. This means that it was the determined time. It was the right time. At just the right time, **God sent his Son**.

Why was the time right for God to send Jesus into the world? Perhaps one reason was that conditions within the first-century Roman Empire were right for the gospel to spread. It was a period of order and peace. Travel on the system of Roman roads was as safe as ever before in ancient history. The Greek language was common through the empire. People all over could understand the gospel in Greek. Another reason the time was right for Jesus’ coming is that God’s revelation to and through the Jews had laid the groundwork for His revelation in Jesus. The Old Testament law set forth God’s standard of righteousness and showed humanity’s need for a Savior. The Old Testament prophets foretold that the Christ would suffer and rise again and that salvation would extend to all nations in Him (Luke 24:45-47). Finally, the time was right simply because God deemed it right according to His purposes. Who can know fully the mind of the Lord? God knew that the time was right to send His Son. ◀

Jesus is uniquely God’s Son. Paul wrote elsewhere that Jesus “was appointed to be the powerful Son of God ... by the resurrection of the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Jesus is “the Christ, who is God over all” (9:5). So, Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son. The deity of Christ is important for many, many reasons. One reason is that it means God Himself stepped into the world in Christ to accomplish salvation for humanity. He did not expect the Galatians or us to work our way to Him. He came to us to save us!

Obviously, Paul believed in the deity of Jesus. He also believed in the full humanity of Jesus. God saw fit for His Son to be **born of a woman**. Jesus was born to a human mother. The Son of God took on flesh. He became fully

human. He could identify with the men and women whom He would redeem.

Does “born of a woman” also allude to Jesus’ virgin birth? Perhaps it does. Paul mentioned no father. Jesus’ miraculous conception led to a mother’s labor and an infant resting in a feeding trough. Even in the most human of experiences and humble circumstances God Himself was at work to save.

It’s also possible that “born of a woman” alludes to an ancient promise God couched in the curse upon the serpent in the garden of Eden. God told the serpent that the woman’s seed “will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The New Testament teaches that Jesus shared in our humanity “so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14) and that “the Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil’s works” (1 John 3:8).

In addition to being “born of a woman,” God’s Son was **born under the law**. That is, Jesus was born under the Mosaic law. He shouldered the requirements of the law as no one else could. He was “tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

6 ▶ Verse 5. In His unblemished moral perfection, the Son of God was able **to redeem those under the law**. To “redeem” is to buy out of slavery and for freedom. Apart from Christ, all people are enslaved to sin, guilt, and condemnation. This was true even for the Jews under the law, for “all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse” (Gal. 3:10). As Paul wrote of himself and his fellow Jews, “we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed” (v. 23).

Receiving circumcision and obligating themselves to the requirements of the law (5:2-3) would not be a step into the family of God for the Galatians. It would be a step in the wrong direction. It would have an enslaving effect. The Son of God came to redeem the Jewish people from bondage under the law. Why would the Gentile Galatians want to enter bondage when they already had Christ?

To be clear, the law is not bad. It is not contrary to God’s purposes (3:21). It is also not the way to be justified before God and access the privileges of heirs. Faith in Christ as our Redeemer is the way. “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7).

God accomplished our redemption in His Son **so that we might receive adoption as sons**. “Adoption” is a beautiful image for salvation. Many people are deeply moved that God set out intentionally to secure us as His adoptive children in Christ. Whether other people value and choose us or not, God

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 5 on page 112 for further explanation about what made this just the right time for God to send His Son into the world.

GUIDE: Refer group members to the paragraph that begins with “When God the Father decided it was time . . .” on **PSG page 107**. Highlight the two reasons God sent His Son:

- *To redeem those under the law.*
- *To adopt us into His family.*

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible**

Commentary 6 on this page and page 114 to give further explanation to the following terms:

- **redeem**—*to buy out of slavery and for freedom. Christ has redeemed those who were enslaved to sin and by His death on the cross He “buys us out of slavery and sets us free.”*
- **adoption**—*a beautiful image for salvation. God has chosen us and accepted us as His children, a part of His family.*

DISCUSS: Question #3
(PSG, p. 108): What are the implications of being adopted into God’s family?

(Alternate: When did something happen for you at just the right time?)

TRANSITION: “There is a great distinction between those who receive adoption and those who do not. Those adopted into God’s family have the wonderful privilege of calling God our Father in an intimate way.”

STUDY THE BIBLE
Galatians 4:6-7



15 minutes

READ: Read or ask a volunteer to read Galatians 4:6-7.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 7** on this page and page 115 to show the distinctive role the Holy Spirit has in the hearts of who are the children of God.

values us and has chosen us in Christ. An employer, team leader, or family member may overlook or reject us. God has chosen and accepted us. We can live in the humble confidence that comes from knowing God as our Father.

Some may wonder why Paul did not refer to adoption as sons and daughters. After all, Paul had just written that “male and female” are equally “heirs” (Gal. 3:28-29). Probably, the reason Paul referred only to “sons” in verse 5 is that sons enjoyed special inheritance rights in the ancient Roman world. His point is that all who have been adopted in Christ enjoy the full status of heirs. Indeed, both men and women who are in Christ enjoy the full status of sons in Him.

There is no distinction among those who “receive adoption.” There is, however, a great distinction between those who have received adoption and those who have not. Christ has done what is necessary for our adoption. We must receive what He has provided.

Those who do so, do not need to add to Christ’s work or earn their way into God’s family. If they have received adoption in Christ, they are in! ◀

Galatians 4:6-7

6 And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!”

7 So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.

KEY WORDS: **Abba** (v. 6)—An Aramaic word that is similar to “Daddy” in English. It is familiar and affectionate. Jesus addressed His heavenly Father as “Abba” in prayer (Mark 14:36).

7 ▶ Verses 6-7. By adoption, we have been included in God’s family. We have the status of sons. Through the Holy Spirit, we also have the wonderful assurance of experiencing closely a personal relationship with God.

Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. The God who sent His Son to redeem us has sent the Spirit to all of us who are redeemed. Just as all who have received adoption are sons, so all who are sons have received the Spirit in their hearts. “God’s love has been

poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

Christianity is about more than facts, evidence, logic, and doctrine. Christianity is not about less than these things. It is about more than these things. It is about a personal relationship with the Spirit of God!

Many people wonder whether or not they are having the full experience of the Holy Spirit that God intends for His people. On the one hand, we can be sure that if we truly belong to Christ, we do have the Holy Spirit. If we don’t have the Spirit, we don’t belong to Christ at all (8:9). On the other hand, there may be greater fullness for us to experience. We are to “be filled by the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). We are to pray for the full measure of the Holy Spirit in daily experience. We are to yield more fully to the Spirit. We are to walk by the Spirit and increasingly bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16,22-25). This is the privilege of the child of God. ◀

8 ▶ The Spirit applies the benefits of our relationship with God by prompting us from within our hearts to cry out “**Abba, Father!**” to Him. In a close and healthy father-child relationship there is ease and confidence in communication. A loved child can speak freely with his or her father, expressing joys and fears and longings.

The word *Abba* is a warm and familiar Aramaic word for “Father.” During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He used “Abba” to address His Father when He was pleading with Him in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). So, when Jesus was feeling the heavy burden of the cross bearing down upon Him and was clinging to His father, the word *Abba* rose from His heart.

Astoundingly, the Spirit of God prompts the child of God to call out to God the Father with the familiarity of the Son of God! In Christ, I can address the Father as Christ addressed the Father. Indeed, grace is amazing.

In Christ’s redemptive work and your experience of the Holy Spirit you can have assurance that **you are no longer a slave but a son**. The Galatians did not need circumcision and law observance to enter fully into God’s family. They were in. You and I are in, if we’re in Christ. Therefore, we trust in Christ alone. We live by God’s Spirit. We rest in our standing with God. Each one of us is a full **heir** in Christ. ◀

1. From the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952, © 1971, 1973.

GUIDE: Use **KEY WORDS** on page 114 (**PSG, p. 108**) for insight about the word *Abba*.

SUMMARIZE: Use **Bible Commentary 8** to give further explanation on the Aramaic phrase *Abba, Father!*

DISCUSS: Question #4 (PSG, p. 109): What are the benefits we enjoy as part of God’s family?

DISCUSS: Question #5 (PSG, p. 110): How can we more fully rely on the Holy Spirit’s influence in our lives?

(Alternate: What does the phrase “Abba, Father,” teach about our connection with God?)

DO: Encourage group members to take a few minutes to complete the activity “**Family Privileges**” on **PSG page 110**.

LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point: Jesus makes us full members of His family.**

REVIEW: Review **Live It Out (PSG, p. 111)**; (see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

WRAP IT UP

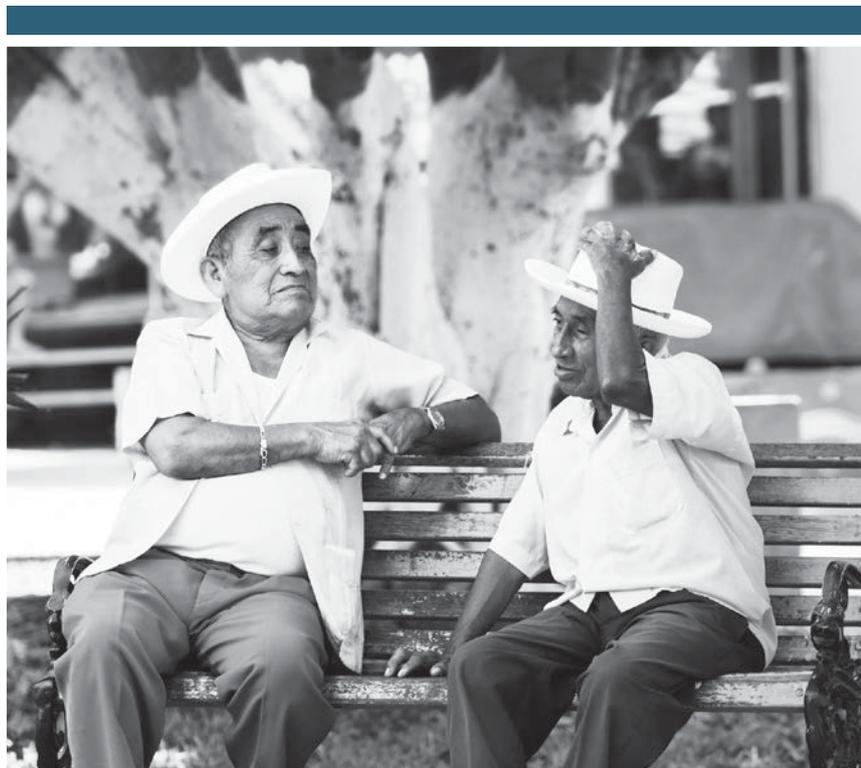
GUIDE: Remind group members that in Christ Jesus we are no longer slaves or under aged children but we are heirs, adopted into God's family, and seated at the "grown up table." We can call God our *Abba* and know that He loves us and has sent His Spirit to dwell in our hearts.

PRAY: "Father, words cannot express our gratitude for Your great grace and the privilege of being full members of Your family."

LIVE IT OUT

As a child of the King, plan to do the following this week:

- ▶ **Pray.** Recognize the fact that God is a loving Father who loves you and is ever-present in your life. Thank Him for demonstrating that love through Jesus and making it possible for you to be adopted into His family.
- ▶ **Reflect.** Focus attention on Galatians 4:7: "So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir." When life gets you down, remind yourself that you are a child of the King.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask the Lord to put you in front of someone in your circle of influence this week who struggles with the idea of being adopted into the family of God. Many people are still attempting to get to God on their own, and they need someone to tell them about the hope found in Jesus.



BIBLICAL
ILLUSTRATOR



One of the better-preserved texts from Ugarit (a Canaanite port city located in what is now Syria) is the legend of Danel and his son Aqhat. After praying for an heir, Aqhat was born and in time became a great hunter. In gratitude, Danel exclaimed, "Now I will sit and rest in peace and my soul will rest, my heart will be at ease." Dated to the 15th–13th centuries BC.

Those in Roman culture made a connection between inheritance and religious duties. From Rome's early history priests were involved in adoptions because of the religious implications of an adopted son becoming an heir and as such the family's spiritual leader.

An heir in Roman culture did not have to be a natural child. A testator could, if he chose, bypass or disinherit his natural offspring

in favor of another person. Natural children were sometimes deemed as unfit to carry on the family fortune and heritage.

In the Roman system an inheritance was often more than wealth and lands. Position could also be a key part of the inheritance. A Roman father exercised tremendous power over his extended family. Even grown children were still subject to their father's discipline and rule unless they had been emancipated from his control. So, an heir could not only receive properties and land, he could also become the head of the family.

Romans placed the greatest value on the heir being the recipient of the family's honor and position. This would imply that as heirs of God, we hold a unique inheritance and we are identified with a unique family heritage. Our most valuable inheritance is our connection to the family of God.

The excerpt above is from the article "Heir: A First-Century Understanding" (Winter 2013-14), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

At just the right time Jesus came to make it possible for all who believe in Him to become the children of God, adopted into His family.

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

Grow with other group leaders at the **Groups Ministry blog.**

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry