

Galatians (the people of the churches in Galatia in the Roman province of Anatolia)

Questions to consider first:

- What is the difference between law and liberty?
- What do you consider the purpose having laws/ rules in society, or in religion?

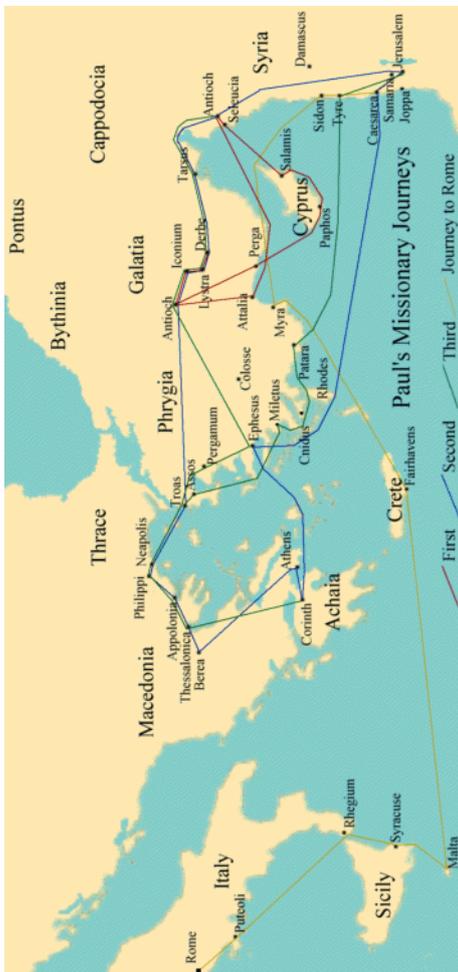
Jesus was a Jew who tested the limits of how the Jewish people understood Mosaic Law. He and his disciples ate on the Sabbath; He touched and spent time with people who were considered unclean and sinful - possibly defiling himself and stopping his ability to take part in religious affairs. These rules are called the Mosaic Law because they are reputed to have been set down by Moses and are found in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures. They assist people to follow the Ten Commandments which are the rules that define how we as people can live in covenant with God (Yahweh).

Read Saint Paul's epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verses 2 to 26

Saint Paul's letter deals with Jewish converts attempting to convince the Gentile converts that to be 'good Christians' they must be 'good Jews' and follow Mosaic Law. Paul says that this is nonsense and that it goes against the gospel he has proclaimed.

Questions to consider:

- Given that circumcision of the penis was generally hidden from public view, how do you think this was a sign of being a member of the people of God?
- Paul has a warning about liberty. What happens in society when laws around drinking, drugs (perhaps cigarettes) are relaxed?
- Are the works of the flesh paralleled by the Fruit of the Spirit? Why or why not?
- Which of the Fruit do you consider Jesus portrayed most leading to the Cross?



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By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

Galatians 5:22-23

Love (Greek *agape*)

Questions to consider first:

- Would you rather love, or be loved?
- How would you define Love ?

Agape is the nature of God. Saint John's first epistle describes the nature of God as *agape*: giving without reservation; giving without a sense of self. Writing about the Fruit of the Spirit, Saint Paul said that these 'Fruit' should be the nature of how we live out our lives; *agape* being the first of the Fruit. The way in which we live in community should not be about how we look after ourselves, nor what we get out of the work or service that we offer, but it should be first and foremost about God's community. A life lived in the Spirit of God is a life that is selfless. We find as we read scripture, and especially as we consider the Cross, that this nature defines God. God is selfless to us and when we live by the Spirit of God, we find our lives characterised by selflessness.

Read Saint John's first epistle, chapter 4, verses 7 to 21

In the gospel and epistles of Saint John, we can read 'the beloved' as being a personification of the wider church.

Questions to consider:

- How can a person receive God's love?
- What is commanded in 4:11 and what makes Christians able to comply with this?
- What does it mean that God's love is 'made perfect' in us?
- What are the differences (or the similarities) between verses 7 and 21 and what do they mean for the Church community?



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