



# The Brady Bunch

Blended families are a fact of life - and they're not always as idyllic as the Brady Bunch makes out! Bringing together two families with different habits, rules and attitudes is a tough job - and one that brings many parents to despair. God is very much in the business of making a blended family. The Jews - who have always had God as their Father - are being called on to welcome the Gentiles into their family. Trouble is, non-Jews have always been considered dirty, distasteful and rude. They don't keep the family rules... like Sabbaths and foodlaws and washings. They don't even have the ten commandments! The first thought is that the Gentiles should learn all the rules... but Paul disagrees. That's not how it's going to work at all.

**Thought Starter:** Find and read the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15). Can you relate to the attitude of the son who stayed at home? That's how the Jewish Christians were feeling. How do YOU react when you're asked to step aside for someone new? Or when you're asked to change old habits?

## A Deal is a Deal...

When you've signed on the dotted line and the ten day cooling off period has expired, then a contract is a contract. The deal is done. A promise is a promise. That's what Paul says in Galatians 5:15. "Let me take an example from everyday life... just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant (contract) that has been duly established, so it is in this case." As we saw in the last study, God made a contract with Abraham - and the contract still stands. But what were the promises all about? And how does the LAW OF ISRAEL fit in?

**Read Galatians 3:15-29.**

## investigating verse 16



## Greek 101 - All in the family

Don't you just hate it when preachers - or other "expert Christians" - make you feel dumb by referring to the "original Greek translation" of a tricky passage? Rest easy - the New International Version is a pretty reliable guide. The times when you need to dig behind it are rare. But this is one of those times. In an effort to make Galatians 3:16 more clear, the NIV has added some words that are not in the original. And by doing that, they've shifted the meaning a little. Here's the English translation, with the added words in bold print...

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say, "And to seeds," meaning many **people**, but "And to your seed" meaning one **person**, who is Christ."

The original greek phrase simply says... "☆☆ ☆♣♦☆☆!!!! ☆X ♣☆☆ ☆☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆' ☆X ♣☆☆ ♣☆☆X △ not saying... 'as to many', but 'as to one'. So the full sentence reads, "The scripture does not say "And to seeds," as to many; but as to one, "and to your seed."

But many what? One what? Many SEEDS, obviously. But what's the SEED being talked about? It's Abraham's OFFSPRING, or FAMILY. The word the NIV should have added (if they really needed to add a word) was FAMILY. Try replacing the word "Seed" with "Family" and see what happens...

The scripture does not say, "And to \_\_\_\_\_s," meaning **many**, but "And to your \_\_\_\_\_" meaning **one**, which is Christ."

In other words, God's plan to bring blessing to the whole world wasn't going to create a bunch of different families (Jews vs Gentiles), but ONE FAMILY... with one set of ground rules. The same point is made in verse 28. Fill the gaps...

There is neither \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_ for you are \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)



## One family - whose rules?

Remember, in Galatians Paul is setting out to correct the idea that the Gentiles must be circumcised and ordered to obey God's law to be included in the "covenant family." So far in this section, Paul has said, "A deal is a deal. God promised blessing to Abraham and HIS FAMILY... not "Abraham and HIS FAMILIES." The two families really do have to become one... and there won't be one set of rules for one, and another set of rules for the other. The question for the Jews is, can you possibly imagine being "the family of God," without having to live under God's Old Testament law. The thought is almost impossible. Or is it?

- a) From verse 17, which came first - the law, or the promise?
- b) How long after the **promise** did the **law** come along?
- c) How does this prove that being "the people of God" does not require the law?

In your own words (and with reference to Galatians 3), describe what you see in this diagram...



If being a part of God's "one family" doesn't depend on the law given to Moses, then what was the law actually for? And are the law and the promise at odds with one another? Those are the questions Paul goes on to answer, in what most scholars agree is a very difficult section of the letter. **Read verses 19-25 again to refresh your memory.** There are certainly a number of statements that are hard to understand. But it's important to see that a number of things are perfectly clear. For example...

- \* the law was added until the promised seed (family in Christ) came (v19)
- \* the law was put in charge to lead us (the Jews) to Christ (v24)
- \* now that faith has come, we (the Jews) are no longer under the supervision of the law. (v25)

How would you summarise these clear statements?

## Optional extras

### Some Complex points to ponder...

Commentators are in a spin about verses 19 and 20 - with good reason. According to the NIV, "The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party, but God is one." Phew! But British scholar NT Wright suggests an alternative translation, that is well supported by the original Greek. More literally, the text says "The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator (Moses). This mediator, however, does not represent the one seed... but God is one." In other words, Moses wasn't the mediator for the "one family" God was going to bring together from all nations - he was just a mediator for Israel. The law of Moses was for Israel alone, and would only last until Jesus came. It was added "because of transgressions" - or "to show what transgression looked like" - until the seed (family) the promise referred to had come." (v19)

### Danger ahead?

If we gentile Christians are not under the Old Testament law, then how can we know how to live? Surely the law has a place? What do you think?

Between now and the next study, read ahead in Galatians and try to find Paul's answer to this dilemma.

