

Discuss evaluation findings in terms of the one true gospel

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Reflections on Galatians 1:1-10

Let's look at this example of evaluation done by Paul. The evaluation atmosphere should be characterized by grace and peace that rescues us from the present evil age (verses 3-5). The evaluator can help people overcome some initial fear of evaluation by praying to be means of grace throughout the evaluation. Since the focus of evaluation work is truth telling, praying to be a means of grace involves constant examination of evidence against scriptural truths.

An evaluator can see a situation with a perspective that is different from the people directly participating in it. If the evaluator has done research to learn background information about the situation, then the evaluator can challenge the participants to consider the consistency between present behavior patterns and past desirable behavior patterns. A primary function of the evaluator is to help people see what is actually happening, and then to interpret the meaning of that against what really matters.

In verse 6 Paul challenges the Galatians to compare the grounds for believing new information contrary to the gospel against what they know about Paul's credentials for sharing the gospel. Evaluation that is meaningful for followers of Jesus must be grounded in gospel truths.

Verses 7-9 point out the importance of knowing what is true and what is not true. The gospel preached by the grace of Christ is true, while other gospels are not true. Paul says in verse 8, "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you [by the grace of Christ, verse 6], let him be eternally condemned!" Note that Paul, who is performing as an evaluator in this situation, does not condemn the Galatians. "Let him, the preacher of an alternative gospel, be eternally condemned" is a way of saying that God is deeply concerned that we follow the ways of God, and that those who encourage us to follow other ways will be judged by God. As an evaluator Paul is pointing out the seriousness of what he has heard about the Galatians, and by his manner of speech telling them that they need to seriously reconsider what they are doing.

Mediation on the first two chapters of this letter can help us understand a little bit about what it means to be objective. Paul is passionate about what he says; he is not at all neutral. But he does not tell the Galatians to accept what he says because he is passionate about it. He describes the evidence to support his conclusion (i.e., his journey before and after he encountered Jesus), and how he obtained that evidence (i.e., revelation from Jesus Christ). Then he encourages them to examine relevant evidence in their own lives. The discussion of

what that evidence means is then based on dialogue that is informed by scripture. These are essential elements of an objective process.

Verse 10 gives us much to think about when reporting the results of an evaluation. Paul says that the servant of Christ seeks to please God, not men. The evaluator who is following Jesus must report evaluation findings in a way that he or she believes will please God, not necessarily the stakeholders. This can only be done by immersing the entire evaluation process in prayer, and regular reference to scripture.