

Learning from Paul: Centered Ethics that Avoid Legalistic Judgmentalism and Moral Relativism¹

By Mark D. Baker

Introduction

I will set the stage for the argument of this paper with some autobiographical reflections. Riding home from church when I was six years old I looked disdainfully at people mowing their lawns. Not only were they working on a Sunday, they obviously had not gone to church. By observing those who mowed lawns on Sunday, I could draw a neat line between those who belonged to my religion and those who did not. I had the security of knowing that I was “in,” my family was among those who were “right.” As I grew older I continued to derive security from the lines I drew. As a teenager I felt morally superior, right, because, in contrast to those around me at school and work, I did not cheat on tests, steal on the job, drink, dance, swear, smoke, or do drugs.

When in college, I met some Christians who drank occasionally and enjoyed dancing. I faced a dilemma. My definition of Christianity told me that these people could not be Christians. Yet in a number of areas I recognized their faith to be more mature than my own. I had to either change my definition of a Christian or refuse to accept these friends as Christians. I left my legalism behind and drew new lines that would include my friends in the category of “good Christians.”

Over the next several years I continued changing. I thought I had come a long way from my high school legalism. But had I? I now considered myself right in relation to others because my Christianity included a simple lifestyle, concern for the poor, an openness to gifts of the Spirit, a realization that those who consumed alcohol could be Christians, and a commitment to social justice. Just as I looked down on those who had mowed their lawns on Sunday, I now looked down on those who did not share my new perspectives. Yet I still lived with the burden of working to stay on the right side of the lines I had drawn. During both my “legalistic” era and what followed, I clearly articulated a doctrine of salvation by grace, but my life was characterized by works-righteousness more than grace.²

Although over the years my perspectives on what it meant to be a good Christian changed, my drive to be right and “in” remained constant. I had torn down one house and built another that looked so different I never realized that the houses’ foundation was the same. This foundation gave me a judgmental line-drawing spirit that prevented me from experiencing authentic Christian community in either house. My experience displays a common response to legalistic judgmentalism and exclusion. I saw the rules themselves as the problem, and saw discarding the rules as the solution. I had not, however, dug deep enough.

Both the legalistic exclusion of my youth and the line-drawing judgmentalism I replaced it with continue to find fertile soil in many places in our world today. A contemporary, and growing, response is to reject the whole notion of drawing lines that separate those who are “in” from those who are “out.” Although this postmodern approach provides an antidote to judgmentalism and exclusion, it creates new problems. When the supreme concern is to not label anyone else as wrong, or “out,” ethics and the community itself quickly become ill-defined.

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² I was not alone in this. In his book *What’s So Amazing About Grace* Philip Yancey observed that North American evangelicals believe a theology of grace, but don’t live it ([Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 15, 33, 203, 263).

Tolerance is a virtue, but when it becomes the supreme virtue it leads to moral relativism or what sociologist Robert Brenneman has called “whatever-ism.”³ Although this approach comes closer to recognizing that the foundation is the problem, it does not actually replace the foundation. This approach uses the foundation in a different way.

We must do more than build new houses on the same old line-drawing foundation. We must excavate and lay new foundations as Paul did when he confronted line-drawing judgmentalism in his letter to the Galatians. After presenting a brief overview of the situation Paul addressed in Galatians, I will borrow categories from missiologist Paul Hiebert that will illuminate the foundation work Paul did, and provide guidance in responding to the situations described above.

Galatians 2:11-16: Line-drawing in Antioch

Paul writes a letter to the churches at Galatia to confront the practices of a group of instigators who have distorted the gospel and threaten the unity of the churches by communicating that the Gentile converts must live like Jews. Paul recounts an experience in Antioch that communicates a number of the main themes in the letter.

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; ¹² for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. ¹³ And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” ¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.⁴

This story presents a clear example of line-drawing exclusion. The leaders from Jerusalem communicated through their actions, and perhaps their words, that those who were truly “in” were circumcised and followed other Jewish traditions such as not eating with uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter, Barnabas and other Jews felt the shame of being on the wrong side of the line and gave into the pressure. Feel the tragedy of this split, of divided table fellowship. Imagine if something like this happened when you were celebrating the Lord’s Supper at your church.⁵ Paul confronts Peter and reminds him that their place at the table of

³ Robert Brenneman, e-mail to author, 2/3/12

⁴ NRSV. I have used the alternative translation offered in the footnotes “faith of” rather than “faith in.”

⁵ In my opinion, the “Lord’s supper” in the early church was not a separate cultic event, but was “an entire ordinary meal” that a Christian community may have eaten each time they came together. (Robert Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, rev. ed., [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 81; see also R. Allen Cole, *Galatians*, 2d ed., TNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 115-116.) Philip F. Esler prefers to distinguish between table-fellowship and eucharistic table-fellowship “where those present shared, that is to say, actually passed around from hand to hand, one loaf of bread and one cup of wine” (Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* [London: Routledge, 1994], 52). Banks reports that breaking bread in this way and sharing a cup at the end of the meal, both accompanied by prayers of blessing, was not “different from

God's people is not because of their fulfilling certain actions that Jews have used to separate themselves from others; rather it comes through their trusting in Jesus' faithful obedience to God.⁶

I do not have time to explore this passage in depth, let alone the letter as a whole. I refer you to my book, *Religious No More: Building Communities of Grace and Freedom*, which has a number of chapters on Galatians. For the purposes of this paper, I will highlight four key observations:

First, the problem is not a simple issue of an explicit teaching that salvation is by works. We know, from his sermons in Acts, that Peter preached of salvation as God's gracious forgiveness, and we can assume that leaders of the church in Jerusalem also taught salvation through God's grace, and the Judaizing agitators in Galatia as well. Yet Paul accused them of distorting the gospel (1:6-10), of not living according to the truth of the gospel (2:14). Similar to what I had done, they articulated a gospel of salvation by grace, but lived out a line-drawing religiosity of works-righteousness.⁷ Their pressure on Gentile Christians to conform to Jewish traditions likely left the Gentiles feeling like second class Christians, at best, or at worst did imply that salvation was through works.⁸ The problem was deeper than simply a lack of articulation of salvation by grace, and therefore the solution must be more than that as well.

Second, Paul does not offer an alternative list of criteria, nor argue for a revision to the criteria they are using to draw their boundary lines. Paul sees what I did not when I reacted against legalism. The particular rules are not the problem.⁹ The problem is the religiosity of line-drawing.

Third, if the lines are the problem, then erasing them would seem to be the solution, and Paul certainly does erase some lines that were drawn. Paul did not, however, take the postmodern approach and say "erase the lines, everyone is 'in.'" In Antioch he did not practice "whatever-ism;" he confronted Peter. Later in the letter he warns against libertinism (5:13), encourages loving confrontation when someone sins (6:1), and clearly considers some as outsiders, no longer truly part of the community of faith (4:30; 5:4, 9).

Fourth, Paul digs below the surface and tears apart the problematic foundation. We see this clearly in chapter four. He tells the Galatian Christians that if they follow the ways of the Judaizers they will be returning to the enslavement they experienced before (4:8-9). Clearly paganism and Judaism are not the same thing. Paul is digging below the surface and talking about the *stoicheia* or elemental forces of religiosity that use paganism to enslave, use Judaism to

the customary meal for guests in a Jewish home" (Banks, 81). In either case, both Banks and Esler agree that Eucharist was a meal the church ate together and it "was the most tangible expression of the unity in Jesus Christ of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28)" (Esler, 53; see Banks, 83).

⁶ For an explanation of my interpretation of 2:16 see: Mark D. Baker, *Religious No More: Building Communities of Grace & Freedom* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 97–108.

⁷ As it had been in my case, so in Galatia, the possibility that people lived out a works-righteousness is not ruled out simply because the teachers in some way included words of God's saving grace in their teaching. For further discussion of how I accept E. P. Sanders's argument that Paul was not countering an explicit teaching of salvation by works, but disagree with Sanders's conclusion that that Paul did not confront a lived out works-righteousness. see *Religious No More*, 84–87.

⁸ While performing an ethnographic study in a Tegucigalpa barrio I found, in fact, the some of the evangelical churches' actions of line-drawing religiosity communicated louder than their teaching of salvation by grace. A number of non-Christians told me that in order to become an evangelical Christian they had to *first* stop "sinning" and put their life in order (*Religious No More*, 22).

⁹ In fact at the end of the letter he makes the startling statement that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything" (6:15, see also 5:6).

enslave (4:3), and in this case, through the judiazers, are distorting Christianity into an enslaving religion. Paul proclaims that through Christ there is freedom from the enslavement of line-drawing religiosity (1:4; 4:4-7; 5:1). In terms of our metaphor we could say he proclaims that the Galatian Christians can build a house on a totally new kind of foundation. What does this look like in practice? For help in understanding that, we now turn to Paul Hiebert.

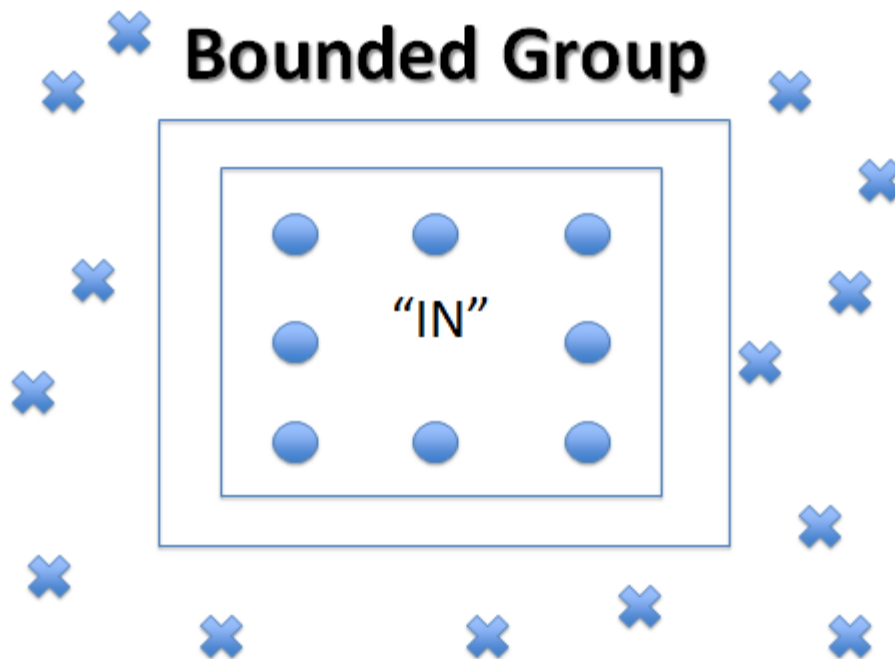
Bounded, Fuzzy and Centered Sets

As a Mennonite missionary in India, Paul Hiebert reflected on the question: when do we consider a person a Christian? It is not a simple question in the Indian context. In writings exploring the question, he argued that how a group conceptualizes “church” or the category “Christian” influences how they will answer the question.¹⁰ Hiebert borrowed from mathematical set theory to describe different ways to categorize things and people.

Bounded Sets

One way of categorizing things is to list essential intrinsic characteristics an object must have to belong to the set. Hiebert explained that bounded sets have a clear boundary line that is static and allows for a uniform definition of those who are within the group. He used the example of apples. We can develop a list of characteristics that distinguish apples from other fruits. That serves as a boundary line. (See the first diagram.) A fruit is either an apple or it is not. It may be big, small, green, ripe, rotten, of one variety or another, but if it has the characteristics that define apples it is inside the boundary line. In society there are many bounded groups: clubs, unions, organized sports teams, associations, etc. In general terms, a bounded group creates a list of essential characteristics that determine whether a person belongs to that group or not. Anyone who meets the requirements is considered “in.” For instance, I tell my students they are part of a bounded group—Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary students. They applied, met requirements, were accepted, paid tuition, have an ID card, etc. Maintaining the boundary line is essential for a bounded group. Without a clear boundary individuals lack security of identity, and the group may disintegrate.

¹⁰ Paul G. Hiebert, “Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories,” *Gospel in Context* 1, no. 4 (October 1978): 24–29; Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 107–136.



What are the characteristics of a church as a bounded set? Hiebert explains that a Christian bounded group will use a list of correct beliefs and certain externally verifiable behaviors to classify the person as Christian or not. In terms of Galatians, the Judaizers display a bounded group approach by asking questions like: “Have you been circumcised? Are you believing the right thing and eating with the right people?” What I described from my life in the Introduction were bounded group approaches to Christianity. Although legalism is clearly an example of bounded group religiosity, it is not limited to legalism. In fact I have been in churches that were self-righteous about not being legalistic; in essence we made that a boundary line. Bounded group religiosity can also use rituals, spiritual experiences, or beliefs as the basis for drawing lines that define insiders from outsiders.¹¹

A bounded church gives great attention to defining and maintaining the boundary line which clearly separates Christians from non-Christians, or true-Christians from mediocre Christians. The boundary lines not only injure the excluded, but those inside as well. The lines hinder transparency as members find it hard to express their struggles honestly for fear of losing their standing in the church. The boundaries may bind them together, but also can leave them bound and gagged, unable to share things from the depths of their being. Some people begin to simply categorize others in terms of lines drawn. They are not free to love or be loved at a profound level. A bounded church has the unity of uniformity, but it is a superficial unity. The bounded approach creates churches characterized by gracelessness, conditional acceptance, shame, fear,

¹¹ Tim Day describes six different kinds of religions that people use to try to connect with God. I believe they each also provide distinct ways for bounded group religiosity to draw boundary lines. His list is religion of legalism, ritualism, mysticism, intellectualism, nationalism and idealism. <http://www.timday.org/writings/irreligious/>

lack of transparency, self-righteousness, and only superficial ethical change.¹² The bounded approach can easily lead people to view God's love and acceptance as similarly conditional.

Before we move on to the next category I want to make a note of clarification about terminology. In critiquing a bounded approach to doing church Hiebert is not critiquing any and all things that we might call boundaries. Pastors and counselors use the term in positive and important ways. For instance we talk of having appropriate boundaries in a relationship. That is different than how Hiebert is using the word.

Fuzzy Sets

A fuzzy set is still a bounded set, but it is one with an unclear boundary line. There may be some sense of who belongs and who does not, but the grounds for distinction are unclear. Blurring the boundary lines may seem like a good strategy for dealing with the negatives associated with line-drawing judgmentalism. Actually, however, it is not radical enough. By not rejecting and replacing the entire paradigm, the fuzzy approach alleviates some problems but creates others. A fuzzy set approach produces churches that are less defined, less cohesive and more relativistic. Rather than passionate dialogue seeking to clarify truth, a fuzzy church puts the focus on tolerance. Out of over concern for tolerance people qualify statements by saying things like: "this is just my opinion you may think differently." I have observed "whatever-ism" in fuzzy churches when not only do people refrain from confronting someone in regard to sinful action, but also rarely describe actions or beliefs as inappropriate. In a fuzzy church people hesitate to talk of the need for personal transformation, let alone conversion. Not only does it feel "intolerant," but with only a fuzzy boundary line there is little basis to do so.

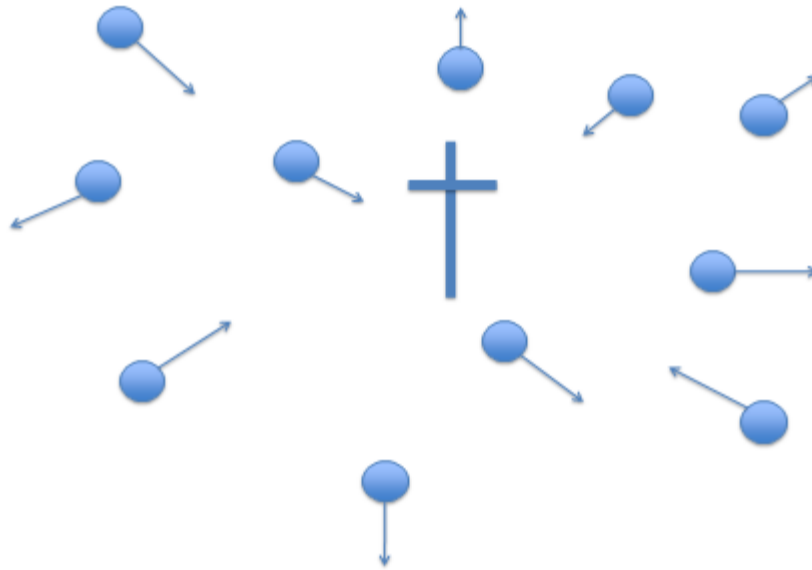
The moral relativism and pluralism spawned by the fuzzy approach appropriately concerns many Christians today. If the problem is caused by blurry lines, then the solution would seem to be to get out permanent markers and make the boundary lines clearer and thicker. That too is not radical enough and alleviates some problems and creates others. What is needed, and what Paul articulated in Galatians is not just a retooling of the bounded approach, but a totally different paradigm—a centered approach.

Centered Sets

Hiebert states that an alternative approach to defining a group focuses extrinsically on how people relate to a common center. For instance, whereas an official fan club might have dues and requirements, and thus be a bounded group, anyone who cheers for a particular team would be part of the centered group of that team's fans. (See the second diagram). Some people may be far from the center, casual fans, but they are headed toward the center, therefore they are part of the centered group. On the other hand, some people may have been active and passionate fans, close to the center, but after too many losing seasons they have switched their allegiance to another team. Thus they are moving away from the center and not part of the centered group. The group is made up of all people moving toward the center. Those in the group will not necessarily be uniform in characteristics, but they will be heading the same direction. A distinction can still be made between those who are "in" and "out." This is done, however, by looking at the person's direction, their relation to the center, not by looking to see if they have met the standards of a particular boundary line.

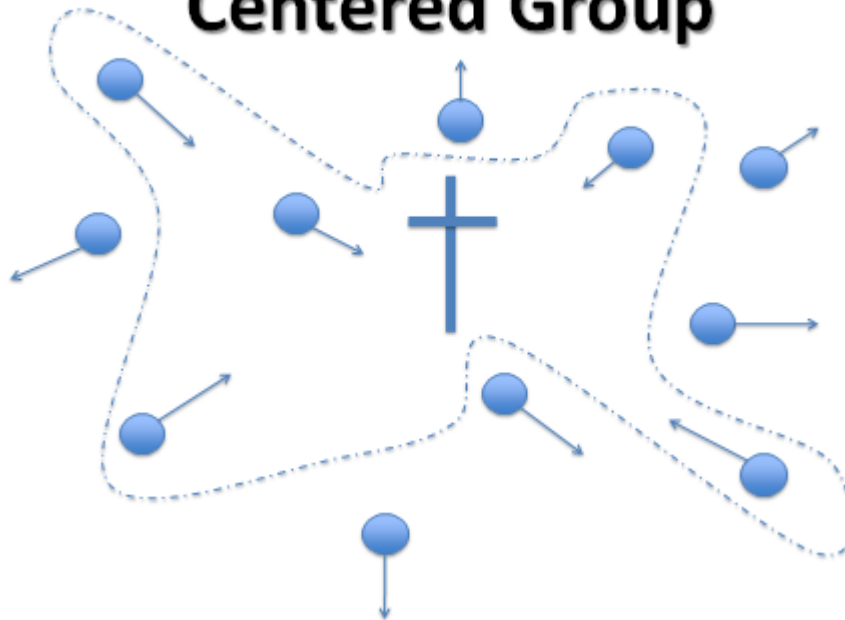
¹² I describe concrete examples that display the characteristics listed in these sentences in the first chapter of *Religious No More*, 17-33.

Centered Group



We can draw a line between those who belong to the group and those who do not, but the line does not form the group. (See the third diagram.) It emerges as those related to the center separate from those not related to the center.

Centered Group



“In centered-set thinking, greater emphasis is placed on the center and relationships than on maintaining a boundary, because there is no need to maintain the boundary in order to maintain

the set.”¹³ In the third diagram we could remove the line and nothing would change because the line does not define the group.

In a centered church, the center, God, is the focus--not the boundary. Therefore, the critical question is: to whom does the person offer his or her worship and allegiance? In terms of Galatians we might imagine Paul asking centered questions like: “Are you living according to the new creation reality created by God’s action through Jesus Christ? Are you trusting God for your security, or placing your security in certain rituals and beliefs? In which direction are you heading?” A centered church makes a distinction between Christians and non-Christians. Yet Hiebert observes, the emphasis “would be on exhorting people to follow Christ, rather than on excluding others to preserve the purity of the set.”¹⁴ A centered church paradigm has two types of change. The first is conversion, entering the set by turning around and heading a different direction--repentance. The second is movement toward the center. Conversion is a definite event followed by an ongoing process of discipleship.

Operating from the centered paradigm facilitates sincere and deep relationship because unity comes, not from uniformity, but from common relationship with the center. There is space to struggle and even fail. All recognize they are in process—moving closer to the center. Since their security is in the center, the centered approach naturally leads people to focus on the center—Christ. A bounded approach does the opposite. A bounded church may talk of God being the center of all, but the paradigm itself naturally pulls people’s focus to the boundary line that defines the group and provides their security.

Unlike the fuzzy approach, in responding to the negatives of a bounded church a centered church recognizes the need for a totally new paradigm. By shifting the emphasis to discerning belonging by trajectory and relationship with the center, the centered church remedies the problems that motivate the fuzzy church to blur boundaries. The centered approach, however, also avoids the negatives that flow from the fuzzy approach. The centered paradigm provides the possibility of conversion, repentance, articulation of right and wrong, a sense of a standard—the center, and the possibility of calling people to a different way of living.

We see Paul operate from the centered approach in the incident at Antioch. He observed Peter acting in a way inconsistent with the truth of the gospel. Paul addressed the behavior itself, but his words to Peter are rooted in a discussion of justification by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness--not correcting a list of boundary line characteristics. In fact, in this same incident at Antioch we can see that one of the distinctive aspects of the new creation community is to not use boundary lines of a religious character. When Peter separated himself from the Gentile Christians he communicated through his actions that they had to meet certain requirements in order to form part of the family of God; he had begun to draw a boundary line. Hence he was not living as part of a centered church. Paul pointed him back toward the center.

Clarifications about the Centered Church

Not Christianity-Lite

Following Jesus, facing and heading toward the center, has significant implications; one will look radically different than others in society. The bounded church has the appearance of taking ethics very seriously, but it may be superficial. In bounded churches many insiders struggle with sin and ignore aspects of the call to discipleship, but since they meet the standards

¹³ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, 124.

¹⁴ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, 125.

of the boundary line they are considered good Christians. In contrast, the centered approach facilitates profound ethical transformation. A centered church can emphasize behavior that is not easily measured, as Paul does in his ethical exhortation in Galatians. People in a centered church can risk greater challenges without the fear of what will happen if they do not fulfill them completely.¹⁵

Not Universal Inclusion

In contrast to the spirit of rejection and exclusion that emanates from a bounded church, a centered church has an invitational character. Unlike a fuzzy group, however, a centered church does not practice naïve or universal inclusion. It has a center, and relationship to the center matters. Those who have turned toward the center are included, others are invited, but until they repent and change direction, they are not seen as part of the family of faith. An example from sports helps to clarify this point. A soccer team that is part of a league would likely be a bounded group. It may have tryouts to select the best players. The players must come to practices and wear the teams' uniform in games. In contrast, a centered approach might be to announce that anyone who wants to play soccer is invited to come to the park Saturday afternoon at 2:00 pm. If a lot of people come they will start another game. All will be included. To come will demonstrate an interest in playing soccer (an arrow turned toward the center). If, however, someone keeps picking up the ball and running with it, others will say, "You can't do that. This is not rugby." If the person continues, eventually the others will tell that person they cannot participate until they are willing to play by the rules. That player was not centered on soccer. So too a centered church invites all, but does not include all regardless of their relationship with Jesus Christ, the center.

Learning from Paul

One thesis of this paper is that Paul Hiebert's categories provide a helpful tool for interpreting Galatians. A second thesis is that Paul confronted a bounded approach in Galatia and responded with a centered approach that facilitates a robust ethics rather than opting for a fuzzy approach. Now, using Hiebert's terminology, I restate the central thesis from the introduction: As a remedy to the negatives of bounded group religiosity we must follow Paul and not merely revise or erase the boundary lines, but respond with a totally new paradigm—a centered approach.

In this final section I will list some things we can learn from Galatians about practicing a centered approach. Two preliminary comments: Since Paul confronted bounded group religiosity in Galatia, not a fuzzy approach to ethics, Galatians does not offer direct examples on how to respond to a fuzzy paradigm. I will, however, offer some comments on how what Paul does in Galatians is applicable in that direction as well. Secondly, one could go into great depth on Paul's centered approach in Galatians. In fact I have just finished a manuscript of a commentary on Galatians in which this was a central theme.¹⁶ I have opted today to give more time to explaining the bounded, fuzzy and centered paradigms so that you may bring that tool to your own reading of Galatians. I will simply offer a list of brief observations that invite further exploration and reflection.

¹⁵ For examples of both (the superficial ethics of bounded churches and the profound transformation in centered churches) see *Religious No More*, 26-28, 155-59.

¹⁶ Marcos Baker, *Gálatas*, Comentario Bíblico Iberoamericano, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós: forthcoming.

- Paul does not see the rules themselves as the problem, nor revision or removal of them as the solution (5:6, 13-15; 6:15). Paul goes deeper; he addresses bounded group religiosity as an expression of an enslaving power (2:4; 4:1-11; 5:1).
- Paul communicates clearly what is the center and puts a strong emphasis on the center—Jesus Christ and his saving work through the cross that provides freedom from the present evil age (1:4; 2:16, 19-20; 3:1, 13-14, 28; 5:1, 6; 6:14-15).
- Paul undermines the bounded group religiosity’s focus on human action by repeatedly emphasizing the centrality and priority of God’s action (1:3-5, 11-12, 15; 2:16, 20; 3:25-28; 4:9; 5:1; 6:15).
- In a centered approach, direction, where one is headed, is significant. Therefore, invitation and calling are important. A fuzzy approach can only offer an anemic call; many today long for something more robust. Paul paints a vision and calls the Galatians to a new creation community rooted in Christ the center (2:11-14; 3:26-29; 5:22-24; 6:1-10; 6:15).
- The presence of language of turning, conversion, and repentance in this letter is evidence of Paul’s centered approach (1:6; 2:10; 2:19; 3:27; 4:9; 5:4; 6:14). Although a fuzzy approach considers it taboo to call for conversion, Galatians serves as a reminder of the importance of inviting people to turn and head in a new direction. It also reminds us of the importance of joining Paul and proclaiming the possibility through Christ of freedom from bounded religiosity and calling for conversion from it.
- In contrast to the “whatever-ism” of a fuzzy church, Galatians displays that true Christian love confronts when others walk in ways not in sync with the Center—Jesus. Unlike in a bounded church, the goal is not just maintaining the purity of the group within the lines. Thus it is a loving confrontation with the goal of restoration to a trajectory towards the center (2:11-16; 5:2-6, 13-15; 6:1).
- In contrast to a bounded church’s unity of uniformity, or a fuzzy church’s high inclusivity but weakened community identity, Paul proclaims the possibility of a diverse community unified through a common identity in Christ and his mission (2:7-10; 2:12; 3:26-29).
- Paul confronts bounded religiosity directly and explicitly states its negative characteristics (1:6-10; 2:3-4, 11-18; 4:1-11, 17-18; 5:2-6, 15, 26; 6:12-13). He also warns against the libertinism of the fuzzy approach. Actions matter, and will have consequences (5:13, 19-21; 6:8).
- A centered approach does not reject all use of rules, principles and imperatives, but they have a different role and thus a different character than they do in a bounded church. Paul’s approach to giving ethical exhortation lessens the likelihood of readers/listeners experiencing it as bounded religiosity. For instance:
 - Paul’s imperatives flow from the indicative. He speaks first of what God has done before talking of what we are to do; and he devotes more of the letter to the indicative, what God has done, than to the imperative, our response. This makes it difficult to construe human action as earning a response from God or inclusion in the community.
 - Many of Paul’s imperatives do not lend themselves for use in line-drawing because their compliance is not easily measured. This includes a strong emphasis on an ethics of character and virtue (5:14; 16-24).¹⁷

¹⁷ N T. Wright, “Faith, Virtue, Justification, and the Journey to Freedom,” in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. by J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2008), 472–497.

- Rather than imposing a static list of comprehensive rules, Paul places his confidence in the Holy Spirit guiding the Galatians (5:25).

Conclusion

In an arid region of Australia with huge ranches there are two main methods for keeping cattle on the ranch. One is to build a fence around the perimeter. The other is to dig a well in the center of the property. Instead of investing so much energy building and maintaining the fences of a bounded church, let us dig wells. Let us also avoid the fuzzy church's mistake of tearing down the fences without digging a well. May we invite people to drink at the well of Jesus.¹⁸

¹⁸ I have borrowed and adapted this metaphor from John Ortberg, "Category Confusion: Is the question for Christians 'Out or In?' or 'Farther or Closer?'" *Leadership Journal: Weekly Trends & Columns*, 6/4/2010, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/le/2010/june-online-only/categoryconfusion.html> .