



Free in Christ • Free to love • galatians 6:1-10 • 07/22/2018

Main Point

The greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is love for one another through spiritual community.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a time from your childhood or teenager years when you did something that you knew would be punished for, but that your parents never found out about.

How were you able to keep them from finding out? Did you ever tell them what happened when you became an adult? Why or why not?

We've all done inappropriate things in our childhood: sometimes on purpose, sometimes by accident. Regardless of our motives, the fear of accountability and consequences often keep us from living truthfully with those charged to care for us and to grow up to be honest, responsible people. As challenging as it may be to live rightly with others, we know that ultimately it is best for us and the community of people with whom we live. Nowhere is this more true than the church. The gospel calls believers to love one another in an authentic spiritual community in which sin is confronted, encouragement is given, and resources are shared.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:1-2.

How can we restore a Christian who is caught in sin? How do we do this lovingly and not in a condemning manner?

How does restoring a fellow believer caught in sin honor him or her?

How is “bearing one another’s burdens” a way of fulfilling the law of Christ?

One of the best ways we can honor our brothers and sisters in Christ is by helping them fight their sin. We understand that all of our sins are forgiven because of what Jesus did for us in His life, death, and resurrection. However, it won’t be until He returns that our personal battle with sin will be finished. Until that day, God has designed for us to live together in community, as iron sharpens iron. We honor a fellow believer when we help him or her walk away from sin.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:3-5.

At first glance, these three verses seem to contradict the first two verses of the chapter. But that’s not the case. These three verses dive us deep down internally, all the way to our motives. It is important to realize that the motive behind bearing each other’s burdens matters just as much as the act of bearing them. So before we get an inflated head about all our burden bearing, let’s remember, it’s not about us. Test your motives. It’s possible to bear another person’s burdens in the hope of receiving honor for yourself. So test your heart, make sure you are not giving help in order to receive the praise of your neighbor. In Christ, there is now no condemnation (Rom. 8:1) As we turn our attention internally, let the Holy Spirit show you just how deep your forgiveness in Christ really is. We welcome conviction, but reject condemnation.

How can doing the right thing be motivated by a desire to make much of oneself?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:6.

Does generosity come naturally for you? Are there certain resources that are easier for you to share than others?

What do you think Paul means when he says the one who is taught should “share all good things with the one who teaches”?

Why do you think Paul put a special emphasis on honoring those who teach the message of Christ?

Most of us are naturally selfish, but Paul shows us how grace frees us to share with others. Here in verse 6, Paul reinforces the idea that the way God builds His church is through the proclamation of the Word, and He wants faithful proclaimers to be honored. Paul speaks of giving to the church as an issue of obedience that comes with tremendous spiritual consequences.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:7-9.

Paul says in verse 7, “whatever one sows, that he will reap.” How have you seen that law at work in your life?

How does Paul’s picture of sowing and reaping challenge or inspire you to continue living in spiritual community with others? What specifically does it call on you to practice with regard to the financial resources God has given you?

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:10.

We are commanded to “do good to all.” Are some people easier to do good to than others? Why?

Why do you think Paul highlights “the household of faith” as a group we should strive to serve?

Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” If we cannot be generous and kind toward one another in the church, how will we do so to those outside the church? In the gospel, God has given us what we do not deserve: forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ. When we are generous toward others, whether or not they deserve it, we display the gospel to the world.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is an area of your life that you are often tempted to think is outside of God’s law of sowing and reaping? Is there an area of your life that you are often tempted to think lies outside the consequences of which Paul speaks?

Is there someone in your life right now to whom you are having difficulty doing good? How can you show him or her kindness this week?

How can we do good as a group? What seeds do we need to plant in order to make a difference in our lives and community?

Pray

Ask the Spirit to form you into an authentic spiritual community in which sin is confronted, encouragement is given, and resources are shared.

Commentary

6:1. Rather than exhibit destructive attitudes and actions (see Gal. 5:26), Christians are to help one another. Paul again addressed the Galatian believers as brothers, signaling a new topic but also emphasizing their spiritual kinship and his warm feeling for them. He gave the example of someone who was caught in a wrongdoing. Whatever the nature of the person's sin, spiritual believers are to restore the individual. The word "spiritual" refers to Christians who follow the Spirit's leadership—who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. The Greek term rendered "restore" means "to make one what he or she ought to be," "to bring one back into the right way." Paul switched to the singular as he issued a caution. He urged any believer engaged in restoration to have a "gentle" spirit rather than a harsh, judgmental attitude. The word gentle has the idea of strength under control (see on 5:22); the restorer is to be firm but kind. Someday that Christian might need gentle restoration, for none of us is immune to temptation and sin. Rather, the believer is to keep a careful eye on self to avoid sinning. An awareness of vulnerability would help the restorer have a gentle, humble spirit.

6:2. Paul exhorted believers to carry one another's burdens. The word "burdens" refers to loads too heavy to bear alone. It could indicate oppressive loads in general but well may have referred specifically to moral faults referenced in verse 1. The guilt and shame from such sins would be heavy loads. Believers, however, also struggle with other loads that threaten to overpower them. Helping shoulder others' heavy loads would fulfill the law of Christ.

6:3-5. Paul warned against pride or arrogance—an overblown estimate of self (see 5:26). Believers are not to consider themselves to be superior to others. Elevating themselves and putting others down would prevent them from restoring erring believers and helping shoulder others' loads. Also, such pride is self-deception; arrogant people have lost touch with reality. Instead of helping erring believers, some Christians evidently were using others' moral failures to make themselves feel smugly superior. Paul directed them to "evaluate" themselves, not others. Each believer is to examine his own work. The Greek word rendered examine was used of testing metals to assure their purity. If a person's work could pass the test of his or her objective examination, the individual had grounds for pride in personal accomplishment. The person would avoid an inflated ego at another's expense. The Greek word for "load" differs from the term for "burden" (v. 2). The word for load could refer to a ship's cargo (see Acts 27:10), the law's heavy burden (see Matt. 23:4), a soldier's pack, or a traveler's backpack. Paul seems to have meant that while some burdens are too heavy to be carried alone, each person has responsibilities he or she must fulfill.

6:6. At first glance, this verse seems to be an abrupt transition to a new subject. One suggestion is that Paul was encouraging believers to participate with their teachers in restoring straying Christians (see vv. 1-5), thus furthering what was morally good. Most interpreters, however, have taken Paul's admonition as promoting material support for teachers. Pagan religious teachers commonly received no pay, so the Galatian believers could have taken Paul's words in verse 5 to mean Christian teachers are to support themselves. Evidently

some believers were devoting most of their time to teaching the message (the gospel and its implications for Christian living) and needed financial assistance. Believers benefiting from such teaching are to share their material goods with the teachers.

6:7. Paul warned believers not to be deceived (literally, to “stop being led astray”), for no one can “thumb a nose” at God (God is not mocked) without experiencing devastating results. Whatever seeds a person sows will yield a harvest in kind (see Job 4:8). The person can expect that exact harvest, not something else. Paul well may have referred to the material support of teachers he encouraged in verse 6, but he likely had a broader application in mind.

6:8. Believers could choose to sow to their flesh. They could devote themselves and their goods to self-indulgence that the old self (the flesh) desired. If they did so, their harvest would be corruption—moral and spiritual ruin. Today, people thumb their noses at God when they view salvation as liberty to sin freely, presuming on God’s forgiveness. Such an approach calls into serious question the genuineness of their commitment to Christ. If, however, believers sow to the Spirit—that is, invest themselves and their goods in the sphere the Spirit governs—the Spirit will produce the harvest of eternal life. Paul’s use of the future tense (“will reap”) suggests he had in mind the final harvest of endless life with God.

6:9. One important aspect of sowing to the Spirit is persistently doing good. The phrase may refer specifically to supporting Christian teachers but likely is broader to include good deeds in general. The Greek term for “get tired” has the idea of becoming physically fatigued and of becoming faint-hearted. Christians could become discouraged and disillusioned in doing good and could be tempted to quit. Believers who persevere in well-doing, however, will reap a harvest at the proper time (or “season”)—refined character, spiritual growth, and fulfillment in this life and endless life with God in the next.

6:10. Because determined well-doing will result in a sure, Spirit-produced harvest, believers are to grasp every opportunity to work for the good of all. The Greek word for “opportunity” is the same term rendered “due time” in verse 9. Paul may have extended the agricultural metaphor: taking advantage of the season of sowing good deeds is essential if believers are to enjoy the season of harvest. Christians are to do good for unbelievers and for believers, but they have a special obligation toward members of the household of faith. Believers are to seize every opportunity to help one another in the family of faith.