

Love Letters

Lesson 5: Galatians 6

Among the important principles Paul teaches throughout the book of Galatians, the area of personal relationships is perhaps the most challenging. Following his teaching on the believer's freedom in Christ and the importance of walking in the Spirit, learning to live peaceably with everyone—Christian and non-Christian alike—is where the rubber meets the road! Paul warns about the attitude he describes here in chapter 6, the tendency to point out the sins of others when we ourselves may also be tempted. We will come to appreciate that the best avoidance of this pitfall is to practice walking in the Spirit while at the same time reaching out in love to those around us.

Day One: Bear and Share the Burden

Read Galatians 6:1–18.

Belonging to the body of Christ means sharing the journey of life with others. Paul now presents some helpful hints for making that journey together much more enjoyable.

1. Notice who it is Paul first addresses in verse 1. How is one believer supposed to deal with another who is caught in sin? Please explain.

The word *restore* means *to mend, as a net, or restore a broken bone*. The way to go about dealing with a brother or sister in sin is “gently.” It is the same word Paul uses in 5:23 to speak of the fruit of the Spirit.

2. What is the positive when we are obedient to do this God's way (verse 2)? What is the “law of Christ”?
3. What is the obvious danger involving our own heart attitude (verse 3)?
 - a. It's good to remind ourselves that when we point a finger at someone else, we have a few more pointing back at us! The fault we see in someone else can also be visible in our own life. Paul says restore in *gentleness*. James puts it another way. What does he say in James 5:19–20?

The word Paul uses for “load” (verse 5), actually refers to a *backpack* or *soldier’s pack*. This speaks of the responsibilities each of us carry through life. Our goal is not to form a comparison of ourselves with others, but to carry our own load, take responsibility for our own needs and, whenever possible, help another person with theirs for a season. It is not okay to judge others (Romans 14), but it is okay to occasionally assess as a “fruit inspector” (Galatians 5:22–23) what is in that other backpack and help that person to align with Scripture.

4. Rather than pointing fingers and sitting in judgment of someone else, what will help each of us to maintain the proper perspective here? Why is this important (verses 4–5)?

Selah ~

Guiding and correcting others should always be in the spirit of gentleness, which is also the Spirit of Christ. We are to handle others with the same loving concern that we would like shown to us—the *Golden Rule*—always keeping in mind that the goal is not to condemn but to *restore*.

Memory verse: Galatians 6:7 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Day Two:

Free to Share Our Resources

Reread Galatians 6:6–10.

The same gentleness that is required to bear another’s burdens and restore the one caught in sin is also needed regarding our financial duties. Paul taught a spirit of giving among the believers in the churches he founded, particularly toward those who were involved in teaching ministries.

1. What does Paul reveal about this principle in Galatians 6:6?
2. In letters to other churches, Paul elaborates on the same point. Look up these instances and note what you glean.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 9:3–14
 - b. 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9
 - c. 1 Timothy 5:17–18
3. What serious warning does Paul issue next (verse 7)?

The word *mocked* means *to turn up one's nose or treat with contempt*. Normally we would not deliberately choose to act that way toward God, but how often do we neglect to include Him in processing our daily choices? Every one of those choices—including what we do with our finances—results in the natural consequence of sowing and reaping.

4. Finish the following thought in verse 8 and supply an example:
 - a. “If I sow to the flesh I will”—
 - Example:
 - b. “If I sow to the Spirit I will”—
 - Example:

While the principle of *sowing* and *reaping* applies to all aspects of life, Paul emphasizes here that God expects His children to financially support their spiritual teachers. Those who fail to do so are courting the consequence.

5. Those who give what they are able and live accordingly can expect what reward with what condition (verse 9)?
 - a. The believer is expected to do good to all, but what is pointed to as the priority (verse 10)?

- b. Is this a priority of *yours*? Please explain.

Day Three: Free to Minister with Pure Motives

Reread Galatians 6:11–18.

Paul now stops dictating his letter and picks up the pen to write in his own hand (verse 11). He writes with large letters both to emphasize his words and to prove that the document is truly his. He then concludes his letter by referring again to the Judaizers, the false teachers who were causing the problem for these Galatian believers.

1. Paul gives us a hint of what the motive was behind the Judaizers; what was it (verses 12–13)?

The phrase *good showing* is the same as *good impression*; but the interpretation here is that the intent was disingenuous. The Judaizers were trying to persuade the Galatian believers to be circumcised to avoid persecution and to preserve their sect of Judaism against the political activists of the day. But their motives were impure; they had their own agenda.

2. In contrast to the Judaizers, what was Paul' motive—in whom did he want to boast (verse 14)?

Verse 14 tells us the world was crucified to Paul and he to the world. In other words, the world was as good as dead—it meant nothing; and he was as good as dead to the world (Galatians 2:20).

3. What instead was the most important thing to Paul (verse 15)?
4. In Paul's closing blessing, what does he say is available to those who believe in salvation by grace (verses 16–18)?
 - a. What personal comment does Paul make (verse 17)?
 - b. According to Paul's concluding remark in verse 18, what did he hope would be the end result for his readers?

Selah~

"It is easy to talk about the fruit of the Spirit while doing very little about it. So Christians need to learn that it is in concrete situations, rather than emotional highs, that the reality of the Holy

Spirit in their lives is demonstrated” (James Boice). It was what Paul endured for the sake of the gospel that helped shape his perspective to motivate others to change. What is *your motive* for serving Christ? To what length are you willing to let go—to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of others?

Day Four:

Gritty Grace God’s Way

The law was powerless to change lives because its focus was on externals. The grace of Christ however, is powerful because it changes people from the inside out! We all struggle with selfishness at times; we become preoccupied with our lives, our struggles, our finances, our aches and pains. Yet all around us are people facing the same issues as we are and attempting to solve them without Christ. If we struggle with Christ, how will they ever succeed without Him?

Selah ~

Think carefully about the questions you are going to answer today. Let them sink down and take hold of your heart. The mature Christian will, whenever possible, help to restore a brother or sister who falls to temptation or who needs a little help carrying their load. God’s grace frees us from self-centeredness to genuinely reach out His way: in love.

1. Can you think of a recent time in your life when you have been able to reach out to someone in need by doing it the Lord’s way? When? How? What was the result?

2. *Gritty grace* isn’t always pretty. In fact, it can look pretty dirty: being willing to humble yourself, and put yourself in someone else’s shoes. Isn’t that what Jesus did for *you*? Take a look at Paul’s words in Philippians 2:1–8. What do you learn in these verses about:
 - The contrast between self-centered and sacrificial service (i.e., what you get out of it versus God receiving the glory)?

 - The anticipated heart motive behind your service?

 - The importance of your obedience?

3. Keeping it real: contrast the obvious outcome of dealing with a sinful or needful believer in a harsh legalistic way versus doing it gently and in love. Then take it a step further: if *you* were the one in sin or in need, which method would you prefer?

4. Is there someone the Lord has put on your heart through your study this week? In what way can you help to bear their burden? Is your heart motive pure?

- a. Add the component of John 13:34–35 to the need you see and expect God to work! Keep track of how He has used you in that other person's life—both for their sake *and* yours.

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

- 1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

- 2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

- 3. *LIVE*: Take the next step of obedience and record the difference it makes in your life.

Prayer Requests~

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