

Leader's Guide

Session 6: Galatians 6

How would you define community?

Where have you experienced good community in the past? (church small group, sports teams, neighbors, charity groups, etc.)

What makes those groups a community?

As we've learned throughout Galatians, Jesus sets us free from sin and death and enables us to live a free life. But our lives shouldn't be inwardly focused. Instead, we should walk out our freedom in the context of community.

read

Read Galatians 6.

watch

Show Session 6: *Galatians 6* (10:55 minutes)

discuss

As we've seen in each of the previous sessions, "freedom" is a major theme throughout the book of Galatians. Through faith in Christ, we are freed from the shackles of slavery to life in Christ. Yet, the freedom is not a license to live however we please. In fact, God not only provides us freedom, but also gives us His Word to direct us into obedience resulting in greater intimacy with Him. In this final session, we're going to focus our attention on the responsibilities we have toward one another in the context of community. Someone read 6:1–10.

What are some of the “responsibilities” Paul describes in this passage? (restoring those caught in sin, carrying each other's burdens, testing our actions, persevering in faith, etc.)

Kyle's first observation was that this passage makes it clear we are responsible for growing together. Community is non-negotiable in a walk with Christ.

Having concluded the previous chapter with a warning against relational division, what instruction does Paul give in verse 1? (To gently restore those caught in sin.)

PEEK AT THE GREEK

Continuing his urge for unity through loving service, Paul begins in verse 1 by encouraging the Galatians to restore one another gently. To describe those in sin, he uses the term *prolempthe*, which means “overtaken” or “detected.” He uses the verb in a passive voice, which suggests a certain element of surprise. Without attention and accountability, we can easily drift and become overtaken by sinful ways. That does not remove our culpability in the matter, but it underscores the importance of regular authentic community with fellow believers and a commitment to walking by the Spirit. Paul prescribes restoration to those “who live by the Spirit,” which means we must pursue relationships with other believers who are willing to confront visible sin in our lives as a means to further sanctification.

What are some of the obstacles that might stand in the way of “gently” restoring someone caught in sin? (anger, frustration, woundedness, etc.)

Why is gentleness an important aspect of restoration? What difference does it make in the way we confront someone about their sin?

In the previous chapter, Paul provided his readers with two different lists. One of them was the “acts of the flesh,” which included both “jealousy” and “fits of rage” (5:20). The other list was the fruit of the Spirit, which notably included “gentleness” (5:23). The reason our style of confrontation matters is because God is on display through us. Rather than confront our own sin with anger and wrath, God offered up His Son on our behalf. When we confront one another in gentleness, we show we are in step with the Holy Spirit. Acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit cannot coexist.

What command does Paul give in verse 2? (“Carry each other’s burdens.”)

What does it teach us about the Christian life? (That we all carry a burden and there will be times when we cannot carry it alone.)

peek at the greek

In verse 2, Paul uses the term *baros* (“burden”) to command the Galatians, “Carry each other’s burdens...” At first glance, this appears to contradict his statement in verse 5 where he says, “each one should carry their own load.” The term *baros* refers to a “particularly oppressive” experience. Elsewhere, it is used to describe a heavy weight or stone someone has to carry at length. It carried the sense of a weighty burden carried over long distances. In verse 5, Paul uses the term *phortion*, which was used to describe the cargo of a ship (Acts 27:10) as well as an individual’s luggage or backpack. The difference is significant. In the former case, Paul is prescribing the responsibility of believers to bear the burdens of another when they are too heavy to be carried alone, regardless of the distance ahead (v. 2). But we should not abdicate our personal responsibility to care for the portions we ourselves have received (v. 5). It’s a reminder of our responsibility to serve one another humbly in love. Sometimes that will mean carrying the heavy weights of another. At other times, it will require us to invite the strength of our brothers and sisters to carry the weights we bear.

What does it teach us about the idea of self-sufficiency? (That it demonstrates pride in someone’s life, not courage.)

How well do you invest yourself in carrying the weights of others? In what ways could you improve?

How prone are you to inviting other believers into your burdens? Are there ways that you could improve in this area?

This passage makes it clear that self-sufficiency is a symptom of pride, but it demonstrates another aspect of pride as well. When we lack personal awareness of our own spiritual condition, we are prone to confront others in such a way that we fall into sin ourselves.

What does Paul command in verse 4? (That each should “test” his/her own actions.)

What does it mean to “test” one’s actions?

We often confuse the idea of “testing” or self-examination with introspection, which often becomes an obsessive form of navel-gazing. Throughout his letter to the Galatians, Paul has been pleading with his readers to submit their lives to the external and objective standard of Christ. In other words, to “test” our actions does not mean to simply analyze where we are spiritually, but to actively submit our thoughts, works, and attitudes to conform more fully to Christ as He is revealed through the Bible. And of course, this is only possible through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

How have you struggled with overanalyzing your own spiritual state to the exclusion of Christ and the gospel?

In what ways have you struggled with comparing your spiritual state to others? How does this kind of comparison affect your walk with Christ?

What would it look like for you to begin practicing the kind of self-examination Paul describes? How would it change the way you pursue maturity in Christ?

The first part of this chapter emphasizes our responsibility to grow with one another in community. The second point Kyle focused on was that of our responsibility to persevere, which is the tone throughout the next section of chapter 6.

What is the basic principle established in verses 7–8? (You reap what you sow.)

What are the two options listed? (Sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit.)

In other words, there is no such thing as neutral. Everything we do in life comes from one of these two motives. We act to either please the flesh or please the Spirit, the latter only becoming possible through faith in Jesus Christ. But Paul also makes it clear the sowing to the Spirit, or “doing good” is wearisome work.

What things discourage you from committing to good works?

How do Paul’s words encourage your commitment to good works? (By focusing on the ultimate gift we have coming through faith in Christ—eternal life.)

How did you react to Paul’s command to be “especially” intentional about doing good to fellow believers? In what ways might that change your attitude toward other Christians? Or to the Church as a whole?

The final portion of chapter six reiterates much of the content Paul has previously discussed, but he leaves us with one final responsibility that is crucial for the life of the believer. Someone read verses 11–18.

What did Kyle describe as the driving theme of these verses? (Our responsibility to keep central the main point of our faith.)

What is the “main thing” when it comes to our faith? (Kyle pointed to verse 14 as our answer—that we boast in nothing other than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the gospel.)

According to verse 12–13, what do the Judaizers boast in? (“The flesh”)

Paul’s point is that a life committed to righteousness by works—if possible—would give us the ability to boast before God. But it’s not possible. Even the circumcised do not keep the Law perfectly (v. 13). Rather, we are made righteous before God through faith in Jesus Christ whose life, death, and resurrection are given to us as a gift of grace.

Verse 15 tells us that “the new creation” is what matters for a life with Christ, not circumcision or uncircumcision. **What is implied by the phrase “new creation”?** (What matters begins on the inside, not the outside. It starts with a new nature driven by the Holy Spirit who lives within believers.)

This is where Paul leaves the Galatians—new creation. At minimum, a new creation means that we exist in a new reality, one the world will not likely embrace. As a final affirmation of the truthfulness of his message, Paul reminds the Galatians that he bears the marks of new creation upon his body, meaning that following Christ comes at a cost.

In what ways do you bear “the marks of Jesus”?

How do you react to the idea that a faithful walk with Christ means experience opposition from the world? Does it cause you fear or anxiety? If so, why?

As you have walked through this series, has the Holy Spirit awakened you to ways in which you are boasting in your “flesh” rather than the cross of Christ? What steps will you take to surrender your boasting to Him over the next week?

last word

Following Christ comes at a cost. During his earthly ministry, Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Denying ourselves includes a denial of the ways in which we try to earn our salvation through works and obedience. Our works are not the means of our salvation. Rather, they are the evidence of it.

It is for freedom that you have been set free and the freedom God desires for your life is one lived in submission to His Word. To do that, we need one another, which will always be a messy process. But our hope is not for perfection in this life. The hope of the gospel is that Christ has secured us a place among the household of God and one day we will meet Him face to face. Until then, it is our responsibility to persevere in the gospel we have come to believe—that we are saved by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone.

live it out

Pray: Ask God to show you what it means to live free this week. Pray for opportunities to walk in freedom in your church community, work, and at home.

Share: Sit down with a trusted Christian friend this week and share what’s going on in your life. Invite them to pray with you as you open up about your life.

Pause: Take time this week to pause and pray about whether or not you compare yourself to other believers. Confess any sin to God and ask Him to empower you to focus on Him alone.

Read: Go back and read all of Galatians in one sitting. Keep what you've learned through this study in mind as you ask the Spirit to show you how to apply this book to your life.

Worship: Pick a worship song that talks about surrender. As you listen or sing along, surrender to God the ways you've boasted in the flesh and ask for His strength to repent.