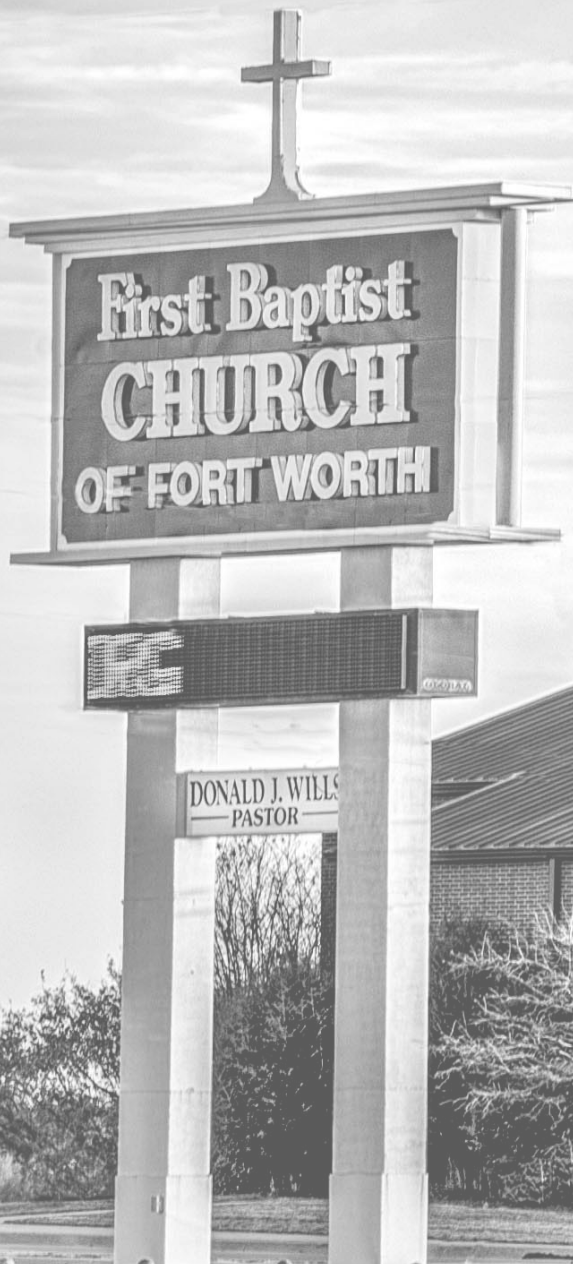
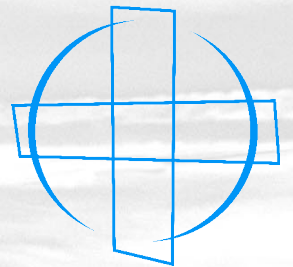


JUNE  
2024

Donald J. Wills  
*Senior Pastor*

LIVE



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Christianity should not be simply a label we wear, but the life we live. Too often, people add Christian to-dos to try to check all the boxes. However, being a Christian is not something you do; it is who you are. We cannot “do” ourselves into living the Christian life any more than we can into being a Christian. Ephesians 2:8-10 makes that pretty plain. It is out of the essence of who we are that we conduct ourselves. In this study of Galatians, you will see Paul’s point is best defined in 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” It is Christ in you that works His way out as evident in our thoughts and actions because of the recognition of whose we are. We are His!

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

This second quarter of 2024 the theme is “Live.” The challenge is to live each day filled with the Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:25. May we leave no doubt in the minds of those we encounter in the coming days to whom we belong. It is Christ in you!

Blessings,  
Pastor Don Wills



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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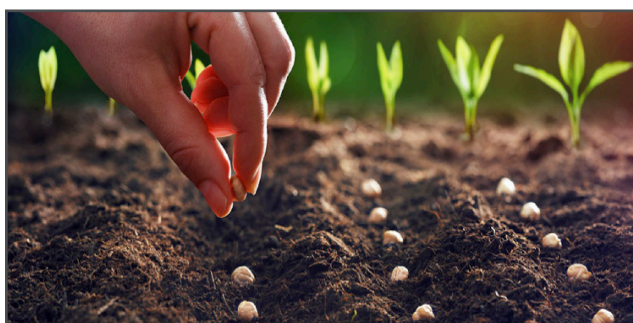
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*June 2, 2024*



# *Walk Steadfastly*

## *Galatians 5:1-6*

Focal Verse:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

Galatians 5:1

## Introduce

We've all likely heard the old adage which goes something like this: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Many of us, however, may find ourselves stuck in such a vicious cycle, bound to ritual and routine despite knowing an easier, more efficient way of doing something. Someone may take the time to show us a better way, but then, like clockwork, we almost immediately revert to the tried-and-true method we learned first. Even though the new way affords us more freedom and versatility, we continue doing things the way we have always done them. And we often excuse our actions with another pithy saying: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Two college freshmen out of the eyes of their watchful parents and into the throes of "real life" for the first time in adulthood roomed together in the dorm. For every one of us, we can probably recall the perilous financial hardships of this time in our lives whether we attended college or not. With little expendable income either from minimum-wage jobs or perhaps beneficent parents who still provided for us, we tried to save money any way we could. We tried to cut costs and be financially responsible, perhaps even frugal, with the very little we had. These two freshmen did just that!



One way they attempted to save money was to purchase one case of bottled water for the entire semester and then reuse the bottles. Instead of sanitizing each bottle after every subsequent use, they merely pitched them into a bin with their lids tightly in place. And they both tossed them into the same bin indiscriminately! Whenever they needed to refill their water for class or activities for the day, they went to the bin, retrieved a bottle, and refilled it without ever giving it a second thought. Consequently, this freshmen duo stayed sick the entire semester, encountering one illness after another. But they couldn't figure out why they both took turns become ill so frequently.

This cycle continued unabated until it so happened that one set of their parents

## Introduce

visited campus and saw what they were doing with the water bottles. In a lesson only parents could teach, they explained to these two roommates how communicable diseases spread. They even explicitly identified the water bottles as the primary culprit of their perpetual sickness. The freshmen stopped reusing the bottles immediately and almost “magically” their propensity for sickness ceased.

But, imagine for a moment, that they only stopped for a few weeks before restarting that same habit. They just didn’t want to spend their hard-earned money on new water bottles. At least, they had begun to wash them out with hot, soapy water. Yet, as time passed, they became busy with the demand of classes, activities, and work, so they once again began throwing the bottles back into the same bin, pulling them out, and refilling them without ever cleaning them. Even though they now knew better and had been warned, they would have found themselves in the same situation again—perpetually sick—because they had returned to their old way of thinking and acting!

In Galatians 5:1-6, Paul warns the churches not to return to the old way of doing things. He explains how Christ came not just to teach us a new or better way of doing something, but to provide the only way that leads to life. Because Christ is the only way to have life, why do we then try to go back to the old way which has proven ineffective? Certainly, we shouldn’t dismiss all tradition as irrelevant and harmful. Paul doesn’t do that in his letter or anywhere else for that matter. Rather, we must view it with the right perspective—a relationship with Christ. Tradition, when rightly applied, reminds us of what Christ has done for us and what He wants to do through us. At the same time, tradition and ritual cannot save. Only Christ can; therefore, let us walk steadfastly in our relationship with Him each day, remembering the past but cultivating our relationship in the present.

Key  
Question

What habits have you found difficult to break?



### Galatians 5:1

#### **THE FREEDOM THAT LEADS TO LIBERTY**

Having contrasted two opposing ways of thinking according to the “flesh” (what we can do ourselves) and “promise” (what God can do for us) by comparing Hagar and Sarah, Paul calls the Galatians to action. He urges them to **stand fast in the freedom (or liberty) by which Christ has made us free** (v. 1). He does not want them to revert to their former way of thinking in the flesh thereby becoming **entangled again with a yoke of bondage**. Yet, from the number of different translations we find, the syntax of the first part of the sentence can be somewhat difficult to capture in English. Literally, the text reads: the freedom, **Christ freed us therefore stand fast**. Most modern translations interpret the Greek this way: “For freedom, Christ freed us.” But this translation seems to miss the point Paul has been making from the beginning of the letter.

Paul isn’t explaining “why” or “for what purpose” Christ freed us, but rather seeks to demonstrate “how” He freed us through the gospel. For this reason, we could legitimately translate it this way: “With that freedom (i.e., that which comes through the gospel), Christ freed us.” In other words, Christ has set us free with the gospel—His death and resurrection. The NKJV bears the closest resemblance to what Paul actually meant here: **Therefore, stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free**. This one sentence, then, summarizes the entirety of the argument Paul has made throughout the letter as a whole: true freedom comes only in the true gospel—not the perverted message preached by the false teachers!

In what ways specifically does the gospel set us free? First, it frees us from guilt. On our own, we all stand before God guilty of sinning. But the gospel puts us in right standing with Him by canceling our debt since

Jesus took it upon Himself (Gal 3:1-9). In so doing, Jesus offered us an uneven trade! He took our sin bearing its penalty and gave us His righteousness as if we had never sinned (2 Cor 5:21). So, we no longer stand condemned because Christ satisfied the



## Instruct

penalty on our behalf (Rom 8:1). Therefore, we should no longer live in defeat in the flesh “helplessly” subject to sin and constrained by guilt. Rather, we can live victoriously through the Spirit according to the holy standards which God expects (Rom 8:9-11)!

While we may still sin at times because we live in a fallen world, we need not live in a constant state of guilt, remorse, or regret. Such a mindset is actually a ploy of the enemy to keep God from using us for His glory. If we have truly repented and sought forgiveness from Christ, we do not need to live in guilt. We need to learn from our mistake and move on. If we are God’s children, we will experience guilt as a form of conviction when we do sin (Heb 12:5). But then, we must confess our sin to Christ who will forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9). We should never wallow in guilt, but instead seek to remedy sin through Christ.

If we are continually racked with guilt in life, it indicates one of two things. Either we have not truly repented—stopped and turned from our sins—and we continue unabated to make the same mistakes repeatedly. Or we have allowed the enemy to deceive us into thinking that God cannot really forgive us, so we can’t really forgive ourselves and progress in our faith. Either way, living with a constant state of guilt will often cause us to miss out on what God wants to do because we find ourselves stuck in our sin or contemplating our own inability and ineptness to overcome it on our own. Trust God who forgives and rely on Him to overcome! While we should remember our mistakes lest we repeat them, we cannot let them dictate the course of our lives. Walk with God daily and He will help you!



### Question # 1

How can perpetually living in guilt cause us to miss out on what God wants to do through us?

Second, the gospel frees us from worry. Although we touched briefly on this subject at the end of the previous lesson, we can develop it more fully here. Attempting to achieve salvation through good works or by being a good person enslaves us to worry. For those who try this method, they will make statements like, “I hope I get to heaven.” In the back of their minds, they are always worried—and rightly so—that they will fall short and their good works will never outweigh their bad deeds. They can never live with the true confidence Jesus brings (1 John 5:12-13). The gospel, however, frees us from such worry because we depend upon what Christ did for us. Our confidence is in Him rather than in what we can do ourselves.

If we truly trust Christ, we can have a worry-free life! This doesn't mean that we won't encounter trouble or even have stress at times. But it does mean that we don't have to be consumed with worry no matter what may happen in life. We only need trust our heavenly Father who will provide what we need at exactly the right time. Leaving the dysfunction of some modern families aside for a moment, think about the lives of most children who depend on their parents. They don't worry about the same things that adults do. They trust their parents to provide. As adults, we “worry” about a number of things: security for our families, putting food on the table, having a roof over our head, and so much more. Children who have these things don't worry about them—even though their parents may find it a struggle to provide at times. But we don't have a heavenly Father who struggles in that department. He will provide if we wait upon Him and trust Him. He's proven that throughout history!

As we go through life, we worry about inflation and the cost of affording our most basic

needs. We wonder, “How will I make ends meet?” Remember God will—just trust Him. We may worry about being laid off or finding employment. We wonder, “What will I do?” Remember God knows—just trust Him. We may find ourselves facing tragic news, unexpected health problems, family dysfunction, and our whole world may be turned

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:34

upside down. And we wonder, “How will I cope?” Remember God can help—just trust Him. The next time you find yourself worrying about anything, think about these things. Remember what God has promised and trust Him to provide. The gospel has set us free from worry because we have a heavenly Father who knows what we need even before we ask and stands ready to act on our behalf.

Question  
# 2

What are some worries that you face? How have you seen God provide?

Third, the gospel frees us to serve. When we don’t have to worry about working for our own salvation or for our basic needs in life, then we can concentrate on serving the Lord and glorifying Him. This kind of service doesn’t mean that we wait idly doing nothing until our basic needs simply fall into our laps; we still have responsibility. Rather, this kind of service allows us to look beyond our own needs and circumstances to serve others as God leads (Phil 2:1-4). When we predominantly focus on our own needs, we tend to become self-centered—a trait that conflicts with the tenor of the gospel. The gospel gives us freedom from that mindset, enabling us to serve the Lord by serving others. In Galatians 5:13, Paul even implores us, “Through love serve one another.”

Question  
# 3

In what ways has the gospel freed you to serve?

Finally, the gospel frees us to relate to God in the way He intended when He created us. He wants us to walk with Him and have unimpeded fellowship. This requires that we submit to Him in everything and follow what He has specified (John 15:13). Like the title to a car or deed to a property which has been sold, our “title” has been transferred from sin to God, for Christ paid the price for us. The gospel simply frees us to relate to God in a new way—no longer as slaves, but as heirs (Gal 4:1-7). However, this does not mean that we have no responsibility. On the contrary, we have an even higher standard by which to live because God has given us His Spirit to guide us. As His heirs, we must represent Him well by imitating His holy example (Eph 5:1). Paul will develop this theme in chapter 5 when he explains the fruit of the Spirit in contrast to the works of the flesh.

Unfortunately, many take these words in verse 1 out of context and misapply them, especially when it comes to freedom. They see freedom as a license to live

however they want without any consequence. Yet, God has not given us *carte blanche*. As Americans, for example, we value our freedom and independence. But even then, our freedom comes with great responsibility. As free citizens of the United States, we are still bound by its laws even though we have many rights and privileges. But perhaps what matters most is how we represent our nation in the way we live as its ambassadors. Likewise, God has called us to follow His commands even though He has given us many rights and privileges as His children. We, therefore, serve as His ambassadors in the way we live. While the gospel focuses on a restored relationship with God through Christ more than a list of dos and don'ts, we still have a standard to which we must adhere.



Overall, Paul warns the Galatians not to return to the fleshly thinking that enslaved them. He wants them to **stand fast** on the gospel. No matter what culture may say or what new fads may become vogue, we cannot compromise the gospel. The moment we trust in human ingenuity or anything we can do on our own is the moment that we fail. We've returned to that flawed way of thinking in the flesh. Only Christ can save. And this proclamation of salvation comes only through the hearing of the unadulterated and undiluted gospel (Rom 10:14-21). Paul will now delve into specific examples of why trusting in tradition and ritual, not Christ, will fail.

### ***Galatians 5:2-4***

#### **THE FAILURE TO BE JUSTIFIED THROUGH THE LAW**

Paul rather tersely transitions from a general warning to a specific example. If they trust in **circumcision** as a means of salvation, then **Christ will profit them nothing** (v. 2). He further explains that any **man who becomes circumcised** becomes **a debtor to keep the whole law** (v. 3). In other words, people who elevate tradition and ritual over Christ must perfectly keep every part of **the law** on their own—something which they could never do! For this reason, Paul emphatically states that they **have become estranged**, or literally cut off, **from Christ** and **have fallen from grace** because

they **attempt to be justified by the law** (v. 4). This doesn't mean that they lost their salvation. It means they were never saved in the first place because they didn't rightly understand and respond to the gospel. Had they understood, they would not have rejected what Christ graciously did for them and tried to earn salvation for themselves through their own works!

Before discussing the danger of traditions misapplied, we must take a moment to assess some of their positive functions. Generally, however, our society despises any kind of tradition. People often crusade to tear down traditional systems of any kind and rebuild them in a state more palatable to a modern world. They see tradition



not only as fraught with problems, but also as having an evil, underlying predisposition that holds mankind captive. But tradition, when rightly applied according to Scripture, has positive value! In fact, Jesus commands the church to observe two ordinances: the Lord's Supper and baptism. While these cannot save any more than **circumcision** could, they prove beneficial in reminding us what Christ has done and what we have become in Him.

To facilitate our discussion, we will focus on tradition only as it relates to the Bible and not secular institutions, ideas, or culture. Tradition has two positive functions in Scripture when rightly practiced and applied. First, it serves as a testimony of what God has done. Therefore, through some traditions we can celebrate and praise God! For instance, to celebrate the Passover is not bad or negative in and of itself. It reminded Israel what God did for His people in freeing them from slavery in Egypt. It also has value for the church because it foreshadowed what Christ would come to do on the cross. Now, we celebrate Passover through Christ who became the "Passover Lamb" for us, freeing us from enslavement to sin.

Traditions like the Passover only become problematic when we forget the meaning behind them and merely engage in them out of routine. They become useless when they no longer function as a celebration which inspires heart-felt gratitude and

praise to the Lord for His magnanimous work in the world among His people. Above all, they become dangerous when they supersede Christ in importance and distract from truly knowing Him.

Question  
# 4

What are some traditions that you have, personally or as a family, that help you to celebrate Christ?

Second, traditions help us to remember and keep us focused on the Lord. Traditions are primarily symbolic, functioning as a sign or tool to remind us of who we serve. Initially, circumcision functioned as such a sign. It didn't give or guarantee a relationship with the Lord, but it reminded the people of the relationship they already had and in whom they placed their faith. It became a problem only when the people forgot the meaning behind it. It lost its purpose and function. Even though we no longer participate in **circumcision**, baptism serves as the same reminder. It pictures what Christ did for us and the new life to which He has called us. When we see others baptized and recall our own, it should remind us of the One who saved us and the One in whom we have placed our faith.

Circumcision is nothing and  
uncircumcision is nothing, but  
keeping the commandments of God  
is what matters.  
1 Corinthians 7:19

For the Galatians, the traditions had become a huge problem because they distracted from Christ. Many in the church had begun to believe that these rituals and festivals were the means to salvation. They wrongly began to trust in them rather than in Christ who saves! Unfortunately, many people in churches today who have sound doctrine and teaching have adopted this same mindset. People ignorantly and errantly trust in baptism, participating in the Lord's Supper, and church membership to merit salvation. In other churches, they may trust in last rites, rote prayers, and a plethora of rituals to save them. None of these things saves! Only Christ can! The danger of trusting in tradition is then that one has placed himself under obligation to **the whole the law**.

## Instruct

This means he must keep every commandment perfectly, like Christ did, to have eternal life. This is an impossible feat! Therefore, salvation comes only through the **grace** of Christ who fulfilled the law perfectly for us. We must accept what He has done and not rely on what we can do ourselves.

Question  
# 5

What can we do to keep tradition from becoming a distraction or hindrance in our relationship with Christ?

## Galatians 5:5-6

### THE FAITH THAT WORKS THROUGH LOVE

Paul now contrasts life in the **Spirit** with being bound to the law through a life characterized by the flesh. He explains that **through the Spirit we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith** (v. 5). What does Paul mean by this expression? Only when we walk in **the Spirit** can we live righteously in the way God intends. We can participate in all the traditions, rituals, festivals, and “religious” activities we want, but they don’t make us righteous. In fact, we can spend all our waking hours “faithfully” devoted to such endeavors and still live in the flesh. Israel did! The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day did! They worshiped in the temple, lifted their hands to God in prayer, participated in all the festivals, and even set additional rules to cultivate fellowship with the Lord. Yet, none of these things worked. They didn’t have a relationship with the Lord. They didn’t know Him!

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for this type of behavior: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt 23:27). But people do these very same things today. Outwardly, they may appear “religious” and close to the Lord. They may even say and do the “right” things at times, but they don’t have a relationship with Him. They come to church on Sunday. However, during the week they don’t walk with Him. They don’t pray or open His Word. If they do pray, it’s only when others can see so that they can make a good impression. Despite doing all these outwardly religious acts, the **righteousness** of God has no effect at all on their lives!

People may appear “good” and even “moral” according to the world’s standards.



yet exhibit no transformation. Outside of church and “religious” activities, they complain, slander, gossip, participate in off-color jokes, curse, and perhaps even lie. They think selfishly, not selflessly looking for ways to serve and love others. They may even participate in ungodly acts that the world deems acceptable, but that God detests. They use the world as a standard and guide rather than Christ. **The Holy Spirit**, however, gives us the proper perspective. We no longer want to do just the bare minimum to get by; we want to please the Lord in all things.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.  
Matthew 23:27

Even though we may stumble at times, **the Spirit** quickly compels us to return to the course God has plotted.

Question  
# 6

In what specific ways does sin blind us?

Finally, Paul reminds us that **neither circumcision nor uncircumcision** accomplishes **anything** (v. 6). It can’t save us nor can it produce **righteousness** in us. What truly matters is **faith** in Christ which we display **through** our **love**. The evidence that we have eternal life in Christ comes through the **righteousness** and, particularly, the **love** manifest in our lives through the work of **the Holy Spirit**. Just as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, we can distinguish people based upon the type of fruit they produce (Matt 7:16, 20). People who walk in **the Spirit** will exhibit **righteousness** and **love**. Those who walk in the flesh will not.

Therefore, a good gauge by which to evaluate our walk is how much we **love**. How much we love God will show in how much we **love** others. This becomes a dominant theme throughout the rest of chapter 5 and a defining characteristic of life in **the Spirit** (Gal 5:13-14, 22). In the coming weeks, we will spend more time unpacking this concept of **love** and how it defines our walk. For now, we can end with these thoughts. Ask yourself these questions: What do I **love** most in life? How do I tangibly demonstrate that **love**?

## Instruct

Hopefully, you answered Christ to that first question. If not, then you need to repent of your sin (idolatry) and ask **the Spirit** to help you get rid of anything in your life that has come between you and Him. Some of the things that can potentially come between us may not be inherently bad or evil—like tradition or ritual—but they become a distraction and a recipient of our attention and devotion (**love**). If you answered Christ to that first question, then earnestly seek wisdom from **the Spirit** to evaluate how you're doing in showing love to God by loving others. Let us walk steadfastly in the Spirit, not getting caught up in routine and merely going through the motions. May **the Spirit** continually guide us to become more like Christ in the righteous way we live and **love**.

Question  
# 7

Why is it important to continually take a spiritual inventory of how we're doing in our walk?

## Inspire

Human nature often causes us to develop bad habits, becoming mindlessly engaged in routines. These routines become so engrained in our lives that we do them automatically. We don't think about their purpose or even the consequences they may produce. We just do them. The two college freshman in the introduction took that same approach to life. To save money, they thought they had devised a foolproof plan, but it turned into them staying sick for the entire semester. Fortunately for them, someone came to show them a better plan! Christ has come so that we might know that better plan and have life through Him. We can't be given to mindless routine, doing things the way we have always done them. In order to have life, we must follow His plan. His plan involves trusting Him for salvation in which He gives His Spirit to live within us, guiding us and helping us to walk in righteousness and love just as He Himself exemplified during His time on earth! Let us walk steadfastly in His Spirit, never wavering from the truth.

## *Incorporate*

What are some things that impeded our freedom in Christ? Why should we not view our freedom as a license to live however we want?

In what other ways does Christ free us to live in the way that God intended? How does the Holy Spirit help us in that endeavor?

What traditions do we have as Baptists or even specifically as FBC? What is the intent and purpose behind them?

*June 9, 2024*



# *Walk in Love to Serve*

## *Galatians 5:7-15*

Focal Verse:

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Galatians 5:13

## Introduce

Whether or not we have watched many action movies about spies, probably most of us have some familiarity with James Bond. The premise of the franchise revolves around secret agents for the British government who serve in a specialized unit demarcated by numbers beginning with double zero—hence 007. This designation meant that these agents not only had access to top-secret information, but also a “license to kill.” The vast majority of the series’ films depict life during the Cold War and the world’s struggle with the communist dictators of Russia. In more recent years, however, the films have begun to focus on terrorism—both foreign and domestic. Either way, Bond was tasked with defending the free world against all forms of tyranny and villainy.

Even though he had a “license to kill,” Bond constantly needed a reminder to use that status responsibly. Though using different words and settings, the movies generally followed the same plot line and sequence. Toward the beginning of the film, Bond would meet with the head of the intelligence agency, designated by the letter M. During these briefings, M would not only outline Bond’s mission, but also take the opportunity to caution him against the temptation to misuse his status to settle a personal vendetta in the name of revenge. Instead, M warns him to remain focused on the mission or risk being replaced by another agent who could handle the job appropriately.

In the movie *Skyfall*, Bond covertly meets the agency’s new equipment and technology quartermaster—or Q for short—in an art gallery in London. The ensuing conversation suggests that Bond has somehow become an obsolete relic of the Cold War Era, leading Q to imply that the agency only really needs him because “a trigger needs to be pulled” at times. To this, Bond says something quite profound. He replies, “Or not pulled. It’s hard to tell which at home in your pajamas.” With this statement, Bond wishes to underscore the idea that this line of work requires discretion and discernment. It’s not about having the “freedom” to act above the law as an agent



## Introduce

licensed to kill indiscriminately without consequence. Instead, the task requires self-control and focus to complete the objectives satisfactorily and advance the cause of freedom, protecting it from those who wish to hold it captive.

Certainly, James Bond engaged in many fleshly and unrighteous activities. And we should never aspire to emulate him or glorify his escapades in any way. But these movies can teach us a valuable lesson about responsibility at times if we listen to their dialogues. Similarly, serving Christ requires self-control and focus in order to fulfill the objectives He has given us and advance the cause of His kingdom which brings freedom and life to all who accept Him. When applied to our walk in Christ, therefore, God has not called us to freedom as a license to sin. On the contrary, we must follow the scope of our mission as outlined in Scripture. We must use the discretion and discernment God has given us as His children to live honorably and reflect the character which He has instilled within us. In Galatians 5:7-15, Paul touches briefly on this very topic. Therein, he commands us to use our “liberty” in Christ “to serve one another” in love rather than an opportunity to exercise our fleshly desires (Gal 5:13).

Key  
Question

In what ways do we need to practice discernment in our Christian walk?

## Galatians 5:7-10

**THE OUTCOME FOR THE DISTRACTED:**

Using an analogy of a race to describe life in Christ, Paul wants to know **who hindered** the Galatians **from obeying the truth** (v. 7). Even before he poses this question, he already knows the answer: “certain men from James” (Gal 2:12). By asking, he hopes the Galatians will wake up and recognize the peril they face in following such erroneous teaching. Although they started the race **well** when they accepted the gospel and followed Christ, they had become distracted in their pursuit by these false teachers who persuaded them to trust in their own ability to earn salvation by following the law. So, Paul reminds them that this **persuasion** to misplace their confidence in their own flesh rather than in Christ **does not come from Him who** called them (v. 8). It has actually prevented them from progressing in their faith as Christ intended.

The verb translated **hindered**, therefore, pictures a runner crossing into another runner’s lane and impeding his progress—whether just slowing him down or causing him to stumble and fall altogether. To ensure a fair race particularly in sanctioned events, boundaries have been set for each participant to follow regardless of his or her skill level. In the Olympics, for example, runners must stay in their own lanes for shorter races like 100 meters. If a runner ever touches or crosses the lane markings, the judge will immediately disqualify him. For medium-length races like 800 meters, runners must stay in their designated lane through the first turn. But then after that, they can move to the inside of the track to run the shorter distance. Most falls during these races occur when runners jockey for position in this tight grouping.

The false teachers have figuratively cut in front of the Galatians to get an advantage over

both them and Paul. At the expense of compromising **the truth**, they wanted to amass



followers for themselves in a rivalry with Paul. When they cut in front, therefore, these teachers hastened the Galatians' fall and **hindered** their spiritual growth. As a result, some of the Galatians abandoned the true gospel for one of works and religious ritual. Through their misguided influence, the false teachers had disqualified themselves by promoting something which cannot save or bring life. To have any hope of eternal life, these teachers must repent and turn to Christ instead of peddling their phony gospel in order to bolster their own reputation. If the Galatians don't extricate themselves from this false teaching as well, they too run the risk of disqualification because it will reveal that they never understood the gospel in the first place. Destruction will be their end unless they repent and trust Christ who freely gives life to all who ask.

Question  
# 1

How well are you running this race? What things in life can serve as a hindrance to your spiritual growth?

Employing another metaphor, Paul compares the effect of false teaching to **leaven** in a **lump** of dough (v. 8). He essentially argues that **a little leaven** goes a long way. Likewise, tolerating and accepting even **a little** false teaching does tremendous damage and affects the entire church negatively! **Leaven**, technically not yeast, is what we could call starter dough today. If you've ever baked a loaf of homemade bread, you know that you'd pinch off a tiny piece of dough from the original **lump** before kneading it, forming it, and baking it. Having set aside that starter piece you'd then add it to other ingredients later to make a whole new **lump** of dough. Each time that you want to make a new loaf, you'd repeat this same process.

Each time a baker pinches the **little** piece of starter off from the **lump**, it will pick up all kinds of bacteria. No matter how well a baker washes his hands or how clean the cabinets and utensils may be, the **leaven** or starter will become more and more contaminated. The bacteria continues to compound and fester in that **little** piece of starter with each subsequent use! When a baker adds that starter to the pure, uncontaminated ingredients to make the next loaf, **the whole lump** of dough becomes infested with the bacteria in that single **lump** of starter. In the same way, even **a little** false teaching contaminates the whole church! Therefore, Paul implies that we need to get rid of any false teaching so that it doesn't affect the purity of the gospel, impugn the integrity of the members, or compromise the mission of the church—remembering **a little** does much damage!



Why does **a little** bit of false teaching or error have such a tremendous and devastating impact on the church as a **whole**? False teaching has such a great impact on the church for three primary reasons: ignorance, indifference, and influence. First, error creeps into the church primarily because of ignorance. Simply put, many people don't know what God has said in Scripture. While they may know what they personally believe and can cite "valid" reasons why they believe that way, what they believe is not based on God's Word! They've never read or studied the Bible as they should in order to hear God definitively speak. So, they can't easily **discern** truth from error.



To be an "expert" in a field in which one determines the authenticity or legitimacy of an item, one must intimately know the real item in order to spot the fake or forgery. For example, one can't only look at fake Rolexes and be able to differentiate them from a genuine one; he must observe and study an actual Rolex! This goes for anything: signatures (forgeries), currency (counterfeit), paintings (fakes), etcetera. In order to spot a fake, we must spend time with the genuine article! As His people, God has called us to know **the truth** and has given us His written Word to test the authenticity and genuineness of what we believe. He has also sent His Spirit to indwell in us as a guide to help us know and distinguish **truth** from error. So, if we read Scripture and listen to His Spirit, we can expertly detect errors and prevent them from hindering our walk (2 Peter 1:19-21).

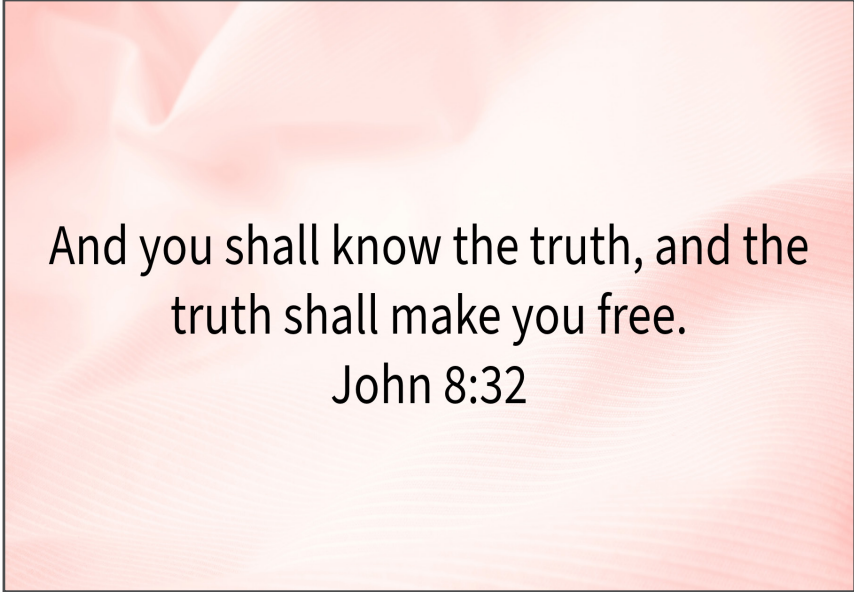
Question  
# 2

When something doesn't quite sound "right," what are the first steps that you take to determine the truth?

Second, indifference under the guise of tolerance and acceptance has allowed false teaching to infiltrate the church. Our culture preaches tolerance and acceptance for most all things except for **the actual truth**! Some churches no longer focus on teaching sound doctrine in favor of feel-good messages deemed to have positive value

## Instruct

because they don't want to offend anyone, but in actuality their teaching is devoid of substance and **truth**. Consequently, many in the church have become indifferent to error and immoral lifestyles. The church in some ways has subscribed to this cultural philosophy and has taken a hands-off approach. As long as a person is not perceived to harm or hinder others, people will argue to let them believe or practice what they want. After all, they see it as not hurting anyone. But, in fact, it is hurting others particularly if it distorts the gospel and produces unrighteous behavior. It's leading that person and all whom he or she influences down a path of destruction—a point to which we will now turn.



And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.  
John 8:32

Third, false teaching is highly influential and, in some ways, more palatable to believe than the **truth**. It's a myth to believe that false teaching doesn't harm or impact anyone outside of the person participating in it. On the contrary, it spreads like a highly contagious disease! It doesn't stay isolated to just a few people—Paul's very point in emphasizing how it affects **the whole lump**. Often, such false teaching comes in a very attractive package that both sounds good and looks pleasing especially if we don't know Scripture. Often, the error occurs by taking **the truth** and changing it ever-so-slightly at an almost imperceptible level. This change sometimes occurs over a long period of time in order to desensitize people from opposing it. Then, it becomes popularized by repeating it over and over again until people accept it without even thinking about the consequences.

Question  
# 3

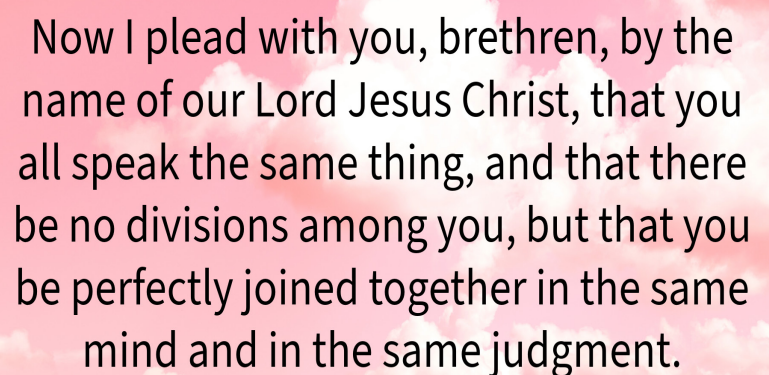
In what areas has our society changed truth so slightly and then repeated the error until people started to believe it without question? How has this affected the church?

Moreover, people who participate in such false teaching and immoral behavior do not actually stay silent. They don't only "infect" themselves with their errant beliefs.

They want to influence as many others as they can. They want to bring many people into their camp, so they parade their views publicly and lobby to have others accept their position! They want to take as many other people with them as possible because it appears to “justify” their beliefs and actions when people “accept” and practice them with them. We could name a number of sins and doctrinal errors here, but the most prevalent example of this approach today is the perversion of gender and sexuality by the homosexual and transgender community. In reality, they don’t just want tolerance and acceptance. They want to force people to believe the way they do. They want to normalize the practice of these ungodly and sinful lifestyles. We need only look at how they attempt to target adolescents and youth—and in some cases attempt to thwart the supervision of their parents! Error—any kind of error—has tremendous influence and doesn’t just stop at a few people!

What effects does false teaching have on the church besides obviously incurring discipline from God? Again, we must realize that false teaching affects the church both individually and collectively. First, it creates an individual competition to be heard rather than seeking to hear Christ collectively as His people. People want to put in their own two cents; therefore, they freely share their opinions, preferences, and priorities, so they can have things done their own way to their own liking. The voice of such people sometimes drowns out the voice of God in a battle of human will against the divine!

Second, but related to the first, it cultivates a culture of complaining about not getting one’s way rather than seeking God’s will and doing it His way. A pervasive attitude of complaining can fray the church, causing division and disharmony by pulling the body in many directions. Instead of walking together in unity to fulfill the mission which God has



Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

given them collectively, each one self-centeredly struggles for the things which have his or her own benefit at the core (1 Cor 1:10-17; Eph 4:1-6).

Third, false teaching tends to value the personality of the messenger over the Person of Christ. In this sense, people are attracted more by the charisma of the

messenger than the content of the message—particularly as it relates to the character and authority of Christ. Charisma can become a distraction! If a messenger is outgoing, funny, intelligent, well-spoken, likable, and any other trait deemed positive by the hearer, it can overshadow problems with the message! From Scripture, we know Jesus suffered this same fate even though He came to earth as **the Truth** (John 14:6). Many in Israel rejected Him as Messiah because He didn't outwardly fit their expectations (Isa 53:2). While Jesus did attract a following during His ministry on earth because of the miracles He performed, many people still missed the main point of His message! They focused solely on their physical needs. Once, Jesus even reprimanded the people who came to Him only because they wanted something to eat rather than the eternal life He was offering (John 6:26-27).

Question  
# 4

How have you seen the charisma of the messenger sometime overshadow the actual message?

Paul concludes this first section with a challenge to the Galatians to **have no other mind** and a rather stern warning of coming **judgment** for the false teachers troubling them (v. 10). The expression to **have no other mind** demands that they must all adopt God's point of view (Phil 2:5). They must adhere to what He Himself has declared. Paul doesn't just want them to agree with him or even adopt some "unified" human position on the matter. He wants them to know and practice **the truth** of the gospel! We live in a society that treats God's Word like a buffet. At a buffet, people pick and choose what they like based on their own tastes. They may "sample" many different items only to discard the ones they don't like. Unfortunately, people do this very thing with God's Word, too! They pick and choose what seemingly works best for them and then discard anything they don't like. God, however, has called us to **have no other mind** but His when it comes to the gospel and truth. If we reject His way of thinking in favor of our own, judgment awaits us just like that of the false teachers who have troubled the churches here in Galatia.

## Galatians 5:11-12

### THE OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH:

Just as the Galatians have experienced opposition to their faith in Christ, so has Paul experienced this opposition himself. Paul poses a rhetorical question to the churches: **If he still preaches circumcision, why does he still suffer persecution** (v. 11) Why does Paul say **still preach circumcision** as if this was something he advocated? Likely, he is recalling his former life as a Pharisee in which he pinned all his hope for eternal life on perfectly fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law. When Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he came to realize the impossibility of this feat. Christ had revealed the Apostle's unworthiness and lack of righteousness. From this point forward, Paul preached nothing but Christ crucified and resurrected (1 Cor 2:2). This change in message caused him great consternation among both the Jew and Gentile. He became the target of intense persecution on both sides.

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:2

Had Paul never changed his message, he would not have encountered such great opposition, for **the offense of the cross** would have **ceased**. But then, he would have incurred the wrath of God against his sin even though he would have been at peace with other people. What does Paul mean by the phrase **the offense of the cross**? Although translated differently into English, Paul uses this same word in 1 Corinthians 1:23 to capture the opposition to the gospel: "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block (i.e., offense) and to the Greeks foolishness." In other words, it shows the violent rejection of God's Word—both the living Word (Christ) and the written Word (Scripture).

People opposed it for various reasons and they severely persecuted those who believed it. For the Jews, it didn't fit their expectations or the narrative which they thought they knew well which seemingly gave them special divine privileges. For the

## Instruct

Gentiles, it didn't make logical sense. It was unreasonable, even moronic, to believe someone could physically rise from the dead since never before in history had that ever happened. These same two lines of thought still exist today. **The cross** offends people because it doesn't fit their "religious" beliefs or it seems totally implausible based upon science. So, we can still expect to face persecution today if we preach the message of **the cross** as God intended.

Question  
# 5

How do we see people take offense to the cross or the gospel today specifically?

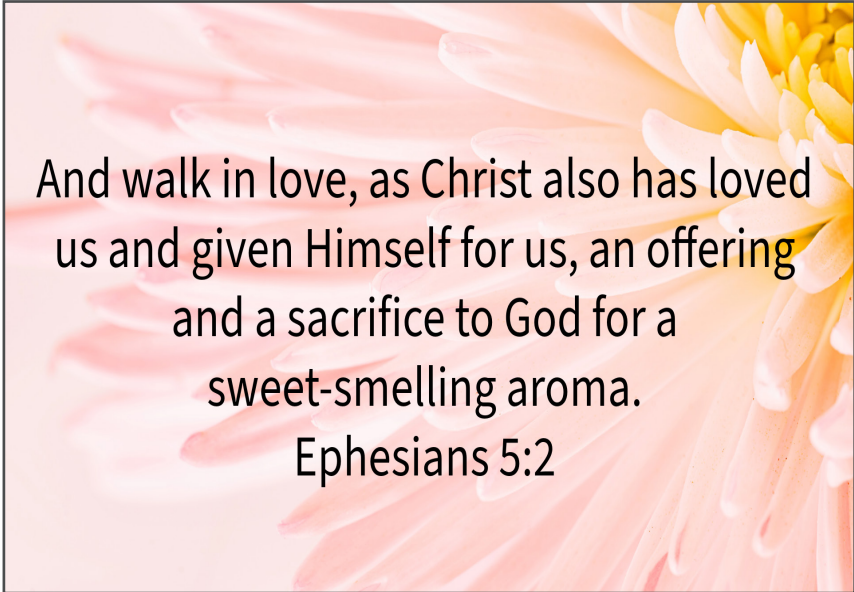
Again, Paul ends this section on a rather harsh note when he exclaims, "**I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off**" (v. 12). Some of the more recent translations have made Paul's remarks explicitly clear here. Figuratively, Paul says these false teachers who advocate circumcision as a means for salvation should castrate themselves. In other words, he wishes that they would remove themselves from the church and stop leading it astray. It would be similar to the handing over of false teachers to Satan—that is excommunicating them or kicking them out of fellowship in the church (see 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20). Literally, however, these false teachers have **cut themselves off** from the people of God. They did this to themselves because they wrongly believed that circumcision defined them as God's people! They have no part in God's kingdom and, therefore, stand condemned, causing them to be cut off because they have rejected Christ.

## Galatians 5:13-15

### THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RACE

Now, Paul returns to the heart of his argument which he began in Galatians 5:1. Although life in Christ brings with it certain freedoms, he doesn't want them to misunderstand it as if they have no responsibility at all, so he clarifies what God expects. God has certainly called us to freedom (i.e., **liberty**), but we should not misuse our freedom as **an opportunity for the flesh** that is as an excuse to sin (v. 13). It's not like playing the game of Monopoly in which we have a "get-out-of-jail-free" card. God does freely forgive our sins in Christ when we ask. Yet, even though we have a relationship with Him, there are still consequences for our actions.

Our actions should not be self-centered, but instead they should emulate the selflessness of Christ which glorifies God. Love not only best defines God's character and activity, but it should also define ours. Therefore, Paul commands us to **serve one another through love**. In verse 14, Paul gives the scriptural precedent for this command from Leviticus 19:18: "You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**." But this technique of summarizing the law this way did not originate with Paul. It came from Jesus Himself.



And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.  
Ephesians 5:2

Jesus summarized the whole Old Testament into two broad principles: **love** God and **love** others (Matt 22:35-40). Here, Paul subsumes the first command into the second. We demonstrate our **love** for God **through** our loving service to others (Eph 5:2).

Question  
# 6

In what ways do you demonstrate your love for God in the way that you serve others? What is the ultimate goal of your service?

**Love** is the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit which we will examine in our lesson next week (Gal 5:22). For now, however, we need to examine the characteristics of **love** in association with these verses. First, love is selfless. We live in a selfish world that feels entitled and seeks benefits purely for themselves. On the day I composed this lesson, I saw a car pulling out from the parking lot of a "church" on Denton Highway. On the rear window of that car, it had the following message painted in large, block letters: "Want to bless me? My birthday trip; the name of a person; and an address for Cash APP!" Here's a novel idea for a potential "follower" of Christ pulling out from a church parking lot: ask, "How can I be a blessing to you?"

Our world has it backwards! We have so many people looking for ways that others can **serve** them instead of looking for ways they can **serve** others. People who have a genuine **love** for Christ and a servant-mindset will not even need to ask the question "how can I **serve**?" They will see a need and meet it automatically as God leads them.

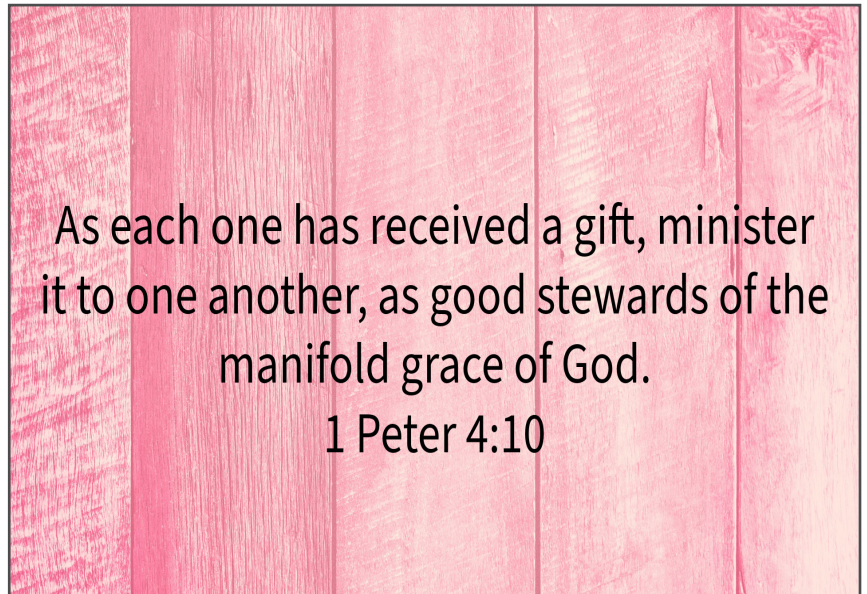
## Instruct

After all, Jesus “did not come to be serve, but He came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). We should follow His example. He has set the bar high for us. Yet, our self-centeredness may not be as blatant as the advertisement on the back of this car. In fact, it’s usually much more subtle. But as we examine our own lives, honestly ask God to show you how well you’re doing in daily showing **love** to others **through** service.

Furthermore, our **love** ought to be unconditional. Although this principle comes more from Jesus’ teaching in Luke 10, and not here in Galatians, we can still make this connection based on a similar use of Leviticus 19:18. There a certain lawyer inquires of Jesus how he might attain eternal life. To which Jesus responds by commanding him to **love** God and **love** His neighbor. So, the man wishing to justify himself pompously asks, “Who then is my neighbor?” At which point, Jesus relates the parable of the “Good Samaritan.”

While we won’t repeat the story entirely here, the Samaritan displayed **love** for a Jewish man beaten, robbed, and left half-dead along the highway whereas the other two individuals did not. Based on history, we know the animosity Jews and Samaritans had for one another. But this didn’t prevent the Samaritan from showing compassion and **love** for someone considered his “enemy.” Jesus’ point is that we should not so narrowly define our **neighbor**, but show **love** to all as a way to glorify God.

This idea of unconditional **love** inspiring acts of service seems to fit Paul’s remarks here as well, especially since he warns the Galatians not to **bite or devour one another lest** they also **be consumed by one another** (v. 15). The words **bite** and **devour** are often used to describe a pack of wild animals consuming their prey. Rather than serving **one another through love**, the members of the church have turned on each other like a ravenous pack of wild animals. Instead of building the community as God has tasked them, they are destroying fellowship. God has commanded us to **love** others as He has first loved us (1 John 4:10-11). This means that our **love** should never depend upon





what people can do for us or even whether they reciprocate our **love**. Our **love** should always stem from our desire to honor God and imitate His holy character. Therefore, may we put aside anything that might hinder our spiritual growth in Christ to walk in **love** just as He has called us.

Question  
# 7

How does a lack of love in a church hinder its progress and even ultimately destroy the body in the end?

## *Inspire*

In Christ, God has given us freedom. But that freedom doesn't mean we have a license to sin. On the contrary, the freedom God gives comes with great responsibility. Yet, God hasn't left us alone to fail as if we must fulfill these responsibilities on our own. He has given us everything we need if we would only walk with Him daily. He has equipped us for the task by sending His Spirit who will work to accomplish His will through us. The Spirit will help us to do the things which don't come naturally for us. Whereas most people have a self-centered, hedonistic approach to life, when we walk in the Spirit, love becomes our motivation for service. Therefore, may we demonstrate our love for the Lord in the way that we walk by serving one another through love.

## *Incorporate*

What opposition to the truth have you encountered? How does fellowship in the church help you to deal with that opposition?

In what ways do you serve through love? Particularly, how have you served this week? Is this something that you practice daily?

What are some of the distractions which prevent you from serving as much as you should? How can you overcome them in Christ?

*June 16, 2024*



# *Walk in the Spirit*

## *Galatians 5:16 -26*

Focal Verse:

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Galatians 5:16

## Introduce

A couple of years ago, I watched a teenage boy walk down the aisle in the sanctuary to sit by his grandparents after the service had already begun. As he walked, he had a very pronounced limp. Because of his athletic prowess and involvement in a variety of sports, I naturally assumed that he had sustained an injury during one of his games. Although I didn't get a chance to speak with this young man personally that Sunday, I mentioned his name to Dr. Brack Buckles during the week to inquire about the nature and extent of his injury. To my surprise, he indicated that the teen had not been injured at all. Rather, he walked with a limp because he was practicing a new fad known as "creasing."

This trend of "creasing," especially prevalent among teenage boys, developed because they sought to avoid getting creases in the high-dollar tennis shoes their parents had bought them! In a vain effort to retain the value of their shoes, they would walk only flat-footed rather than planting their heels and rolling



onto the balls of their feet as any normal person would. Perhaps, one day, these teenagers will learn an important lesson about the depreciation of goods! Like any new car once driven off the lot, these shoes automatically decrease in value once removed from the box and worn—no matter how much care one takes not to "crease" them.

In our study of Galatians 5:16-26, we can learn a valuable principle from this example which we can each apply to our lives—a principle not about depreciation, but about the intentionality or purposefulness of our walk. Even though we may chuckle at the ideas youth have at times, we must applaud this young man's dedication and focus to be constantly aware of the way he walked! He was intentional in the way that he walked in order to achieve a specific goal: not to crease his shoes and decrease their value!

As His followers, Christ wants us to be constantly aware of the way we live. In fact, He wants us to alter the way we walk so that it matches the pattern that He Himself set for us to follow. Because of the life-changing transformation which Christ

## *Introduce*

has produced within us, we should no longer walk in the flesh as unbelievers do, but instead we should allow His Spirit to guide us in producing the fruit of righteousness. Although we won't literally walk with a limp like this young man trying not to put creases in his shoes, we should still walk in such a way that others can visibly see a change in us as we seek to reflect the character of Christ!

Key  
Question

How would you evaluate your walk? Is the change evident to others?

### Galatians 5:16-18

#### **THE WAR FOR OUR WALK:**

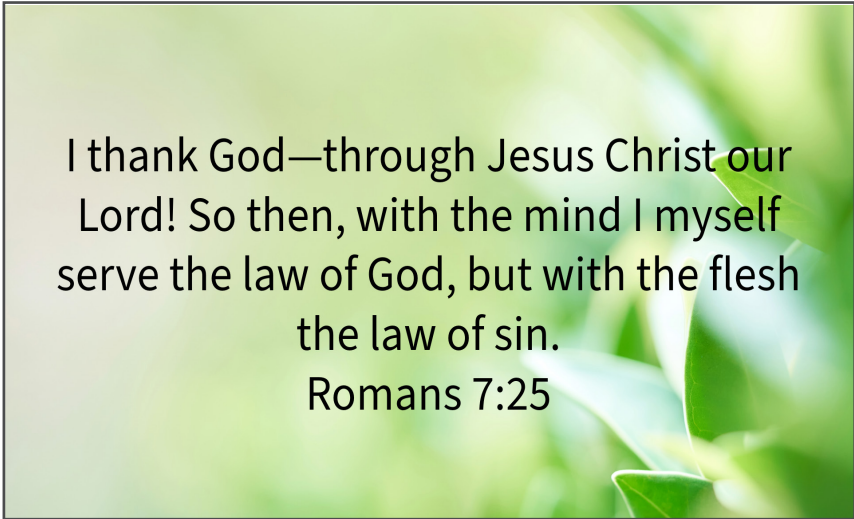
Having just described the division and fighting in the church caused by the false teachers (Gal 5:7-15), Paul now addresses an equally grave danger for the believer: the war between **the Spirit** and **the flesh**. In our study last week, we established that our freedom in Christ does not give us a license to sin. Instead, our freedom has called us to a higher standard that only Christ can fulfill by working through us, so He sent His **Spirit** to guide us into righteousness. In our focal verses this week, therefore, the Apostle spells out exactly what this freedom should look like in our lives by challenging us to **walk in the Spirit** and **not fulfill the lusts of the flesh** (v. 16).

Knowing that we are in this war, we must make a conscious effort to watch the way we **walk** because walking **in the Spirit** does not come naturally or easily for us. We

all struggle with it because we want control over our own destiny. But this desire to control our own destiny always leads to dysfunction and destruction.

Thus, Paul further explains the nature of this war: **the flesh lusts against Spirit** and vice versa (v. 17). In other words, **the flesh** and **Spirit** are incompatible. To live in **the flesh** means that we are incapable of doing **the things** that we **wish**—that is as believers, we cannot live in **the flesh** and still do **the things** which please and honor God! Elsewhere, Paul describes this war between **the flesh** and **Spirit** as the propensity to do the evil things that we should not be doing while failing to do the good things that we should be doing (Rom 7:18-25). In all, our **flesh** has a voracious appetite! We often allow our sinful desires (i.e., **lusts of the flesh**) to consume and control us. We have no hope to control them on our own. Only when we grant control of our lives to **the Spirit** can we control **the flesh** and **walk** victoriously in the manner which God expects.

Moreover, this pursuit of righteous living and good deeds does not stem from a legalistic adherence to **the law** as if it earns favor from God. Rather, it stems from



I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:25

## Instruct

devotion to **the Spirit** who enables us to do these good things as God intended. Thus, Paul can say, “**If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law**” (v. 18). What does he mean? If we allow **the Spirit** of God to control us, righteousness and good deeds will automatically and effortlessly flow through our lives. God will always lead us to become more like Him. This isn’t something we do legalistically as if we’re checking off a to-do list. Neither will we seek just to do the minimum requirements to eek by. God’s character is something that will shine through us because His **Spirit** is working in us. If we attempted to manifest God’s character by our own power through our good works (i.e., **under the law**), we would fail because our **flesh** is weak and incapable of doing these things on its own. Therefore, we must consciously **walk in the Spirit**, submitting to His guidance so that His character might be visible in us.

Question  
# 1

How do you see the war between the flesh and the Spirit in your own life? What conscious steps do you take to ensure that you walk daily in the Spirit and not the flesh?

## Galatians 5:19-21

### THE WORKS THAT LEAD TO FAILURE

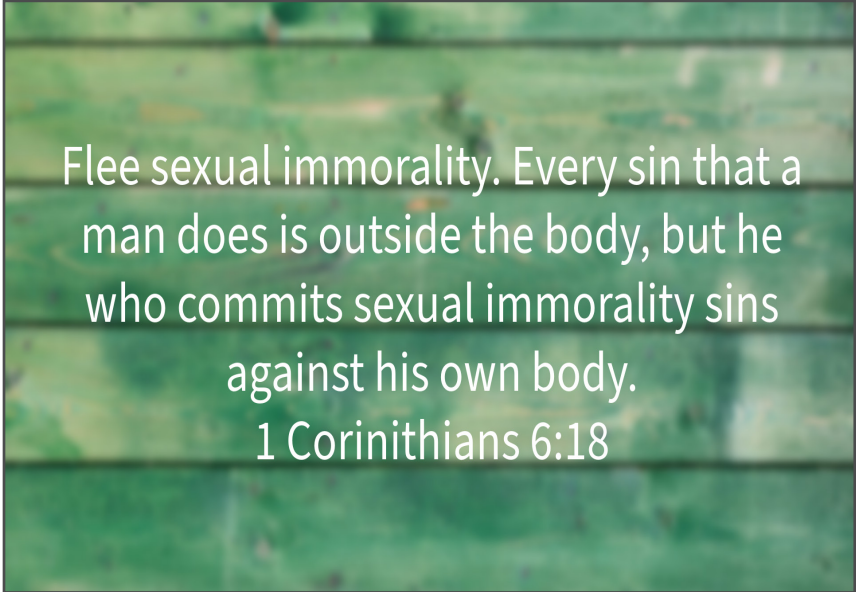
After broadly outlining the conflict which seeks to influence the way we **walk**, Paul describes specific character traits that we should *not* exhibit in our lives. He designates these negative traits as **works of the flesh** (v. 18). Although Paul provides quite an extensive list of these **works**, it is by no means comprehensive. It only serves as a starting point or template to help us recognize the **works** of which God disapproves. For this reason, those who **walk in the Spirit** must not participate in any of these sinful **works** at all. We must rid our lives of anything that is unrighteous and brings dishonor to God. To facilitate our discussion of such a daunting topic, we will combine Paul’s list into six broader categories into which most of these traits will fit.

First, those who **walk in the Spirit** must refrain from any type of sexual impropriety whether **adultery** or **fornication**. The latter word, **fornication**, encompasses every type of sexual sin, including, but not limited to **adultery**. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul admonishes us to “flee” all types of “sexual immorality.” Sexual sin comes in a variety of forms which society has tried to temper and many people no longer even regard as sinful: premarital sex, living together, **adultery**, divorce for

unbiblical reasons, self-gratification, and homosexuality or bisexuality. God does not approve of any type of sexual activity outside of a marriage between one biological man and one biological woman for life. Through His Spirit, we must maintain our purity!

But sexual sins include more than just the mere physical act. Jesus, for example, equates lust with **adultery** (Matt 5:27-28).

The impure thoughts which we entertain are equally as loathsome to God. Therefore, we must guard ourselves against dwelling on such lustful thoughts. We must guard our hearts and minds, exercising caution about what we watch on television or at the movies, what we view on the Internet, and what we read in print which can escalate fantasies spurring us to act impulsively and giving birth to sin (Jas 1:14-16). Through the Spirit, we must keep our thought-life pure and free from lust!



Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.  
1 Corinthians 6:18

Question  
# 2

Why is it so important to control our thought-life especially when it comes to sex?

Second, Paul urges us not to participate in any immoral or obscene activity whether **uncleanness** or **lewdness**. Even though these two characteristics also include sexual impropriety, they have a much broader scope and refer to any speech or activity that has a hint of immorality. The term **uncleanness**, for instance, refers to anything morally impure. This can include lying, gossiping, slandering others, and lacking integrity—saying one thing, but doing another (Matt 5:37; Jas 5:12).

Similarly, **lewdness** connotes having no moral restraint. In today's terminology, we would say that these people have no filter. Not only do they exhibit unfiltered speech where they brag about their sin, but they also parade and display it publicly for all to see; they have no conscience or qualms about it. **Lewdness**, therefore, can include wearing immodest and revealing clothing or wearing clothing with inappropriate messages, using crude and obscene language or gestures, having explicit



## Instruct

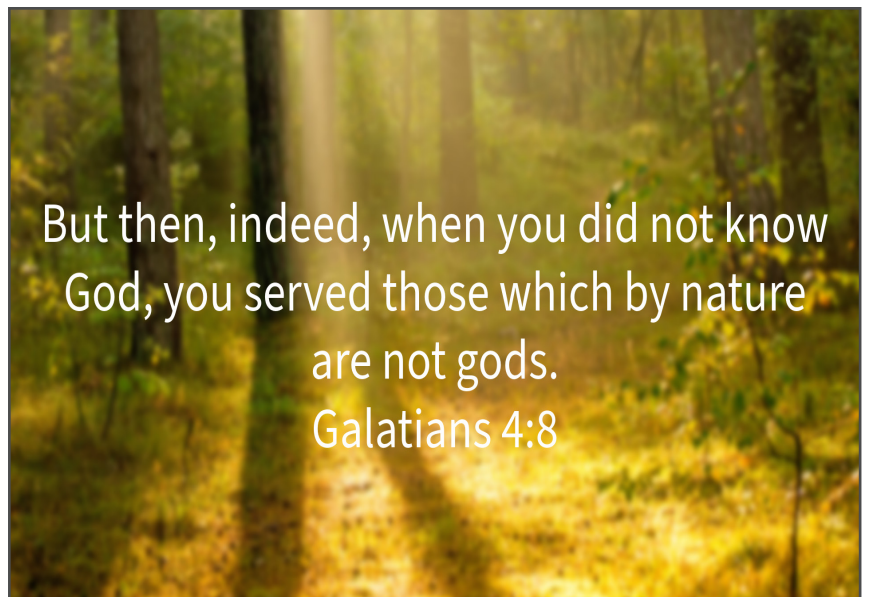
conversations about sexual activity, using innuendos, telling dirty jokes, talking about matters of family dysfunction publicly, airing personal grievances through social media, or even posting inappropriate or suggestive pictures on social media, texts, or e-mail. We must remember that what we do whether in private or public has ramifications on our testimony (1 Thess 5:22). We must exercise integrity to maintain a good witness for Christ rather than being charged with hypocrisy and bringing disgrace to His name.

Question  
# 3

In what way have you seen people become bolder in parading their sin in our society? How do you guard yourself from becoming desensitized to such sin?

Third, those who **walk in the Spirit** should not participate in any idolatrous activity whatsoever. In short, this means placing anything before our devotion to the Lord (v. 20). Like the previous categories of **uncleanness** and **lewdness, idolatry** pervades almost every aspect of our modern culture and many Christians engage in it without even knowing it. Most Christians identify the love of money as the chief source of **idolatry** in our culture (1 Tim 6:10), but it also can occur in the form of seeking fame or success as well as pursuing our careers, our families, relationships, and hobbies above our service to Christ. We need only briefly mention the concept of **idolatry** here because we dealt with it in detail when we discussed Galatians 4:8-20 on May 19.

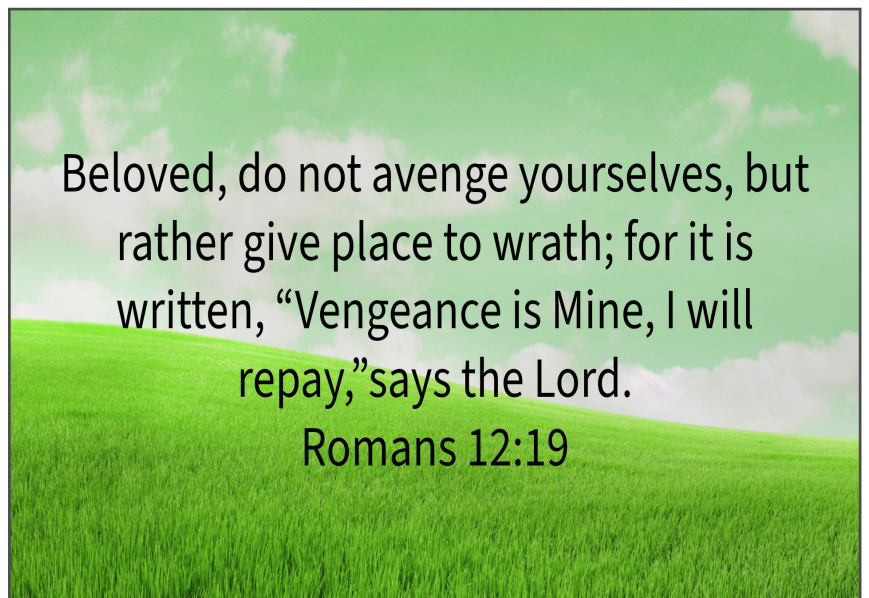
Fourth, Paul urges us not to engage in acts that express anger, lead to violence, cause division or disunity, or impair our thinking: **contentions, outbursts of wrath, dissensions, murders, and sorcery** (vv. 20-21). The word translated **sorcery**, for example, means to dispense drugs and is the one from which we get our word pharmacy. In this context, it refers to the use of drugs to poison or put a spell on



someone. Thus, it alludes to having an altered or impaired state of mind. Today, people use drugs or alcohol recreationally to get buzzed so that they “feel good” or have an ecstatic “experience.” However, we ought not ingest anything that chemically alters our bodies or impairs our minds because we are the temple of the Lord in whom His Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19).

The majority of the character traits in this category deal with uncontrolled anger and disunity. A quick perusal of the news will reveal that unbridled rage and anger plague our society. It can occur in the form of road rage, domestic violence, rioting as a form of “protest,” harassing people who don’t share the same beliefs, or threatening to assassinate or kill public officials with whom one disagrees. But it’s not just physical acts that constitute violence which God deprecates. Scripture compares both being angry without cause and hatred to murder (Matt 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15). As followers of Christ, we should rid ourselves of any vengeful, wrathful, and bitter thought and never participate in any act which leads to violence.

Fifth, we ought to avoid actions that incite greed: **jealousies**, **selfish ambitions**, and **envy** (vv. 20-21). The word **jealousies** literally means “to be zealous.” But when used negatively like this, it means to resent others and covet their success. The Ten Commandments expressly prohibit coveting whether it’s someone’s family, possessions, or success (Exod 20:17). **Envy** also pictures a grudging spirit that cannot tolerate another’s success. Frequently, **envy** manifests itself through verbal put downs—whether done in a joking or serious way. The phrase **selfish ambitions** describes someone who would do anything to have an advantage or get ahead. As Christians, our **ambition** should come from our desire to please the Lord and accomplish His will—not to make a name for ourselves.



Finally, believers should exercise self-control instead of participating in **drunkenness** or **revelries** (v. 21). Obviously, we ought not get drunk because we lose

## Instruct

control of our faculties and impair our judgment. Neither should believers participate in worldly parties or **revelries** because they typically promote over-indulgence and feature a host of immoral activities (1 Cor 15:11). When around such ungodliness, it becomes a struggle for many believers to resist the temptation to participate (1 Cor 15:33). Even if one doesn't participate, he or she becomes associated with the acts of debauchery that occur at those functions! Yet, a lack of self-control may manifest itself in a variety of other ways outside of worldly parties, including procrastination, overeating, reckless spending (impulse buying), and a number of addictions that people have today (gambling, hoarding, pornography, and drugs).

Question  
# 4

In what ways do you see a lack of self-control in our world today? How would you evaluate your own self-control?

To reiterate that he hasn't provided an exhaustive list of vices, Paul concludes by saying **and the like**. In other words, believers should not be engaged in these activities or anything **like** them! Those who **practice** these types of **things** without restraint, conviction, or any hint of transformation in their lives **will not inherit the kingdom of God**. Although believers may sin at times, they will no longer habitually live a lifestyle of sin, engaging repeatedly in the **things** that displease the Lord. Instead, they will live differently than the world. The way they **walk in the Spirit** then will be the evidence they have life, for they will bear His righteous fruit—a theme to which we will now turn our attention.

**THE WALK THAT PRODUCES FRUIT:**

Because **the Spirit** lives within us, we should produce **fruit** that is consistent with His character! Before we look at the nine **fruit of the Spirit** individually, notice that **fruit** is singular and not plural. In this way, it functions collectively. A Christian's life should reflect all nine of these characteristics at the same time. We can't pick and choose the traits we will bear and disregard the others! For instance, we can't have **love** and **peace**, but lack **self-control** and patience. Each of these nine characteristics should be displayed daily in our **walk**. This requires a conscious effort on our part to surrender to the Spirit's leadership daily. For only when we give control to Him can we have a fruitful life!

Paul begins the list with the single, most-important **fruit** in the Christian's life because it defines the character of God: **love** (see 1 John 4:16). As followers of Christ, we are called to **love** selflessly and sacrificially in all circumstances: we are to love God (Matt 22:37), **love** others (Matt 22:39), and even **love** our enemies (Matt 5:44; Rom 12:14)—which totally contradicts the world's view of what **love** ought to be.

Consequently, others will know that we belong to God because of the **love** that we have for one another (John 13:35). Moreover, we express our **love** for God through our faithfulness to Him (Gal 5:5) and our service to others (Gal 5:13). **Love**, therefore, is not merely something declared, but rather it is shown through our deeds. Consequently, we express our **love** through our obedience to Christ: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).



In addition, we ought to bear the **fruit** of both **joy** and **peace**. We have **joy** when we abide in Christ, knowing that He will meet our needs and equip us to serve Him (John 15:11). We also have **joy** because we know that God remains faithful to His

## Instruct

promises and one day Jesus will return to gather His church to live with Him for eternity (1 Thess 2:19). **Joy**, therefore, results naturally when we focus on praising and serving the Lord rather than our temporary circumstances. We can have **joy** during our trials (Jas 1:1-2), when others mistreat and cause us trouble (Phil 1:15-18), when we have disagreements and don't get our way in matters of personal preference (Phil 4:2-4), and when others begin a personal relationship with Christ (Luke 15:7, 10). As followers of Christ, we ought to have **joy** in every situation because we know that God desires the best for us and will care for us even better than we can care for ourselves.

Question  
# 5

In what ways do you have joy in your life?  
When times get tough, how do you maintain that sense of joy?

The **joy** of the Lord also produces **peace**. Biblically, the concept of **peace** signifies more than just the absence of physical conflict; it signifies the complete well-being of a person: spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. The primary way that **peace** is displayed in our lives is through our salvation. When we turn from our sins and give God priority in our lives, then we have **peace** with Him because His wrath is averted from our sin (Rom 5:1; John 3:36). Therefore, **peace** allows us to trust God, freeing us from worry (Matt 6:31-34; 1 Peter 5:7) and comforting us during any trial (Phil 4:7; 2 Cor 1:3-12).

The **peace** of God in our lives will also point others to Him. We are to live peacefully with others as far as possible on our part, sharing the life-changing gospel with them (Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). We shouldn't shy away from sharing the gospel for the sake of political correctness or under the guise of living at **peace** with them in an attempt to avoid conflict. This actually shows a lack of love when we refuse to share the truth with people. Instead, we must allow God to speak the truth in love through us in such a way that it encourages people and declares His love for them even while they are yet sinners (Rom 14:19).

Through the **Spirit**, we should also demonstrate patience (i.e., **longsuffering**) and **gentleness**. Above all, the salvation God offers through Jesus demonstrates His great patience toward us: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; see also Rom 2:4; 1 Tim 1:16). Because God has been patient toward us, we ought to also be patient with those around us; we ought

to have patience when teaching people who do not seem to pay attention to sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:2).

Not only should we exercise patience, but we should also act with **gentleness**. Today, **gentleness** is often equated with ineptness and weakness where one allows others to take advantage of him and walk over him without a fight. However, biblical **gentleness** corresponds more with humility and patience than being

passive. Jesus, who we would characterize as loving and gentle, certainly expressed His anger and displeasure against corruption in the temple (Matt 21:12-13), but He always corrected people with humility and patience. In our lives, **gentleness** is conveyed by having a teachable spirit that humbly listens and abides by God's Word (Jas 1:21), by restoring erring brothers and sisters in Christ with a humble spirit that seeks their repentance rather than by condemning them in judgment (Gal 6:1), and by debating with unbelieving opponents so that they might be receptive to hearing the truth (2 Tim 2:25). When we live with a **gentle** spirit in all humility, it will allow us to have more opportunities to share the gospel and see people transformed than if we have an arrogant and judgmental attitude.



Question  
# 6

How would you distinguish gentleness from being passive or weak?

As a follower of Christ, we should allow the **Spirit** to produce **kindness** and **goodness** in our lives. The concept of **kindness**, or compassion, can be somewhat difficult to define, but it signifies benevolent acts done in love through grace and mercy. The greatest act of **kindness**, therefore, came from God Himself who sent His Son to give His life so that we might have eternal life in Him: "The kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared" (Titus 3:4-7). In the same way, we have been called to display **kindness** through acts of forgiveness (Eph 4:32), by serving with others in love through the local church (1 Cor 13:4), and by confronting our opponents

## Instruct

through our testimony of God's grace and mercy (2 Cor 6:6).

The concept of **goodness** doesn't so much mean doing good things for people, but rather living in holiness and righteousness for God. The term "good" in the Bible carries with it the idea of moral **goodness** or ethical and holy living; the word was much more strongly associated with moral uprightness than today. In the **fruit of the Spirit** mentioned in Ephesians 5:9, Paul pairs it with the ethical traits of righteousness and truth. Thus, to exercise **goodness** means to that we are to live ethically and avoid any of **the works of the flesh**—not merely performing "good" deeds or acts of **kindness**.

Question  
# 7

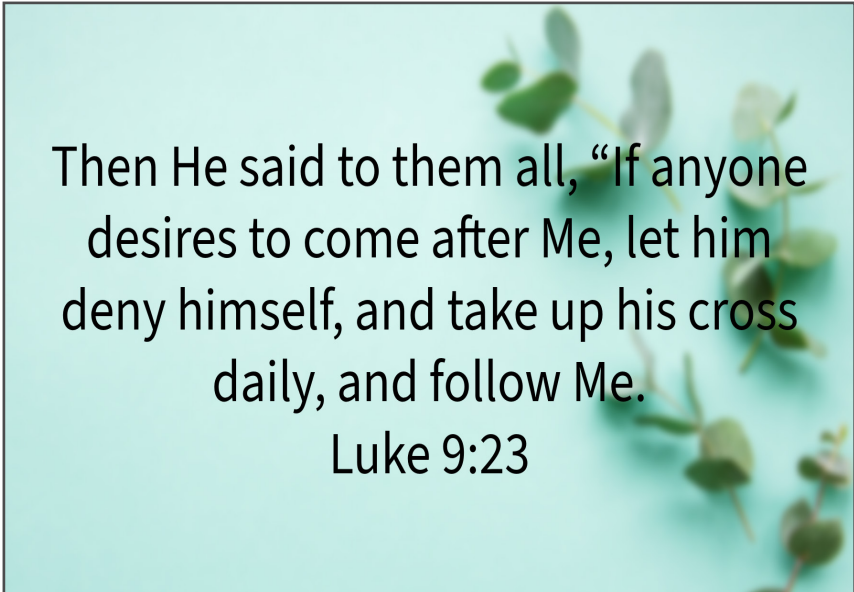
In what ways can we show kindness to people in the Spirit? What is the purpose of showing such kindness?

Finally, both **faithfulness** and **self-control** should characterize our lives in the **Spirit**. We've already established that **faithfulness** to God demonstrates our love for Him. Therefore, we ought to be faithful in every area of our lives: our obedience to His Word (John 14:15) and in our service as His stewards or caretakers. In 1 Corinthians 4:2, Paul writes, "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful." In addition, **faithfulness** is also revealed through our exercising of **self-control**. **Self-control** often means temperance or moderation such as not overindulging (i.e., 1 Cor 9:25), but it also signifies that we ought to abstain from any activity that brings dishonor to God. We ought to exercise **self-control** by participating in moral living and maintaining a good character that honors God (1 Peter 1:6), allowing the **Spirit** to guide our lives to abstain from debauchery or evil (Eph 5:18), resisting temptation (1 Cor 10:13), focusing our thoughts on righteousness (Phil 4:8-9), maintaining patience and ridding ourselves of anger (Prov 18:21; Jas 1:19), and finally by abstaining from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:4; 1 Cor 7:9). To have a fruitful life, we ought to maintain **self-control** to do the things God has called us to do and avoid those things which will harm our testimony and disrupt our fellowship with Him.

Question  
# 8

In what areas do you struggle with self-control? How can the Spirit help you to overcome those issues?

When we belong to Christ, we ought to **crucify the flesh with its desires and passions** (v. 24). In other words, we ought to die to our old way of life and live according to the transformed way that Christ expects; thus, we ought to get rid of anything that doesn't glorify God. We must participate only in the activities that bring honor to Him. In Romans 6:4, Paul explains it this way: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Dying to our old way of life means that we surrender control to **the Holy Spirit** and His desires now become our primary focus. Furthermore, we must realize that we depend upon Him for everything if we hope to bear **fruit** consistent with His character!



Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.  
Luke 9:23

As Paul closes this section, he reiterates that if we **live in the Spirit** then we should **walk in the Spirit** (v. 24). To **live in the Spirit** means that we have a relationship with God through Jesus (Eph 2:4). Because **the Holy Spirit** lives within us from the moment God saves us, we should start reflecting His character in how we act (i.e., **walk**). This transformed character becomes especially evident in the way that we treat one another in the church. Therefore, Paul urges us not to become **conceited** or **provoking and envying one another** (v. 25). Walking **in the Spirit** is not a competition. Since we all have access to **the same Spirit**, we are on equal footing in Christ. When we allow **the Spirit** to control us, no one is holier than anyone else; no one is superiorly gifted; and no one has an inside-track to obtain more favor from God. As a result, we should not have any "spiritual pride" above our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as if we have somehow accomplished these things on our own.

On the contrary, God has gifted us equally and given us the ability to live in holiness through His **Spirit** if only we would grant Him complete control. Problems arise, however, if we wrestle control away from **the Spirit** and venture to do things on



our own. Paul indeed addresses this mindset when he speaks of the need to correct those who have strayed as chapter 6 begins. Bearing **fruit** in a fallen world is tough enough without bringing a sense of “spiritual pride” into the equation. In fact, we cannot bear **fruit** on our own! We need God working through us. Thus, there is no room for any conceitedness or pride. Because God has saved each one of us through His mercy and allowed us to participate in His ministry by grace, we ought to work together to honor and glorify Him rather than compete with one another.

Question  
# 9

How do we sometimes see competition within the church? What does this say about our relationship to the Holy Spirit?

## *Inspire*

Today, some teenagers still participate in the fad known as “creasing.” They pay careful attention to the way they walk so they don’t crease their shoes. This practice of “creasing” requires determination, dedication, and focus! It doesn’t come naturally nor does it happen automatically. The person must be always on guard concerning how he walks. Christ has called us to this same determination, dedication, and focus as His followers. He wants us to pay careful attention to the way that we walk. He desires our walk imitate our heavenly Father’s holiness and bring honor to Him! This doesn’t come naturally for us. It’s not something that we automatically do when we have a relationship with Christ. It takes a concerted effort. We must consciously be aware of the way that we walk so that we don’t participate in the things of the flesh, but that we bear the fruit of the Spirit which pleases the Lord. God has given us His Spirit to help in this process. We must completely surrender control of our lives to Him so that we might bear the fruit of righteousness in our lives—something which we cannot do on our own. Therefore, let us walk in the Spirit daily so that we may serve Him with righteousness and integrity.

## *Incorporate*

What are the things which are perhaps hardest for you to overcome in this war between the Spirit and the flesh? How would being intentional in the way that you walk help you to succeed in overcoming them?

Which of the fruit of the Spirit can you most easily identify in your life? Which of the fruits is hardest for you to bear? How would being intentional in the way that you walk help you to be more fruitful in bearing all the different types?

How do you use the fruit in your life to testify to the goodness of the Lord, particularly about the salvation He gave you in Christ? Why must we not just visibly display the fruit in our lives, but tell others verbally how we are able to bear it?

*June 23, 2024*



# *Walk in Support*

*Galatians 6:1-5*

Focal Verse:

*"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."*

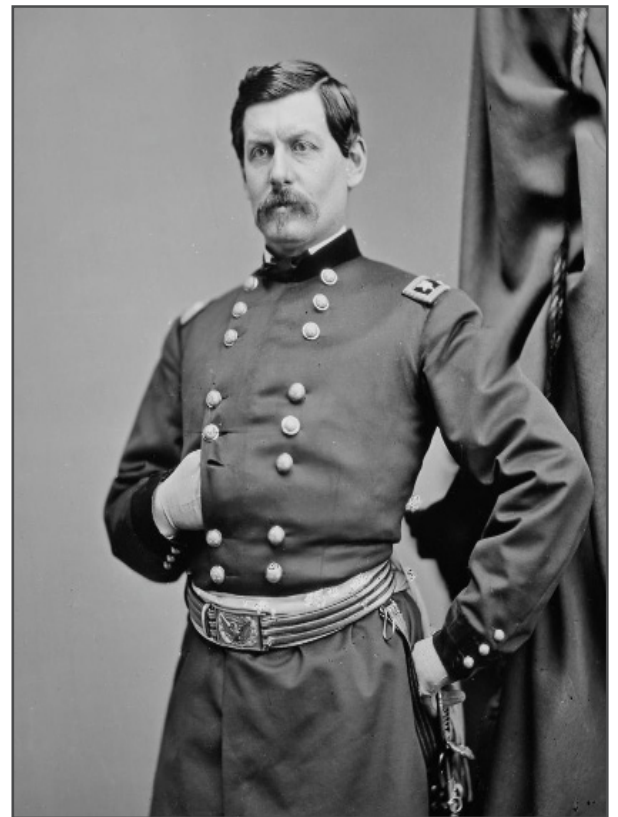
Galatians 6:2

## Introduce

When asked to recall generals who served during the Civil War, men like Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson usually come to mind. Most of us, however, probably know very little about a general named George B. McClellan—and for very good reason. Although he had a promising military career—gaining notoriety in a regiment of engineers who served during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and later as an instructor for a brief stint at West Point—McClellan, achieved very little during his tenure as a general in the Civil War for the Union. Under his command, he only had a single victory during the Battle of Philippi Virginia. His arrogance and hubris constantly got in the way! Therefore, he became more well-known for his inactivity, defiance of authority, and complaining. In fact, he disputed with the Commander-in-Chief on several occasions and never regarded anything as his fault. He always placed the blame on others.

McClellan thought of his abilities and intelligence in the military theater more highly than he ought. Keeping a diary of his experiences during the Mexican-American War, for example, he notes that he served only “with the high hopes . . . [of] acquiring a name and a reputation as a stepping stone to still greater eminence in some future and greater war.”\* During the Civil War, his arrogant aspirations become even more pronounced and repugnant. In a letter to his wife dated July 27, 1861—a month after his only victory in Virginia—McClellan pens, “I almost think that were I to win some small success now I could become Dictator [sic] or anything else that might please me.”\*\* He continues, “But nothing of that kind would please me—therefore I won’t be Dictator. Admirable self-denial!” Although this “self-denial” drips with arrogance and pride, his letter to his wife goes on to describe his failures. Yet, he expresses confidence that he has learned how to turn his fortunes around and motivate the troops to victory.

Because McClellan fancied himself a great tactician and strategist, he often had a different philosophy about how to win the war than others around him, including



## Introduce

President Abraham Lincoln. At times, this different philosophy caused confrontation with his superior and he often refused to follow Lincoln's direct orders—which later resulted in his firing. Now, let's contrast McClellan's hubris with Lincoln's humility. Once, Lincoln took a great risk to visit his general on the frontlines rather than summon him to Washington, but McClellan snubbed him. Retiring early to his quarters to sleep, McClellan refused to meet with the President! After the incident, Lincoln's friends took great offense and criticized the President for "allowing a mere General to treat him that way."\*\*\* In response Lincoln stated, "All I want out of General McClellan is a victory, and if to hold his horse will bring it, I will gladly hold his horse."

Abraham Lincoln didn't care about making a name for himself. He wasn't concerned with how history would view him. He simply wanted to do what was right; he wanted to do what was best for the country as a whole. Lincoln had the right mentality. He acted humbly even in the face of conflict. In Galatians 6:1-5, Paul encourages the church to exercise humility in everything. If a person needs a course correction in life, we must act with humility to point him to Christ who can restore him into a right relationship. We shouldn't walk puffed up with pride, thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. On the contrary, we should serve others humbly, walking together in Christ to bear one another's burdens as His people.

Key  
Question

In what areas have you become prideful at times?

## In Reference



\*George B. McClellan, *The Mexican War Diary of George B. McClellan*, ed. William Starr Myers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917), p. 17;

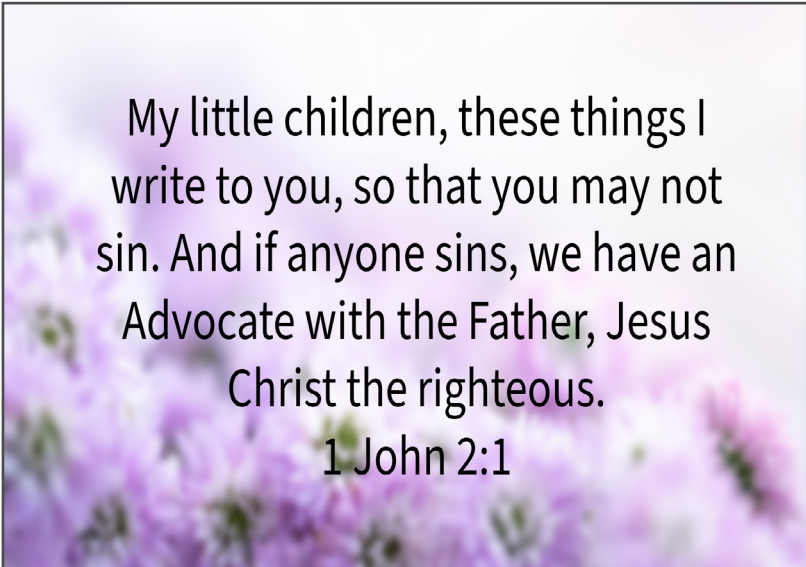
\*\*George B. McClellan, "Letter to Mary Ellen McClellan," available from [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com); \*\*\*Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the President* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1954), p. 88.

### THE PURPOSE OF OUR WALK:

In the previous chapter which we studied last week, Paul described how we should walk—that is what our lives should now look like since we have a relationship with Christ. No longer should we walk according to “the works of the flesh” in which we selfishly seek to fulfill our carnal desires. We should put to death this old way of thinking and living (Gal 5:24). Instead, we should walk in the Spirit where we seek to live righteously and do the things which please the Lord. However, we can’t please the Lord on our own power because our flesh is weak and has the propensity to sin. So, we must surrender control of our lives to His Holy Spirit who will work through us to accomplish His will and conform us to His image (Rom 12:1-2).

Indeed, we learned last week that the flesh is at war with the Spirit and we constantly struggle to live according to the holy standards God expects (Gal 5:17). When we fail to give the Holy Spirit full access and control of our lives, it is impossible for us to please God. We will find ourselves continually entangled in sin, needing correction. At times, therefore, we all need a course correction because we have gotten off-track (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2). We abandon our primary purpose of faithfully serving the Lord and become side-tracked in serving the desires of our own flesh. Ultimately, God Himself provides the course correction we need by convicting and disciplining us (Heb 12:5). But He has also tasked those in the church who are led by the Spirit to assist in correcting a wayward brother or sister—especially here in Galatia among those who have listened to the false teachers and strayed from the truth. Above all, we must take up this task of correcting others with great humility, knowing at some point we will all find ourselves in the need of repentance and forgiveness.

Therefore, Paul exhorts the church that **if anyone is overtaken in any trespass**, those **who are spiritual** should seek to **restore** him or her (v. 1). Before addressing the attitude



My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1

## Instruct

with which one should attempt to **restore** another person, we must first define what it means to be spiritual. The world, and sometimes those in the church, have a skewed view of what it means to be **spiritual**. Theoretically, one could have a vast knowledge of Scripture and be able to recite obscure facts, but still not be **spiritual**. One could even “pray” elaborate prayers many times a day and still not be **spiritual**. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders proved this when they interacted with Jesus (Matt 6:5)! While we should pray, study Scripture, give, and share the good news, none of these things in themselves “makes” us **spiritual**! They can serve as good indicators that one may be **spiritual**—for one should certainly practice these things if he or she has a relationship with Christ. But they don’t necessarily define us as being **spiritual**. So, what does Paul mean by **those who are spiritual**?

It is not primarily about what we “do,” but about Who we “follow.” To be **spiritual**, therefore, means nothing less than being completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit and led by Him! We could even translate the phrase **those who are spiritual** as **those who are** governed by the Spirit. When we are led by the Spirit, He will always influence what we do (Gal 5:25). In this sense, Who we serve influences what we do. As believers, however, we can have the Spirit living within us because we’re God’s children and still wrestle control away from Him. When we don’t walk with Him daily, we cannot say that we are **spiritual** because our own weak flesh will participate in fulfilling our own carnal desires.

If we aren’t walking with the Spirit daily, therefore, and attempt to “**restore**” someone, this is a recipe for disaster! Without the Spirit guiding us, we can easily become prideful rather than practice true restoration. Because of pride, we often want to show how “**spiritual**” we are by highlighting how “unspiritual” another is. In Galatians 5:26, Paul even warned us against becoming “conceited,” perhaps for this very reason! Without the Spirit guiding us, we also can become wrathful and vengeful instead of showing mercy which leads to repentance (Jas 1:20). When we walk in the Spirit, however, we will see things from God’s perspective which allows us to point others to restoration in Him if only they would receive it.

Question  
# 1

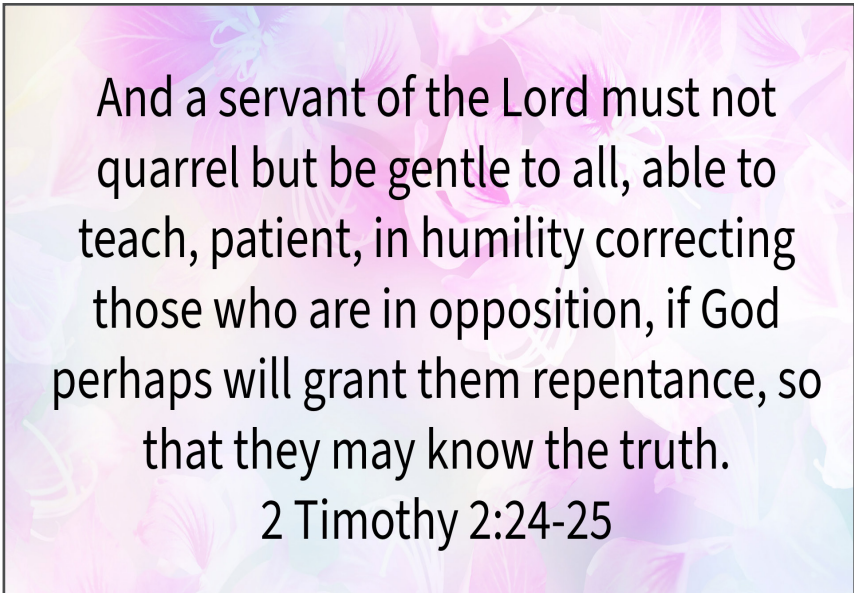
What character traits as led by the Spirit should be present in someone who attempts to restore a wayward person?

Restoration, not condemnation or judgment, should always be our goal when pointing out another's error. When we are led by the Spirit, we will always have the right attitude and the right motives to correct others in the church. Paul, therefore, states that we should **restore such a one** who has erred **in a spirit of gentleness**. Last week, we established that **gentleness** does not necessarily describe a passive pushover. On the contrary, it connotes more the idea of humility. While we should never use harsh or heavy-handed tactics, we can be direct and confront the sin head-on with the aid of the Spirit and Scripture. But we must always do so humbly, realizing that we too could very easily find ourselves in this same situation.

Taking our cues from Scripture as a whole, we can identify four principles that will help us practice humility when

God uses us to **restore** a fellow believer. First, we must follow Jesus' own prescription for enacting discipline within the church (Matt 18:15-20). When we see someone sinning (i.e., we have first-hand knowledge and not simply hearsay) or they have committed a sin against us personally, we should approach them individually in a one-on-one setting. We should never call them out publicly, including the use of social media, or attempt to confront them in a group setting. We should always try to rectify the situation privately at first. Private consultation often prevents people from becoming defensive and feeling as if they are being targeted by the group. It also alleviates the temptation of the group to pile on the person or, even worse, to gossip, forgetting the grace Christ as shown them.

Yet, Jesus still makes provision for taking a small group to correct a wayward believer. If a person refuses to listen, then take two or three witnesses as a testimony to the truthfulness of God's Word in reference to his or her specific situation. If that doesn't lead them to repentance, only then is it to be told to the church and the appropriate steps taken, such as removing them from the congregation (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20). Sin is serious. It's not something with which we can trifle. At the same time,



And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.

2 Timothy 2:24-25



## Instruct

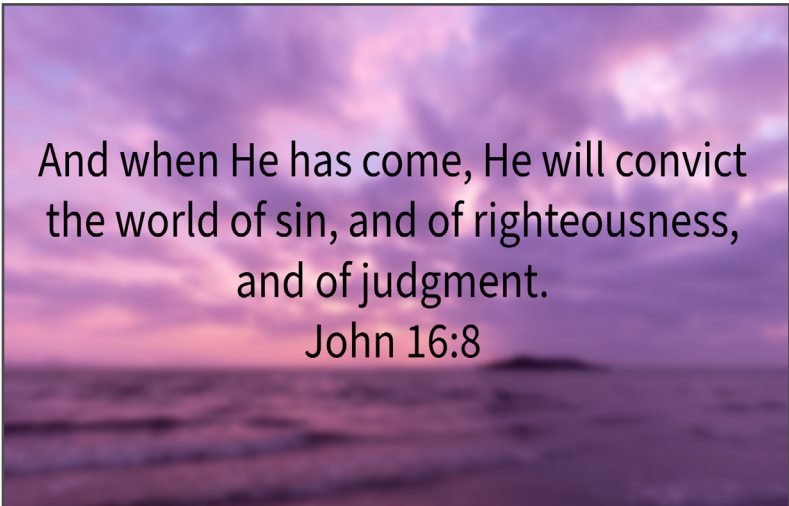
we need to point people to the grace and mercy that Christ offers when they seek restoration through repentance for their actions.

Question  
# 2

What are some of the dangers of confronting someone publicly, especially through social media, about their sin?

Second, we must be specific about the charges against the person and present evidence from Scripture that shows their error. We should not speak in generalities when it comes to confronting sin. Good parents, for example, point out the specific rules that their children have broken. If they didn't, the child would never know what must be corrected! God doesn't speak in generalities, but He has clearly set forth His expectations clearly in His Word. When a person sins, therefore, we must show him exactly what God's Word says on the issue. It doesn't matter whether or not we approve of an action; it doesn't matter what we think. It matters what God has said. Therefore, we always need to start with what God has said in Scripture. Then, it becomes the responsibility of the person to listen and follow the leadership of the Spirit!

This leads us to the third principle which will help us to practice **gentleness** or humility. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts as well as the one who performs the restoration (John 16:7-8). As believers, we only function as the conduit which funnels people to Scripture and points them to God. In His sovereignty, God has given mankind the freewill to respond to Him. He could force us, but He doesn't. He has given us the choice. This means that we can either accept or reject what He has said in His Word; thus, we can choose to remain disobedient. If God has given mankind that choice, we certainly cannot force people to repent. All we can do, and all God has called us to do, is show them in Scripture and urge them to listen to Him. Once we show them, we can intercede for them in prayer so that they might respond with repentance (Jas 5:16).



And when He has come, He will convict  
the world of sin, and of righteousness,  
and of judgment.

John 16:8

Finally, to exercise **gentleness** means that we approach the situation without

being judgmental. We must never compromise the truth of Scripture and always speak the truth in love, but we must do these things with the utmost humility (Eph 4:15). Unless we view the situation from God’s perspective with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can easily become vindictive, vengeful, and condescending, hoping that people “get what they deserve” rather than offering them the same grace that God has shown us. For this reason, Jesus warns us against having a judgmental attitude: “judge not lest you be judged” (Matt 7:1). This doesn’t mean that we cannot judge or differentiate between right and wrong; nor does it mean that we cannot speak against things which are clearly sinful (Matt 7:15-20). On the contrary, it means that we should not be judgmental or speak with an arrogant attitude. We must remember the grace and mercy God extended to us when we sinned!

Question  
# 3

When has God shown you grace when you’ve erred? How can you use this understanding to help you minister to others who are in error?

Although we share the same human frailties and weaknesses, we all have distinctive personalities and respond to situations differently—making each case of restoration somewhat unique. Therefore, we need discernment from the Holy Spirit to guide the entire process because the way we approach the situation may change depending upon the personality of the individual. Even though the tactic or method may change at times, the message must remain the same! For those who have children, you know that one form of communication or discipline may work for one, but not the other. Therefore, you must tailor the approach to fit the specific child and their specific situation without compromising the truth or downplaying the consequences of their actions. The same principle applies in the church. Only the Holy Spirit can help institute correction in which we lovingly communicate the truth without compromising God’s Word.

In addition to having **a spirit of gentleness**, we must also prepare ourselves both mentally and spiritually **lest we also be tempted**. However, Paul doesn’t cite any specifics here about how we should prepare. Commonsense tells us that we should prepare by praying and reading Scripture so that we ourselves don’t become distracted. Jesus, for instance, teaches us in the model prayer to ask for deliverance from distractions—whether temptation or trials (Matt 6:13). Even though we may not find the sin of person we are confronting tempting to us, we can still easily become distracted and carried

## Instruct

away by our own desires so that we too will need restoration if we're not careful (Jas 1:14). Sometimes seeking godly counsel from others can help us prepare (Prov 24:6; Heb 3:13). We should not use this as a forum to gossip, but rather as one which helps us to look biblically at the issue, see the circumstances from another perspective to point out things we might have missed, examine our own motives, and evaluate the approach that we intend to take to ensure it promotes grace and restoration.

Question  
# 4

How should you prepare yourself if God has called you to confront someone in sin?

## Galatians 6:2

### THE PRESCRIPTION FOR OUR WALK:

Next, Paul gives us the prescription for our walk that is how the Spirit will lead us to live if we have truly submitted ourselves under His authority. The Christian life focuses largely upon who we have become in Christ—that is our transformed character through which we display His righteousness. At the same time, our character determines what we do. In this sense, following Christ doesn't mean legalistically adhering to a set of rules, but living according to the leadership of the Spirit to fulfill an even higher God-given purpose to which He has called: **the law of Christ** (v. 2). Therefore, Paul commands us to **bear one another's burdens** which fulfills **the law of Christ**. The proper response to living within a family of believers—the church—is to meet **one another's** needs in whatever ways God has given us ability. Before we examine what it means to **bear one another's burdens**, we must first distinguish **the law of Christ** from the legalism of the false teachers.



Even though Paul doesn't explain exactly what he means by **the law of Christ**, the phrase does bear some striking similarities with Galatians 5:14: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **The law of Christ**, then, is declared through love which also coincides with the first fruit of the

Spirit which should be evident in our lives (Gal 5:22). Therefore, we demonstrate our love for God through our faithful obedience to Him, particularly by serving “others through love” (Gal 5:22). Because we love Him, we will want to honor God with all our being. We won’t see life as a series of rules that we must do just to get by. We will live sacrificially, doing whatever it takes to please our heavenly Father because we love Him with all our hearts (Deut 6:5). This includes living righteously and following the standards which He has set for us. Yet, we don’t follow them out of compulsion, but love (1 John 5:3).

Question  
# 5

What does the law of Christ look like in your life? How does it affect the things that you do?

Rather than being motivated by love as in the **law of Christ**, legalism motivates people to act selfishly to earn favor from God, invoking a spirit of competition among them as they jockey for position. In this case, the false teachers have wrongly promoted earning salvation by fulfilling the requirements of the law in addition to believing in Christ. Legalism also seeks to fulfill only the letter of the law which minimizes the responsibility of a person who then attempts to do the least just to get by. Thus, following Christ to them becomes a checklist rather than a lifestyle. As long as they have checked a box off their hypothetical list of dos and don’ts, they have satisfied the requirements. But as we have seen, Christ has shown us that no one can truly satisfy those requirements and we all need help in achieving our full potential through the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

To help us understand how legalism truly seeks to do only the minimum requirements to satisfy the law, think of Jesus’ discussion with a lawyer in Luke 10:25-35 who pompously asked what constitutes a neighbor. To the lawyer, the “legal” definition meant only loving those in close proximity to him, particularly those who share a similar ethnic and religious background. For the legalist, it definitely doesn’t include loving one’s enemies which Christ has commanded us to do (Matt 5:44). The **law of Christ** compels us to go beyond the mere appearance of outward requirements to express the depths of the love through which God has saved us. Life, consequently, is not just a series of boxes that we check off on a list. It entails following the Spirit who shows us a greater and higher way of fulfilling the law which God has set

## Instruct

forth. **The law of Christ**, therefore, stands in stark opposition to doing the minimum; in Christ, we should give our maximum devotion to Him!

With this background, we can begin to understand what it means to **fulfill the law of Christ**. As believers, we must live in a state of love. Love is not a mere emotion, but a way of life which influences everything we do. If we love God with all our hearts, His love will flow through our lives to everyone with whom we interact. It will especially be evident to our enemies

and wayward believers, like those in Galatia, who stand opposed to God's Word. Our love will compel us to show them their error and point them to forgiveness in Christ rather than maliciously attacking, slandering, and condemning them. Unfortunately, many believers treat "sinners" like the woman at the well in John 4 as an outcast. They have nothing to do with them publicly, but privately they gossip and scoff at them behind their backs instead of trying to lead them to repentance. Yet, God has called us to **bear one another's burdens!**

To **bear one another's burdens** means to share life together, particularly in helping one another mature in our faith. Typically, we equate **burdens** with physical needs (such as food, shelter, or clothing) or simply any area in which a person struggles. Certainly, God has called the church to help with such physical needs. But in this context, to **bear one another's burdens** refers to helping one another mature in our faith, especially those who have become sidetracked by sin or disillusioned by false teaching. To borrow a more modern expression, we must hold one another accountable for how we live out our faith in Christ!

You shall love the LORD your God with  
all your heart, with all your soul, and  
with all your strength.  
Deuteronomy 6:5

Question  
# 6

With whom in our church could you or even have you shared some of your spiritual struggles (temptations)? If not, why haven't you?

In our Western mindset, we often find accountability difficult because we compartmentalize our lives and prize our privacy above anything else. Moreover, we tend to view things individualistically instead of collectively. Accountability requires vulnerability because our worst deeds will be exposed for others to see. In other words, we must let those led by the Spirit in the church know where we struggle so they can walk with us! This doesn't mean that we broadcast our failures to everyone in a Bible study or prayer meeting or even post them online, but rather we should seek mature individuals in the church who exhibit evidence of being led by the Spirit to help us resist temptation and get back on track. God has designed the church to function in this way!

Accountability also requires trust. We must trust that those in the church truly have our best interests at heart and want to help us grow in our faith. To do so, we must have the love of Christ in our hearts and be unified in our purpose. It takes tremendous effort to grow together in our faith! It doesn't just happen naturally.

For example, it requires us to be available despite our busy schedules. We must make ourselves available to God as His instruments whom He uses to meet the need. We must also make ourselves available to the one dealing with temptation and sin, being able to offer support at any time he or she becomes distracted. Even more importantly, it requires time for us to study God's Word to prepare ourselves to counsel. We can't offer sage, godly advice if we haven't studied it!



Question  
# 7

What are some things that hinder people from practicing accountability (either giving or receiving)?

### Galatians 6:3-5

#### **THE PERSPECTIVE IN OUR WALK:**

To conclude, Paul describes the perspective that we must maintain in our walk. Even though we are called to **bear one another's burdens**, we are still responsible for our own actions. Bearing **one another's burdens** doesn't relieve us from personal responsibility! We must pull our own weight. We can't sit back like freeloaders and let others do all the work! We are still responsible for our own personal growth! For this reason, Paul advises **each one** to **examine his own work** (v. 4). When we walk together as His people, it brings joy because we all have done our part to mature in faith. Consequently, Paul admonishes **each** to **bear his own load**. God has gifted us to work together as one body, but He has given us different tasks and responsibilities to ensure the body matures as it ought (Eph 4:11-13).

To illustrate, let's take a common complaint we hear in ministry: "I'm not getting fed." Unless the church teaches something contradictory to Scripture or it has no opportunities for discipleship whatsoever, then this is not a valid complaint! Even if no opportunities existed within the church for discipleship, believers still have no excuse for not getting fed. They should be "fed" through their own personal quiet time. What these individuals actually mean is: "I chose not to eat." We must walk hand-in-hand with new believers, teaching them to read, study, and apply God's Word correctly. For every member of the church, we should also provide the necessary tools and avenues to mature together corporately. But if we're not growing, then ultimately it's our responsibility. We must take ownership of our own choices! Those who don't are like a baby who makes a face and refuses to eat. The parent has provided the food, but the child is ultimately responsible for eating it!



We live in a world that fails to take responsibility and shifts the blame to others. People, their environment, their circumstances, their upbringing, and even God! If

we don't see growth in our lives personally or in the church (either spiritual or numerical), then we must ask ourselves: how have I contributed? What have I done about it? We should not pass the buck, looking around at others in the church; we should not even blame the culture and the godlessness that has become so prevalent. We must first look at ourselves and determine how well we have done our work in Christ.

The same goes when we seek to **restore** another person. We must first examine our own lives to determine how faithful we have been to fulfill God's calling before we can ever point others to restoration in Him. To critique a situation correctly, we must be in right standing with the Lord which means that we must submit to the leadership of the Spirit. Before ever seeking to restore someone else engaging in sin, we need to evaluate our own lives (Matt 7:3-5). We can only obtain a true and accurate evaluation if we submit to the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, we can skew our assessment by thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (v. 3). Only when we have the proper perspective can we then help others find restoration in Christ.

## *Inspire*

No one typically likes to be on the end of receiving end of correction and few people truly like to confront others who need correction. And even fewer people attempt to correct others in a biblical way through love and humility with the purpose of restoration. In the introduction, we saw how General McClellan dealt with criticism and correction. He remained intensely self-centered, narcissistic, arrogant, and defiant, always blaming others for his failures and never taking responsibility for his actions. On the other hand, President Lincoln led by example. He was humble and would do anything to preserve the Union, leading to victory. President Lincoln graciously, and repeatedly, tried to help General McClellan understand his faults and change his ways, but to no avail. God has called us as His people to exercise this same type of patience and humility when dealing with someone in sin. He has called us to show them their faults by pointing them to His Word in hopes that they might repent and be restored! Consequently, God has called us to walk alongside one another in support, so that we may all grow in our faith together by living under the leadership of His Spirit who helps us practice righteousness!



## *Incorporate*

Why is it difficult to practice church discipline today? What should we do to overcome these problems?

At what time in your life has someone had to correct you? What did you learn from those times? How can this help you to restore others?

What things are you doing to contribute to your own personal spiritual growth as well as the church's collectively?

*June 30, 2024*



# *Watch What You Sow*

## *Galatians 6:6-10*

Focal Verse:

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

Galatians 6:9

## Introduce

Although used infrequently today, we may have heard the expression “sowing wild oats” which refers to a period in one’s life before settling down usually characterized by experimentation, impulsiveness, recklessness, and sometimes even rebellion. During this period, people make questionable decisions and engage in risky behavior. Our society has come to view this period almost as a rite of passage; they treat it cavalierly as a phase in life through which everyone must go. In some sense, society embraces this model of experimentation and even encourages it so that people can find who they are and what they like. Rarely, however, do they think of the consequences of their actions and the long-term effects they can have on their lives.

When we hear this phrase “sowing wild oats,” we tend to think of a person who parties excessively or engages in sexual promiscuity. But it truly can include so much more. We could broadly say, for instance, that “sowing wild oats” entails a lack of self-control and discipline—like a college student who stays up too late and misses class or fails to complete an assignment on time because his extracurricular activities overshadow his academics. On the other hand, we could also regard it as a lack of responsibility where one puts a premium on pleasure rather than on productivity which stems from hard work and integrity. Still, we could also see it as a period in which one fails to choose wisely with whom he associates. After all, Scripture decries, “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor 15:33).



We must exercise caution and not surrender to society’s view of treating this time of rebellion as a rite of passage for two reasons. First, every action has a consequence. Some consequences become manifest immediately while others may become evident years down the road—whether in health problems, broken relationships, and the like. Some consequences may not even become fully known until we depart this world in death. But whatever we sow, as Paul says, we shall reap (Gal 6:7). Second, bad habits are difficult to break—and, when involving sin, they are impossible to break apart from

## Introduce

a transformative relationship with Christ. Even then, those bad habits will continue to rear their head from time to time in our human weakness unless we continually seek Christ.

Many people never truly mature in life beyond this period and they continue to sow their wild oats. People may “settle down” according to the world’s idea, but not according to God’s. They have a hard time letting go of their fleshly or sinful habits because they have not given themselves to Christ. Or, in the case of believers, they have wrestled control away from Christ in some particular areas of their lives. For this reason, Paul warns against sowing these wild oats, so to speak. He wants us to watch what we sow, so he specifies the consequences of our actions plainly! Those who sow in the flesh, that is sinfully, will reap the consequences of corruption; those who sow in the Spirit, that is to live righteously according to God’s standard, will reap the benefits of eternal life. Rather than seek opportunity to live sinfully according to our flesh, Paul encourages us to live righteously and do good. Let’s not develop bad habits by participating society’s call to experiment and following one’s desires, but let’s spur one another to good works in Christ.

Key  
Question

How closely do you pay attention to what you sow?

### Galatians 6:6

#### **SHARE THE GOOD:**

With verse 6, Paul seems to jump to an entirely new subject when he addresses the relationship between student and teacher in the church apparently centered on the former's support of the latter. He encourages the one **who is taught the word to share in all good things with him who teaches**. Through this command, Paul seems to encourage the congregation to support full-time teachers financially so that they might focus on their ministry without becoming distracted by the pressures of the world. As a result, this becomes another way that the church can "bear one another's burdens"—one of the themes which we examined last week. In order to focus on their God-given task of equipping the church for the work of ministry, these full-time teachers need a way to take care of the needs of their own families. Therefore, the church should share in the responsibility of meeting their needs as these full-time teachers serve to meet the needs of the church.

As we know from other passages (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31; Eph 4:11-13), God has designated certain individuals to serve in specific roles in the church to equip the saints for ministry. In this case, teachers equip people to know God's Word, apply it with the help of the Spirit, identify any error in preaching or practice, and confront anyone in sin to lead him or her to repentance and restoration (Gal 6:1). While God has called some to serve bi-vocationally in this capacity, even as Paul himself did (1 Thess 2:4-12), He has called others to serve in ministry full-time in order to advance the cause of the gospel, keeping the membership unified in purpose and sound in doctrine. For those in full-time positions, God has given the church the responsibility of providing a living wage so these individuals can concentrate on their God-given task. Over the years, consequently, many people have tended to identify this command to **share all good**

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"  
Ephesians 4:11-12

## Instruct

**things** primarily with material possessions or financial support in the form of a salary for full-time teachers called by the Lord to instruct His people.

In fact, Scripture does establish a precedent for financially supporting those whom God has called into full-time service. In the Old Testament, the Levites—who served as priests mediating between God and the people—received a tenth of the produce of the land to support their full-time ministry because they neither received any land as an inheritance nor farmed any land so that they might focus solely on the role which God had assigned them: pointing the people to a relationship with Him (Num 18:21-24). Still, God required them to return a tithe to Him out of what they earned (Num 18:25-32). The New Testament also shares this same concern to support those whom God has called into full-time ministry in the church financially (1 Cor 9:3-14; 1 Tim 5:17-18). Since God has decreed such provision in His Word, full-time ministers should concentrate on proclaiming the gospel so as not to “hinder” the work of Christ (1 Cor 9:12).

### Question # 1

What is the benefit of having full-time ministers in the church who equip the saints for the work of ministry?

But here in Galatians 6:6, Paul does not qualify **all good things** as monetary or material support alone. We certainly cannot exclude this application based upon the context nor can we limit it to this financial aspect only. **All good things** can also include the blessings which come with teaching the truth, particularly in watching people progress in the maturity of their faith as they sit under proper instruction. One of the most rewarding things in which a teacher can **share**, therefore, is seeing his students succeed in life. Ultimately, every disciple or student is responsible for the choices he or she makes, his or her own spiritual journey in life, and his or her own personal growth! A disengaged, inactive, and inattentive student has no one to blame for his lack of progress but himself. Those who teach **the word**, however, play a vital role in supplementing that journey and inspiring their students to persevere and remain faithful as they both grow together!

Furthermore, teachers provide additional insight into the biblical text, assist in comprehension, and offer differing perspectives on application (not meaning) as the

Holy Spirit leads. Consequently, teachers find great joy in seeing how God uses them to equip their students for service and the lasting impact it makes on the community and the culture. Nothing else could garner any greater reward than when students take seriously their God-given responsibility to grow and serve. It gives great satisfaction for teachers to see the fruit that their ministries bear through the lives of those whom they have taught faithfully—just like a proud parent! Although godly teachers do not teach to receive recognition, but to glorify the Lord, take time to share with them how they have impacted your life and helped you on your spiritual journey so that you may rejoice together.

Question  
# 2

Who is a godly teacher that has impacted upon your life? In what ways did he or she impact you?

**Those who are taught the word** also share in the work! When God created the world, He gave mankind the responsibility to work. Work in this context is a privilege and a **good** thing. But the introduction of sin into the world corrupted our work like everything else and brought with it major challenges—literally thorns and thistles (Gen 3:17-18). Nevertheless, God has called us all to work together as the church. It's a **good** thing we **share** in this venture together! It's not solely the responsibility of the staff or lay teachers to allow God to use them to grow the church or share the gospel while the "student" sits back and watches (1 Cor 3:5-7). On the contrary, teachers of **the word** equip all the saints—every member—to engage in its work. God has tasked every one of us to share in ministry. He hasn't called anyone to sit on the sidelines and watch! Working together through the Lord creates a sense of camaraderie and belonging that gives us a sense of purpose and accomplishment when we see what He does through us collectively.



For each one shall bear his own load.  
Galatians 6:5

Hence, just as Paul reminded us last week “each one shall bear his own load” (Gal 6:5).

In our Western mindset, culture has come to the place where it wrongly believes teachers shoulder all the responsibility to do all the work of educating. In this errant model, the student sits passively like a *tabula rasa* or blank slate, soaking in the information just to repeat it on a test. Rather than learning and applying it in their lives, they forget it once they have reproduced it. Ask any of our public or private school teachers who receive the blame for their students’ performances, especially the ones who under-perform! Only a few students and their parents truly understand that they **share** the responsibility in both learning and practicing the correct principles being taught.

In the church, this idea of sharing the work together is imperative if we want to grow spiritually and numerically as God intended (1 Cor 3:5-15). We can’t learn all we need to know about God and His Word in only an hour or two of corporate Bible study each week. We must immerse ourselves in it at home and put it into practice in our daily routines! But many people who call themselves followers of Christ only rely on their time at church to educate themselves and prepare themselves to face the challenges of living in a sinful world. That corporate time certainly helps, but they must also shoulder the responsibility of both learning and applying it so that they don’t lose focus and become distracted in their service. Above all, we must work together to promote Christ, proclaim His Word, and produce mature disciples who invest in the lives of others and see it as a **good** thing in which we all **share** responsibility!

### Question # 3

In what ways do you see the effects of disciples or students failing to understand their role and responsibility in learning in our world today as related to the church?



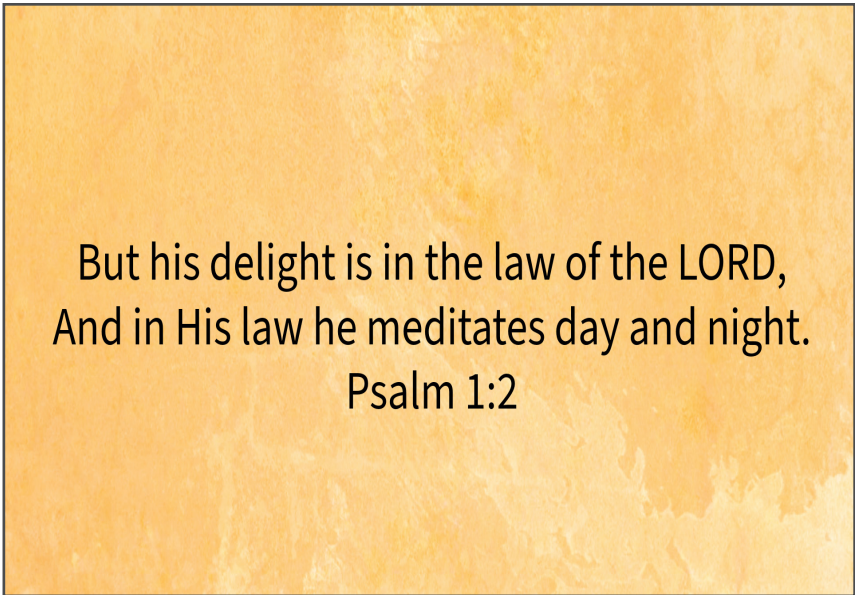
## Galatians 6:7-9

### **SOW IN SPIRIT:**

Paul's remarks may seem disjointed here as he transitions from the obligation of the student to the outcome of our choices. But they're not! They continue the same point he began making in Galatians 6:5 that everyone who follows Christ has an obligation to participate in his or her own spiritual development. Studying God's Word together as a community is part of the **good things** which He has called us to **share**. We should never view our study of Scripture as inconvenient, burdensome, or tiresome because of its repetitiveness. Rather, it is always a **good** thing which should elicit joy. For this very reason, Psalm 1:2 notes this about the righteous: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." As much as studying Scripture is a blessing, it is even more of a blessing when we apply it in our lives so that it produces transformation and has a positive impact on the culture around us. In this context, therefore, a teacher can present the opportunity for a student to learn; he can encourage, inspire, and model for a student as they both grow and serve together. But ultimately the student is responsible for the outcome because only he can choose whether to apply what he has learned.

Before continuing our discussion, we must offer a word of caution. These verses collectively refer to the

application of Scripture in our lives, the effect it has upon our actions, and the consequences we will face based on our choice about how we live. They do not talk about tithing or giving financially to the church as some wrongly apply them. Verse 8 makes this clear. To speak of sowing **in the flesh** means to succumb to our desires and live according to the pattern of this world which stands in direct conflict to the righteousness by which God has called us to live. Such conduct only leads to **corruption** and death. This stands in contrast to sowing **in the Spirit** which means that



But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
Psalm 1:2

we abide by the principles which God has called us and live according to the righteous pattern which He has shown us in His Word and through His Son. In fact, Galatians 5 makes this contrast explicit. In 5:17, Paul writes, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

### Question # 4

What is the danger of removing these verses from their context and using them to speak about tithing/giving rather than the way that we conduct ourselves?

For this reason, Paul warns us against being **deceived** since we have the responsibility to practice the **good things** we have been **taught** (v. 7). Scripture isn't something we memorize to use only as trivia when someone quizzes us. Indeed, God did design Scripture to be memorized, but He also wants us to put it into practice! We deceive ourselves when we think we know better than God and we can navigate our lives on our own without His help, trusting in our own **flesh** (see Gal 6:3). Many believers would never admit this sentiment aloud, but they live this way. They have intellectual knowledge about God and His Word, but they don't apply it. They don't live by its principles. They may come to church and even attend Bible study regularly; they may hear Scripture with their physical ears. But it has no impact upon them; it produces no growth and no transformation! Such people are **deceived** into believing they are in good standing with the Lord even though they do not abide in His Word (John 15:7).

This disconnect between principle and practice leads Paul to assert that **God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap**. In other words, God is not fooled by our phony piety or religiosity. When we say one thing and do another, we are the ones deceived, not God. The Greek word translated **mocked** pictures someone turning up his nose in contempt. Relatively few people who identify themselves as believers would ever literally stand and shake their fist in God's face in defiance. Yet, we show such contempt when we do not adhere to His Word and live righteously as He has commanded! We treat God with disrespect. Since God cannot be fooled, we will face the consequences for our actions; we will receive a just “reward” for the kind of acts in which we participate. If we engage in the things of the **flesh**, for example, we will receive the penalty of corruption. In other words, our works will be judged and

they won't last (1 Cor 3:15). This does not mean that the consequences of our evil deeds won't last a lifetime, but that our works do not have lasting value! On the other hand, those who engage in the things of **the Spirit** will receive a lasting, imperishable reward (1 Cor 3:12-14).

Question  
# 5

In what ways do people deceive themselves?  
How does this deception specifically show  
contempt for God?

If we casually glance over this idea of reaping or harvesting here in verse 8, we can miss the very point which Paul wishes to emphasize. For those of us who garden, or any rationally-minded person for that matter, we know that we cannot plant a tomato seed and expect to get a cucumber vine or a rose plant. It's illogical and against nature. Whatever kind of seed we plant will yield a harvest consistent with its biological nature. In the same way, whatever kind of deed we do will yield a harvest consistent with the "nature" of the action—whether **flesh** or **Spirit**. Thus, we cannot partake in evil and expect good results! This meaning is plain from the text.

However, we often overlook, or at least fail to emphasize, one important aspect about sowing that we can learn from this verse. As a present active verb, to **sow** means that we take an active part! It doesn't just happen to us. We're not just an innocent bystander. We caused the calamity to befall ourselves because we actively participated in the evil deed! We brought the consequences upon ourselves based on the choices we made! The same principle applies also to the converse when we do good. We must be intentional as led by the Spirit to do good deed as these things simply don't come naturally to us, but we will receive a blessing when we faithfully serve the Lord.

We have an epidemic in our culture where people want to blame others for their actions and



refuse to accept any personal responsibility. They see themselves as the victims of their environment, their circumstances, and other people. Yet, they find themselves in this position because they participated in sowing **corruption** through the evil deeds of **the flesh**. To determine why things may turn out the way they do, therefore, we must look at an individual's actions and the fruit they produce to see if they resemble **the Spirit** or **the flesh** as defined by Scripture. We cannot simply go by the results at times. We must determine the source of their actions along with the outcome.

While participating in the deeds of **the flesh** does always incur negative consequences and draws judgment from God Himself, we must exercise caution in how we apply this principle to situations in life. Even though this principle is always true, it does not apply to every situation. Sometimes, for instance, people walk in **the Spirit** and do good deeds, but they still have "bad" things happen to them simply because we live in a fallen world. We see this in the life of Job when calamity struck his household even though the text describes him as "blameless" or having done nothing to deserve it (Job 1:1). Therefore, we must have the proper perspective when evaluating why things happen.

Along those same lines, sometimes judgment seems delayed and people who commit evil deeds appear to get away with them. When we participate in the evil activities of **the flesh**, however, we should never expect a good outcome. We must always take responsibility for what has happened and repent! God's justice will eventually become manifest to all. For those who participate in evil, they will receive the due penalty for their deeds at the time and place God so chooses. For those who obediently walk in the Spirit, God will vindicate them even though "bad" things may happen to them in this life when He so chooses; He vindicated Job! Either way, we all will **reap what we sow**, so we better pay attention to how we live.

Question  
# 6

When have you looked at the "outcome" of a situation and judged it prematurely only to find out that you hadn't examined the source? What is the danger of looking at the "results" or "outcomes" only?

To illustrate this principle, think of it in terms of a harvest. In the natural growth of plants, it takes a while before we can harvest the product. The plants don't produce fruit overnight! It takes several months for the plants to sprout, to mature, to bloom, to bear fruit, and even to ripen! Just as the results of a physical harvest aren't immediate, so also the sowing and reaping of our actions may not always have immediate repercussions. It takes time to see the consequences of our actions! Paul emphasizes this very aspect in verse 9 when he reveals that in due season we shall reap what we have sown.

Sometimes we are caught with our hand in the proverbial cookie jar and receive immediate punishment for our sin. At other times, however, it may look as if we can get away with our evil deeds. No one knows about them and some people may have even turned a blind eye to them, allowing evil seemingly to triumph temporarily. Eventually, as Numbers 32:23 reveals, our sins



will find us out! God doesn't give a timeframe here in which we will **reap** what we **sow**, but we ultimately know that no action will ever escape His notice and go unpunished whether evil or unrewarded if righteous. God, not man, is judge and He will always be the one who brings the harvest to fruition according to His time!

This delay in judgment, whether punishment or reward, might deceive some into thinking that they have nothing about which to worry. But this harkens back to Paul's original assertion in verse 7 that **God is not mocked**. God knows and sees everything! Therefore, we need to remind ourselves of this principle daily and be cognizant of the things which we **sow** right now—for we **will reap what we sow** one day. One day, either here on earth or in the future in the courtroom of heaven, judgment will come. What kinds of things are you sowing in the way that you live? What can you expect to **reap** as you stand before the Lord for the actions in which you have participated here on earth?

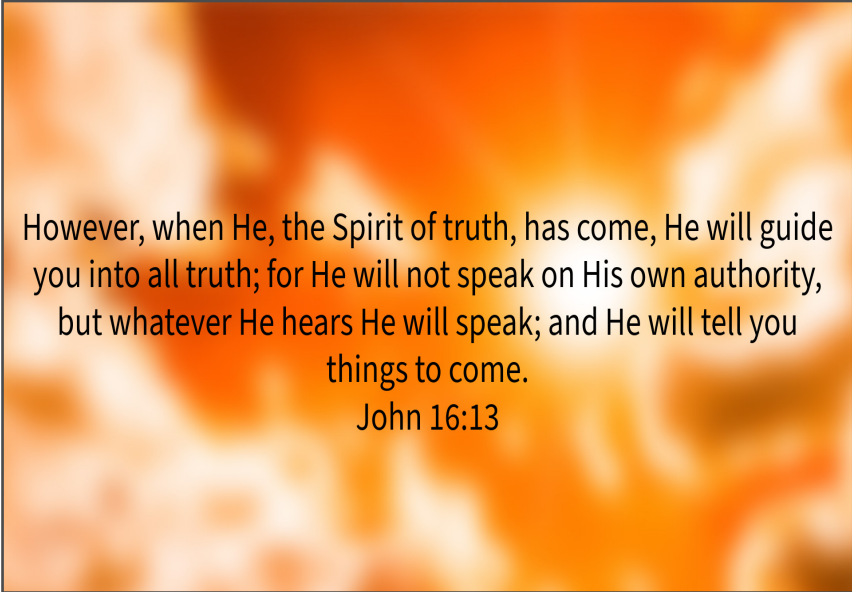
### Galatians 6:10

#### **SEEK TO DO GOOD:**

Paul now turns to encourage us further in the types of things we **sow** by challenging us **not to grow weary while doing good** (v. 9). He concludes his exhortation in this letter by urging us to **do good to all as we have opportunity, especially those of the household of faith** (v. 10). We should actively seek opportunities to extend the love God has shown us to others by doing **good** works. We should particularly help those in our church family as God gives **opportunity** to bear one another's burdens, but also those in the secular community so that we might point them to a relationship with Christ. To address this command adequately and do it justice is almost impossible because it takes so many forms so that God has even given us a whole book—the Bible—to guide us in this principle.

Yet, we must approach this topic cautiously to ensure that our actions are indeed **good** and beneficial for the situation. This command requires two things of us in order to apply it correctly in our lives and in the church: 1) we must be guided by **the Spirit** according to the Word of God and 2) we must be observant and actively look for opportunities to engage in **good** even though in **the Spirit** this should come naturally to us. Being guided by **the Holy Spirit** in this endeavor is essential because some of the things that we may envision as "**good**" might not truly be beneficial or the most appropriate way to help. We must, therefore, make sure that the "**good**" we propose to do aligns with the will of God, is consistent with His Word, and appropriate for the situation. For this reason, Paul reminds us of the two ways which govern how we act: **the flesh** and **the Spirit!**

The world often attempts to **do** things which they define as compassionate and **good** simply through their own willpower and confidence in their **flesh**. But most often this only serves to exacerbate the problem! For example, giving someone access to clean needles to



However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

John 16:13

partake in illegal, harmful drugs is deemed compassionate by some in the world because it can reduce the spread of some blood-borne diseases like AIDS and theoretically reduce the drain on medical and police resources. However, this is misguided compassion and not **good** in the eyes of the Lord because it does nothing to resolve the true problem and transform the bad habit. In fact, it can lead to a whole host of other problems! Although this may seem like an extreme example, we must position ourselves in the church to **do good** which actually reflects God's will and helps people rather than enabling them to continue their lifestyle of sin. This will look very different from the way **the flesh** thinks; therefore, we must surrender to **the Spirit** for His guidance!

Question  
# 7

What are some things that the world does that appears to show “compassion,” but are not truly “good” according to what God expects?

Nevertheless, participating in **good** deeds led by the Spirit should come as second nature to believers in the church. We can never go wrong communicating the gospel and pointing others to Christ through the Scripture. We can never err by interceding for one another in prayer. We should always look for opportunities to meet the physical needs of others when they arise as God gives us the abilities and resources. Proverbs 3:27 puts this into perspective when it bids us, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.” To be in a position to do these things, we must be intimately connected to the body of Christ and led by the Spirit. Let us be active in doing **good** and take great care in **what we sow**, knowing that we **will reap** accordingly.

Often, we may look around at the world and feel that it's hopeless to do **good**. Evil and wickedness appear to triumph. People are persecuted and mocked for doing **good** and standing on God's Word. No one may even notice the **good** we do for them and rarely do they ever show their appreciation. But God sees and knows! God will one day reward. We don't do things to please man or to seek an earthly reward (Matt 6:1-4). We do **good** things because we love God and He's called us to extend that love not only to those in the church, but even to our enemies! Jesus loved every one of us in such a way that He was obedient even unto death on the cross. Let's follow His example and never **grow weary of doing good**.

In addition to the phrase “sowing wild oats,” our culture also has the expression, “I’m paying the price.” We usually hear this phrase when someone overexerts himself athletically or does something inconsistent with his age. The next day we generally will say, “I’m paying the price for that workout,” meaning that every muscle in our body aches. Both of these expressions capture the meaning of what Paul wants to communicate here in Galatians: we will reap what we sow. We will pay the price for our actions! As a result, we must be careful what we sow because the consequences or reward will be consistent with our actions. If we participate in evil, we will face punishment. If we participate in doing good, God will reward us just as He has promised. So, let us pay attention to what we sow!



## *Incorporate*

How do you share in all good things with the teachers and ministers which God has placed in this congregation? How do you share in the work, too?

What kinds of things do you sow in your life? What kind of eternal impact might these things have?

How do you seek to do good? How do you keep yourself from growing weary in the pursuit of doing good?

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First Baptist Church of Fort Worth

For more information  
or for questions  
please contact  
[mikeneal@fbcfw.org](mailto:mikeneal@fbcfw.org)

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5001 NE Loop 820 • Fort Worth, TX • 76137  
(817) 485-7711 • [info@fbcfw.org](mailto:info@fbcfw.org)