

# Galatians

## Unbound, Unchained, Unbroken

### Week 12 | Galatians 6:1–10

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

You can listen to an audio version of the Engage God Daily at [bit.ly/EngageGodDaily](https://bit.ly/EngageGodDaily).

If you've spent much time around youth team sports like basketball, soccer, or lacrosse, you've probably encountered the "ball hog" phenomena. On a team of young kids, sometimes a talented player will emerge. If they get the ball, they're going to score. So, they always want the ball.

The coaches can yell "pass the ball!" until they are blue in the face, but it doesn't matter. After all, this star player is getting results and helping win games. Why shouldn't they get the ball? What coaches understand is that having one player hog the ball will cost you games, especially as kids get older and the competition gets tougher. The opposing team will quickly identify "the shooter," shut them down, and dominate the field.

It may sound obvious, but in a team sport, games aren't won by a single individual. They are won by teams, with everyone doing their part and supporting one another. Victory comes when each player does their individual best but also works as a team.

In our passage in Galatians this week, Paul is going to remind us that following Jesus is not just a personal journey; it's also a team sport. We can't grow and thrive as a Christ-follower without our fellow believers. Jesus saves individuals, but intends for them to act as part of his body. Jesus secured our victory over sin and death, but we need each other to live out that victory. We've got to both walk in the Spirit as individuals, and rely on our spiritual family. This week, we'll consider how.

## Day 1

Last week was such a pivotal week in our study of Galatians, so let's review.

Paul made much of a believer's freedom in Christ. In Christ, both Gentiles and Jews are free from the Mosaic law. Paul has been adamant that people can neither enter into nor maintain their relationship with God by following the law. The righteous live by faith (3:11). The object

of that faith is Jesus Christ. Paul doesn't want these believers to fear that true Christ-followers will abuse this freedom and fall apart morally, because to be in Christ means to also be free from sin's control and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

As those who will inherit the kingdom, people who walk in step with the Spirit act like kingdom-people. They are people of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (5:22–23). They don't live to indulge desires that dishonor the Father, or harm themselves and others. The heirs of God desire to be led by the Spirit, so that they can live out their love for God and others. The Spirit's leading isn't just for our own personal growth and spiritual health. The fruit he bears in us allows us to humbly serve and love those around us.

This week we'll focus on how a Spirit-led life affects our relationships with other believers. What do you see in the passage about supporting and relying on each other as brothers and sisters in Christ? How do we sow together to reap the Spirit's harvest?

## Read

### Galatians 6:1–10 (NIV)

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup> for each one should carry their own load. <sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.*

*<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

*<sup>8</sup> Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup> Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

- According to Scot McKnight, what we find in this section of Galatians “is an interplay between two themes: personal responsibility and mutual accountability—both emerging from the context of communal strife.”<sup>1</sup> Where do you see those themes in the verses you just read?

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<sup>1</sup> Scot McKnight, [Galatians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 282.

- There are phrases that might be familiar in this passage, even if you've never read it before. What do you think Paul means by "carrying each other's burdens" and "reaping what you sow"?

## Respond

As we go through the week, reflect on your relationships with other Christ-followers. Commit to praying for your spiritual brothers and sisters. As a local expression of the body of Christ, we want to live out Paul's vision of bearing one another's burdens, supporting those who instruct us, recognizing our accountability before God, and of doing good to all people, especially those in our spiritual family.

As we explore the implications of this vision, let's discuss the "how's" and "why's" with one another, so that as we individually walk in step with the Spirit, we overcome distance and divisions so that we are also walking in step with one another in genuine love. Let this passage inspire you to have real, authentic, meaningful conversations with others.

Finally, as we move from studying Paul's words to applying them, let's commit to pray for one another. By name, pray for some of your brothers and sisters in Christ right now. Praise God for them, and pray blessings over them. Who is one person you could encourage this week? How will you do it? Could you commit to encouraging them regularly? Invite the Spirit's presence into that relationship as you seek greater love and authenticity.

## Day 2

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

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At the end of the movie, *iRobot*, Sonny, the self-aware robot who helped save the day, asks what he's supposed to do next. With the ability to make independent decisions, Sonny is not sure what his future should be. His human companion answers this way, "I think you'll have to find your way like the rest of us, Sonny. That's what Dr. Lanning [Sonny's creator] would've wanted. That's what it means to be free."

As we've learned in our study of Galatians, that's not a definition of freedom that Paul would endorse. Our Creator hasn't left us to find our own way. As the ultimate source of love and goodness, he created us to be in a relationship with him, to flourish under his care and guidance.

That's the beautiful thing about the freedom we experience in Christ. It's not just freedom *from*; it's a freedom *to*. We're free from the oppressive powers of sin and darkness and free to live differently — exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. By the Spirit we can enjoy our adoption into God's family and escape our self-indulgent desires that can destroy. We can be free to love. That's been Paul's message here in Galatians.

Yet, Christians still struggle with sin. Sometimes we sin in devastating ways that not only hurt us, but hurt others. How should our brothers and sisters react when this happens? Paul helps answer that question in these verses.

## Read

### Galatians 6:1–5

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup> Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup> for each one should carry their own load.*

- In verse 2 Paul says to carry each other's burdens, and in verse 5 he says everyone should carry their own load. How can both be true?

## Reflect

To understand what's going on in these verses, we need to remember that Paul is writing to a church in conflict. Recall that Paul's opponents were coercing Gentile believers to be circumcised and treating them as unworthy of being included in God's family (5:2, 2:12). Paul warned these believers against biting and devouring one another (5:15) and becoming conceited or provoking and envying each other (5:26).

Imagine being in a divided church where one group of people saw themselves as superior and everybody else as hopeless sinners. As they walked around in the self-righteous smugness, this group assumed that anyone whose life was falling apart probably deserved it. Will this community bear the fruit of the Spirit? No way. Paul is helping a divided church learn to walk in the Spirit, not just as individuals, but as a faith community.

Rather than standing over and looking down on another, Paul is instructing believers to care for each other. When someone is struggling with sin, we don't turn our backs on them and thank God that it's not us. The body should help restore our brothers and sisters trapped by sin — gently, in a spirit of humility. Recall that gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. And so is love and patience, kindness and goodness. Part of fulfilling the law of Christ is to live in the love of the Spirit. As Paul has already pointed out, part of it is loving our neighbor as ourselves (5:14). He stated that fulfilling that command is to fulfil the whole law. This means carrying another's burdens when someone is too weak to carry them alone.

We've all seen people broken down by sins they've committed. These situations can be complicated and messy — often those who sin have also been sinned against. We want to love, support, and care for one another while being honest about the destructive environment that sin creates. There really aren't victimless crimes. Addictions never just hurt the addict, they

hurt family and friends as well. Chronic fits of anger scar the people who have to learn to walk on egg shells. We can't help but affect those around us when we embrace sin. That's why it's so important that the body of Christ watches out for each other.

Sin is a brutal master and human beings can be blind to its captive force. People seem to have an almost endless capacity for self-delusion and can justify almost any behavior. Let's care enough to gently and humbly speak truth into each other's lives. We can have compassion and empathy for those who are struggling without trivializing or minimizing their sin. It isn't loving to see someone headed off a cliff and not try to warn them. Ideally, they will hear our call, feel our genuine concern, and turn back. We can embrace them and walk with them back to Jesus.

There is another danger when trivialize sin — we risk falling into temptation ourselves. It doesn't matter if we are five or eighty-five, it's easier to justify doing the wrong thing when other people are doing it. Healthy faith communities walk in step with the Spirit, together.

Paul warns against deception and asks people to test their own actions. Be self-aware and honest with yourself and God. "When we engage in this kind of self-evaluation, we are renewed in our commitment to our own God-given mission: that's what it means *for each one should carry his own load* (v. 5).<sup>2</sup> We need to take responsibility for our own thoughts and actions and invite the Spirit's conviction.

When we are quick to confess wrongdoing and receive God's forgiveness, the Spirit will restore us to the right path. But we shouldn't dance close to the edge between what's acceptable and what's questionable, or be so arrogant that we think we can never fall. Paul is speaking against unholy pride here. The antidote? Pray, seek guidance, spend time with the Father, and walk in step with the Spirit.

## Respond

Families look out for each other, and that should be especially true with our spiritual family.

Think about it this way. How likely are you to confess a sin that you're struggling with? Imagine doing so in your small group or in front of a couple of Christian friends. If they are prideful, self-righteous, or quick to condemn, there's a zero percent chance you ask for their help. If they are critical and disagreeable, you're going to keep hiding those struggles behind a facade. You'll never share one another's burdens.

Now think about what would make you feel safe and comfortable enough to share your sin struggles with other believers? How can you become that kind of person — the kind of person that you'd ask to help bear your burdens? Let's ask the Spirit to make us into those kinds of people, so we can create environments where people can grow in Christlikeness.

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<sup>2</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [Galatians](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Ga 6:3–5.

In Christ Fellowship's [Re:Generation](#) groups, people are invited to share their struggles and receive instruction from God's Word, and help, encouragement, and accountability from the group. If you feel trapped in a sin struggle, Re:Gen may be just what you need.

## Day 3

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

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If you plant wheat, you expect wheat to grow. If you plant corn, you expect to see some ears of corn at harvest time. There may be some weeds that crop up, but for the most part, it's simple. Whatever seed you sow is what you're going to harvest.

Paul uses the illustration of planting and harvesting in the verses we're looking at today to make a spiritual point. We have accountability with God through reaping what we sow.

### Read

#### Galatians 6:6–8

*<sup>6</sup>Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.*

*<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*

*<sup>8</sup>Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

### Reflect

If you are finding it difficult to trace Paul's flow of thought in these verses, you're not alone. Verse 6 sticks out, and some scholars include it with the verses we looked at yesterday, and some with the paragraph we just read today.

Scot McKnight describes the flow like this: "living in the freedom of the Spirit precludes conceit (5:26), so spiritual people should bear one another's burdens in humility (6:1–5), bear one another's burdens to the degree that they financially support their teachers (v. 6), and recognize that God will hold them accountable for how they have treated others (vv. 6–10)."<sup>3</sup>

N.T. Wright explains it this way, "the picture of 'sowing' and 'harvesting'—a development in Paul's mind, perhaps, from the fruit trees at the end of chapter 5—seems to be tied also to the

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<sup>3</sup> Scot McKnight, [Galatians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 283.

giving of money... If church members 'sow' to the Spirit, by giving solid practical support to the church's ministry, especially in teaching and preaching, they themselves will in due course bring in a harvest.<sup>4</sup>

However you want to divide these verses, we can agree that healthy, vibrant faith communities want to grow. They want to reach people in their communities and invite them into the family. Because of this desire, they are willing to invest in the ministry of their church to see a greater harvest for the kingdom. That includes providing financially for those who have taken on the mantle to lead and instruct. Kingdom people invest in kingdom growth. We should give generously to our local church.

Of course sowing and reaping have broader application. Paul warns that God will not be mocked. In other words, you can't sow to the flesh and expect God to give you the harvest of the Spirit. God is generous beyond belief, but he won't be made a fool of. Yet how many times do we bitterly complain and blame God for our troubles, when in reality, we are reaping what we've sown. God forgives and restores those who confess and repent, but nevertheless, often the most loving thing he can do is allow us to face the consequences of our actions. Good parents know this because it's one way we learn and grow.

But here is the good news, because of Jesus's sacrifice for us on the cross and his victory over the forces of sin and death, we don't have to sow to the flesh! We can choose to sow to the Spirit and reap the harvest of his work in our lives.

In the context of the Galatians, that no doubt includes building relationships with others so that we are not just led by the Spirit as individuals, but as whole faith communities. Imagine the impact we could have on our community if we were a church characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. A place that opened up space for the presence of Jesus. A community where people felt known and loved and where people came and found freedom from their anxieties and addictions. What if that was the kind of harvest we could reap? It starts with each of us walking in step with the Spirit.

Of course the ultimate harvest is eternal life. In the Bible this phrase isn't just about duration (living forever) but about the quality of this forever-life. It's an eternity with Jesus where our restoration is complete. It's experiencing God's presence without the veil of fallenness between us. It's a life with one another, where we enjoy being the family of God for all eternity as heirs of God.

Paul isn't saying that we earn eternal life for ourselves by what we sow. He's contrasting two ways of being — either in the flesh or in the Spirit. Those who are in Christ have received the Spirit. It's to him they sow.

## Respond

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Wright, [\*Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians\*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 78.

Walter Hansen vividly explains the harvest that the Galatian Christians were reaping:

“Those who are sowing to please the sinful nature are destroying relationships with others: they are biting, devouring, provoking and envying others (5:15, 26). In their arrogance they are seeking to pressure everyone to conform to the same ethnic customs and traditions. Churches are being torn apart and destroyed by ethnic rivalries and social competition. Sowing to please the sinful nature will always result in a harvest of destruction, a destruction of relationships with others and with God.<sup>5</sup>”

The Galatians aren't alone. Churches throughout the centuries have met with similar fates. How can the American church in general, and our local church in particular reap a different harvest? How can we sow to the Spirit? What role do we need to play as individuals?

## Day 4

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

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In our desire to apply the Bible to our lives, we can forget about the original people to whom it was written. I'm convinced that we lose something when we do that. Paul was writing to real people — men and women who had their share of blessings and hardships, but who ultimately responded to the good news about Jesus and committed their lives to him. At last they knew about the God who loved them and gave himself for them. They served a king unlike Caesar, who only wanted their good. They knew what it meant to feel known and loved by a God who related to them as Father. But their faith was in jeopardy because of false teaching and angry disputes.

The verses we are talking about this week, are not vague abstractions about sowing and reaping. Paul's whole letter has been aimed at helping the Galatian church recover the true gospel and live together as family.

Ideally, families love and take care of one another, but it can be hard. We can be tempted to give up on one another and decide it's just not worth it. I can imagine many of the Galatian Christians doing just that. But as we move from their context to our own, we will find Paul's exhortation in these verses as relevant now as it was then.

## Read

### Galatians 6:9–10

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<sup>5</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Ga 6:7–8.

<sup>9</sup> *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

- Do you ever find yourself weary in doing good? How so? Can you trace the source of that weariness?

I read several commentaries to prepare the Engage God Daily for you. Sometimes I come across a section that is so right on that I think, “there’s no way I could explain that better.” I found one of those this week, so I thought I’d just share it with you in full.

Walter Hansen beautifully explains this passage:

“Growth in our relationships does not happen automatically; growth takes effort. Hard work is required if broken relationships are to be rebuilt. In these two verses Paul simply encourages Christians to keep on working at building their relationships: *Let us not become weary in doing good* (v. 9). To say that Paul’s emphasis on faith means that he was against works is obviously an inaccurate interpretation. Although he warned against relying on the works of the law as the basis of blessing (3:10–14), he clearly taught that true faith expresses itself through love (5:6) and in the hard work of serving one another (5:13) and carrying each other’s burdens (6:2).”

“One of the greatest obstacles to rebuilding broken relationships is simply fatigue. We can easily lose heart and run out of strength when we come up against the same problems over and over again as we deal with others. Even Paul sounds discouraged when he talks about his efforts to rebuild his relationship with the Galatian believers: ‘I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you’ (4:11). Paul recognized that fatigue and discouragement might cause Christians to throw in the servant’s towel and quit. So he presents two incentives to keep us from giving up when we grow weary of serving others in love. First, he assures us of a reward for doing good: *at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up* (v. 9). Sometimes the harvest is experienced in this life. When we sow acts of love, we reap a harvest of love in return. When we give generously and sacrificially to the needs of others, we reap a harvest of gratitude as those needs are met. When we sow the seed of God’s Word in needy lives, we experience the joy of response. But we must remember that reaping a harvest almost never happens on the same day as sowing the seed. We may not even see a harvest in this life from what we have sown. Nevertheless, we must never give up, because we know that *at the proper time* our Master will return and reward those who have been faithful servants.”<sup>6</sup>

## Respond

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<sup>6</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [Galatians](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Ga 6:9–10.

Let's not give up! The Spirit will give us peace and endurance when we are tempted. He will work in, through, and with us to produce a harvest that will last into eternity! Ask him to encourage and strengthen you in your good work today.

If you're feeling weary, share that burden with someone else, someone who will pray for you and encourage you. You're not sowing alone!

## Day 5

*Lisa Scheffler, author*

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Happy Friday!

Let's reflect on what we've learned this week, invite the Spirit to transform us and commit to living out his guidance.

### Reflect

Take another look at [Galatians 6:1-10](#).

- What are Paul's main points in this passage? How has it helped you walk in the Spirit as an individual? What about as the body of Christ?
- What has stayed with you personally as you've studied this passage?

### Connect

I can't believe it, but next week will be our last week in Galatians. I pray that the Spirit has spoken to you through this amazing book!

Since we're close to wrapping up, I'm inviting you to read through the whole letter today in one sitting. It's only seven pages in my Bible. Read it without stopping. Let Paul take you on a journey through the highs and the lows of his relationship with the Galatians. Hear his plea to believe the gospel and put your faith completely in what Jesus has done for you.

See how our loving Father has brought us into his family. Think about what Paul's words to the Galatians means for our relationships with other believers today.

When you're finished, think about your overall impressions. What stands out to you? What words or phrases stay with you?

It's so tempting to finish a study like this and quickly move on to the next thing. But then we miss the sweetness of savoring God's Word.

## Respond

Now slow down, pray over these prompts, and ask the Spirit to direct you.

Ask the Father:

- What do you want me to take away from what I've studied this week? What do you want me to remember and keep present with me?
- What do you want me to do with the truth of your Word? What is the one, next, right step that you want me to take?
- What are you teaching me about you? About who you are and the relationship I have with you? How can I worship and love you based on what you've revealed?

Continue to pray for the fruit of the Spirit in your life and in the life of the church. Let's not get weary in doing good! Let's build stronger relationships through meaningful conversations. Let's be all in — united to make a difference in our community. Pray for hearts to change, starting with your own.

## Next week

Next week we'll wrap up Galatians and further reflect on all we've learned. Don't miss it!