

FAMILY LIFE

Galatians 6

Key Truth

The Church is a family where we care for one another.

When we marry, we not only marry our spouse, but we marry into our spouse's family. In my case I married into a wonderful family.

We were immediately blessed by Cathy's family in that we were able to stay in her grandmother's duplex rent free for the first month of our married life before hitting the road with Continental Singers and Orchestra in the summer of 1984.

But being part of the family also includes serving the family. Christy, my brother-in-laws wife, is the queen of knicknacks. I painfully remember carting dozens and dozens of boxes of knicknacks up three flights of stairs when they moved to Dallas. That day also included a near death experience as Kevin and I wrestled a sofa up those three flights of stairs and almost went over the banister.

On another occasion, Cathy and I helped move her aunt from California to North Carolina with a toddler and newborn in tow.

Marrying into a new family comes with blessings and responsibilities.

So also for us as Christians.

When we trust in Christ for salvation we are born again into a new family, the Church. As family, we are called to care for one another. Previously, in chapter 5, the Apostle Paul encouraged believers in the Galatian churches to walk in the Spirit that their churches might be filled with His fruit. As he concludes his letter in chapter 6, Paul encourages us to care for one another in the church family and to persevere in doing good to all, but especially to the church family.

GALATIANS 6:1–18 (ESV)

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

In verses 1-5 Paul describes two types of family members for whom we are care: 1) the *stumbling* and 2) the *struggling*. Then he warns those unwilling to care for the family.

WE ARE TO CARE FOR THE *STUMBLING* AND THE *STRUGGLING* (6:1-5)

The Stumbling (6:1)

Galatians 6:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

We are to care for each other when when one of us gets off track and *caught in any transgression*. The Greek term Paul uses is general; it certainly can refer to transgressing a specific command of God, but it also includes mistakes, lapses in judgment, what we would call “being foolish”. It could be a case where one of us gets involved in a get-rich-quick scheme, lying to our spouse and losing a lot of money. Or it could be a situation where a flirty office relationship goes too far. Or it could be out right thievery or alcoholism or some such. Whatever the case, we do not condemn one another when we’re stumbling; we care for one another.

Those brothers and sisters *who are spiritual*, that is, those who are walking in the Spirit, are to *restore* the stumbling brother or sister. The term *restore* means to mend, to put back together. Those who are walking in the Spirit have the love, patience and gentleness to help a stumbling, but repentant brother or sister put the pieces of their lives back together after they’ve blow things up. If a stumbling brother or sister denies their need or is offended then we must pray the consequences of their choices bring them to repentance.

Because we all have the sin nature even the spiritual need to be vigilante they not give way to temptation that might present itself as they are helping their stumbling brother or sister.

In addition to the *stumbling* we are to care for the *struggling*.

The Struggling (6:2)

Galatians 6:2 (ESV)

² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

We need to care for one another when we’re overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. A *struggling* brother or sister needs our practical help, our encouragement and our prayers. This could be because of illness. It could be a spouse on deployment. It could be a single mom overwhelmed with work and taking care of her children. It could be the brother or sister deeply grieving the loss of a loved one. It could be our elderly brothers or sisters would need a little extra help.

We bear one another’s burdens by finding out what the need is and meeting it. Meals, house cleaning, yardwork, childcare, a cup of coffee, a word of encouragement, prayer. Whatever it is we seek by God’s grace to meet the need. This is what it means to fulfill the law of Christ. The *law of Christ* is that we love one another as Christ has loved us (John. 13:34).

The Unwilling (6:3-5)

Galatians 6:3-5 (ESV)

³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

In 5:26 Paul warns us to *not become conceited*. This seems to be the person described in 6:3-4; one who compares and considers themselves better than others. Such self-importance is antithetical to the self-sacrifice required to love others as Christ has loved us. These are the brothers and sisters who consider themselves too important to spend time and energy caring for other members of the church family. One’s “importance” however is not determined by comparison to others, but one’s commitment to fulfill his or her duties, including our duty to fulfill the law of Christ.

I hope none of us consider ourselves too important to care. Caring for one another is one of the most joyful, satisfying experiences in our Christian life.

But caring for others can be exhausting especially if a minority in the church family are providing the care. In that case, brothers and sisters may be tempted to stop caring, but the Spirit encourages us to persevere with the hope that in God's time we will reap a harvest.

KEEP DOING GOOD (6:6-10)

To the Teacher (6:6-8)

Galatians 6:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

The church family is to give material support so the teacher can give his time and energy to the study and teaching of the Word of God. The family provides physical blessings; the teacher spiritual blessings.

But what is the relationship between the warning in verses 7-8 and supporting the Bible teacher?

It's possible there is no relationship and that verse 7 starts a new thought. But I wonder if this is a parallel construction to verses 1-5. In verses 1-5 we are instructed to care for the stumbling and struggling followed by a word to the unwilling. Here, in verses 6-8, we are instructed to provide for the teacher followed by a word to the unwilling.

Perhaps Paul anticipated push back to financially supporting teachers in their churches. His point then is that supporting their teachers is a good investment: through the teaching of the Word the Spirit continues to bring God's people into a deeper experience of His life now on earth and on into eternity. By contrast, if they fail to invest in the teaching of the Word they will waste away spiritually which is the idea of the word *corruption*.

If 7-8 stand alone, the truth is: where we invest our time, energy and resources results either in spiritual vitality or deterioration.

Finally, Paul encourages us to persevere in doing good.

To Everyone and Especially Our Church Family (6:9-10)

Galatians 6:9–10 (ESV)

⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

I am so grateful for the many of you who are committed to doing good to others. There are so many examples from those who serve at the Ramona Pregnancy Care Clinic to those who visit at the Ramona Senior Manor. Thank you to those of you who share meals. Thank you to those who volunteer for various work projects like the one we had recently at the Webers. Thank you for those who write notes of encouragement. Thank you for those who visit the sick in the hospital. Thank you for those who visit and serve our elderly brothers and sisters.

May more of us discover the joy of caring.

Let us continue to adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ with grace and compassion as we care for others.