

Galatians 6

Sustaining Freedom in an Enslaved World

Paul concludes chapter 5 by encouraging those who belong to God, by way of faith in Jesus, to *walk* in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) - to live it out in service to one another. Remember, the Galatians to whom Paul was writing were believers (see Galatians 1:6), but like we all do at different points in our Christian faith journey, they had gotten off course by following false brethren who *wanted* to pervert the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:7) by preaching a works based salvation. Like the child who goes back into the burning house after being rescued by her father, the Galatians were headed right back into bondage to the law. They were exchanging God's free gift of grace, and what Jesus did for them on the cross, for a gospel based on works. Last chapter we learned about the works of the flesh evident when we choose to believe this lie. We also examined the fruits that are produced in our lives as a result of repentance - the desire/obedience to turn away from our selfish ways (sin) and fully posture our hearts towards God and *His* ways (righteousness). Paul concludes the letter by switching gears a bit. We will split this chapter study into days, as we will cover a different topic each day as it relates to the finale of Paul's letter. Let's begin by dissecting the first verse.

Day One - Restoration

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1 NKJV)

1. According to Galatians 6:1, who is Paul directing this message to?
2. And in regard to whom is he addressing it?
3. Do you think the "man overtaken" is a believer or unbeliever? Explain your stance based on everything we've studied thus far.
4. Has Paul's discourse ever changed audiences? Who is the entirety of the letter written to?

It's important for us to note that Paul is talking to *believers* about restoring other believers. Depending on what version you're reading, you may see the word "anyone" as it relates to the person overtaken by sin. Because Paul has directed his entire letter to the believers of the church and just finished admonishing those same believers to walk in the spirit so they won't carry out the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16), we can conclude that the "man overtaken" is any brother or sister of the faith that gets off course. Since we are imperfect humans, even after we've made the decision to follow Jesus, there will be times when we will need to be gently restored by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Furthermore, this is a call to "you who are spiritual" (one who is walking by the Spirit) to restore. We will find that the directive to restore one another is our duty as a Christ follower and an obligation we must adhere to in order to strengthen His bride - the church.

5. What are we to do when one of our Christian brothers or sisters is overtaken by sin according to Galatians 6:1?
6. In what manner are we to restore this person?
7. Why do you think it would be important to restore a Christian friend who is struggling with temptation with a spirit of gentleness?

Read Romans 2:4 and write it here. Underline the word kindness.

Below are synonyms for the word *kindness* (Thesaurus.com). Circle all the fruits of the spirit you see listed.

affection	altruism	benevolence	cordiality	thoughtfulness
courtesy	decency	forbearance	gentleness	
Good will	goodness	grace	graciousness	
Hospitality	humanity	patience	solicitude	
Unselfishness	sympathy	tenderness	tolerance	

8. Romans 2:4 says the kindness of God leads us to _____?

We established in week 5 that repentance is a decision one must make by a change in heart posture to turn from personal sin and commit (or present) themselves to walking in obedience to God. It's the acknowledgement that the flames of temptation will still arise, but we will choose to turn away from them and submit ourselves to God and His ways over ourselves and our

ways...one step at a time. If God's kindness - his *gentleness* - leads us to repentance, shouldn't we, out of a sincere heart led by the Spirit, replicate that with our Christian brothers and sisters? Repentance, undoubtedly, is the first step to restoration - not only with fellow believers, but with God.

9. Can you provide an example from your own life where God's kindness has led you to repentance?

10. Can you provide an example where *your* kindness has led a Christian friend to repentance?

"...considering yourselves lest you also be tempted." - Galatians 6:1 NKJV

11. Why do you think Paul made sure to include the above directive?

12. Based on what we've studied so far, are any of us (even those walking by the Spirit) exempt from temptation? Provide scripture to back up your answer.

It's important that we carefully examine ourselves when restoring a brother or sister of the faith. Going about the restoration process "gently" is not only a measure we must take in order to get our friends back on track, but it's how we must approach situations for our own sake. Careful prayer and meditation on God's word should be contemplated when endeavoring in any situation. If we aren't gentle in how we approach other believers, we could send them further into a tailspin of sin. Furthermore, if the brother or sister struggling is battling the same temptations we once struggled with, it's even more important that we take special consideration. Since *no one* is exempt from temptation, every situation should be prayerfully considered and handled with care - not only for our friend's sake - but ours as well. Below are a couple of hypothetical examples where temptation can creep in, deceptively, as we help in the restoration of a fellow Christ follower.

Maria has been struggling with an addiction to pain pills for several years now. She knows it's wrong and, not to mention, unhealthy. However, the battle is raging; she finds herself defeated more times than not. On the brink of exhaustion, she calls you, one of her closest friends, to ask if you would hold her accountable. Knowing you've faced this battle before, and

overcame it, you're confident you can help your friend. You ask Maria to lunch one day in an attempt to gently speak some truth into her. After the conversation and lunch have ended, she hands you her last bottle of pain meds and asks you to dispose of them for her. You gladly accept but get sidetracked on the way home and forget the bottle is in your purse. A few days later you have a really bad day at work. To ease the tension and relax, you pour a couple of glasses of wine. Midway through your second one, the awful day at work has dissipated, and you think about your friend, Maria. Suddenly, you remember the pills in your purse...

You and Jenny are friends from High School. You both know a lot of the same people and now you both live back in your hometown. Jenny checks all the Christian boxes, but has a bad habit of gossiping. Since you guys have been friends for so long, she feels comfortable talking about others, to you, behind their backs. She swears you're the only one she does this with. You've tried really hard to steer the conversation a different way when she starts talking negatively about other people, but she always goes back to gossiping. One day you're both at the park letting your kids play with each other when you see an old classmate with her kids. This classmate ended up marrying your high school boyfriend and, to make matters worse, also beat Jenny out of the valedictorian spot. To make the situation even worse, she turns her nose up at you and Jenny as you pass by. Suddenly, like a volcano erupting, instead of restoring your friend, you have chimed in on the gossip...

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9 and Ephesians 6:13-18.

Peter and Paul, in their epistles (according to NLT), lay the groundwork for ways we can guard ourselves. Peter lists three measures we can take to aid us, and Paul lists five different pieces of spiritual armour we can put on to protect us as we live free in an enslaved world. Next to each, write how you would apply these to your own life. An example is provided for you.

1 Peter 5:8-9

*Ex. 1) Stay alert -
Keep a sober spirit; pay
attention to how I live
and the Holy Spirit's guidance.*

Ephesians 6:13-18

*Ex. 2) Belt (truth) -
Showing honesty/integrity in everything I do.
Exemplify a love for the truth.*

To “consider ourselves lest we also be tempted” like Paul suggests in Galatians 6:1, we have to be tethered to God by way of His word and prayer. Conveniently, these are also two pieces of *offensive* weapons a Christ follower has access to in Ephesians 6:17-18. Continual abiding must happen. We see from 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. He’s actively looking for ways he can trip you up by casting doubt, deceiving, and accusing in order to derail you from the mission God has for you. His traps are out for those that go by the name Christ follower. No one walks into a trap knowing they’ll be captured. Likewise, we don’t willingly oblige in the devil’s schemes either...especially when we’re in the act of doing a “good” thing. In the very act of restoring a fellow friend of the faith we can become victims if we’re not guarded with God’s spiritual armour and alert through a sober mind and spirit. Now, let’s take a deeper look at the word *restore* in this verse as it will set the course for the rest of the study:

Restore

(*katartízō*) - properly, *exactly* fit (adjust) to be in good *working order*, i.e. adjusted *exactly* "down" to fully function. (Help's Ministries, Inc.)

The NASB records four different cross references for the word “restore” in this passage of scripture. Read the following verses and next to each verse, write a brief summary of the components of restoring a brother or sister in Christ.

2 Corinthian 2:7

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

Hebrews 12:13

James 5:19

14. Out of the four components above, what is the hardest for you and why?

15. Why do you think it’s necessary, as a Christian, to restore our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Read Ephesians 4:11-13 in the New Living Translation if you can.

16. In verse 12, Paul says it’s our _____ to equip God’s people to

do His work and _____ the _____, the body of Christ.

17. Who is the “church” Paul is talking about? And is this “church” limited to a building? Explain.

18. The very next verse (v.13) tells us restoration (building up) will continue until when?

19. Going back to the beginning of this section of verses in verse 11, Paul lists certain gifts given by the Holy Spirit in order to build up the church. List them here:

20. If you know your spiritual gift(s), write them here:

21. Below, record some ways you can use your spiritual gifts to help others in your community, workplace, neighborhood, or schools.

In the following days, we will dive deeper into understanding the gifts we’ve been given in order to edify the church and make an impact in the world around us. We will also spend a couple days tackling how to forgive one another, and we’ll glean the scriptures for an in-depth look at some examples given to us. Exploring how these concepts support the finale of Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia, we’ll conclude this study. But before you close today’s study, ask God to bring to mind any friend of the faith in your life who may be struggling and in need of restoration. Lift them up in prayer and record Psalm 121:1-2 in the space below. Meditate on this Word throughout your day.

Day Two - Wrestling with Unforgiveness

The command to forgive is explicit throughout the pages of scripture. So explicit, in fact, that when Peter asked Jesus if seven times was enough to forgive someone who had sinned against him, Jesus responded that he should forgive that person up to seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21). Although forgiveness is paramount to the Christian faith, it's often overlooked. It can be easy to forgive when the offense is minor, but what about when it isn't? It becomes a lot harder. And for some? Impossible. We find ourselves battling an unforgiving heart with wrongs committed against us by other humans either from the past or present. Some of us suppress these feelings of resentment for so long that a wedge is created in any relationship going forward without even realizing it. Like a soldier traveling hundreds of miles with the weight of his comrades' belongings on his back, we live life burdened by the things others have done to us (or said to us) with no reprieve. Today, we'll discover how to lay those burdens down at the foot of the cross. We'll discover how in Christ, forgiveness is possible. Today we're going to examine an Old Testament story with a big time offense, a big time forgive, and a big time blessing. By comparing the similarities in this story with the directives Paul gives in his final memo to the churches of Galatia, we will understand how to apply the principles of forgiveness to people in our lives as God desires. But first...

1. Brainstorm some reasons that would make it hard for you to forgive someone.

Feel free to use personal examples or hypothetical:

Ex. a thief robbed my store and stole everything I had.

2. If any of the reasons listed above are personal, would that person have to do anything to make you forgive them? What would it be?

Read Ephesians 6:12.

3. Whenever there is a struggle between us and another person, there is always a need to forgive hanging somewhere in the balance. This verse says that we are not fighting _____ and _____.

4. If we aren't fighting the person we thought we were, then who are we "wrestling"? Some versions may say "fighting" or "struggling".
5. Does knowing that we have an "unseen" enemy at work amongst us make it easier for you to forgive someone or harder? Explain.

Get comfortable and read Genesis 26:19-34 and Genesis 27:1-46.

If you want the *full* story, and have more time to spare, read Genesis 26:19 through Genesis 33:15.

6. In chapter 4, we discussed the Abrahamic covenant God made with His faithful servant, Abraham. As a part of that promise Isaac (Abraham's son) and Isaac's wife (Rebekah) had twin sons. What were their names (in order of oldest to youngest)?
7. How did Esau forfeit his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob?

Sidenote: "A birthright was a special honor given to the firstborn son. It included a double portion of the family inheritance along with the honor of one day becoming the family's leader. The oldest son could sell his birthright or give it away if he chose, but in so doing, he would lose both material goods and his leadership position. By trading his birthright, Esau showed complete disregard for the spiritual blessings that would have come his way if he had kept it." (NLT commentary, pg. 48)

8. We see how Esau's lack of patience and impulsivity in a seemingly trivial moment led to a significant series of events. What did he trade his birthright for?
9. Have you ever traded what you know is right and true for "quick fixes" or temporary satisfaction? Give an example.
10. What was the result of that decision?

11. In what way did Jacob trick his ailing father, Isaac, into giving him Esau's blessing?

Another sidenote: "Before a father died, he performed a ceremony of blessing, in which he officially handed over the birthright to the rightful heir. Although the firstborn son was entitled to the birthright, it was not actually his until the blessing was pronounced...After the blessing was given, the birthright could no longer be taken away...Although Jacob had been given the birthright by his older brother years before (Gen. 25:27-34), he still needed his father's blessing to make it binding." (NLT commentary, pg. 52)

12. Jacob not only capitalized on his brother's weakness by getting him to trade his birthright for a bowl of soup, but he also deceived his father into blessing him as the oldest heir. What deeds of the flesh are evident in Jacob's actions?

13. Where did Jacob's deceptiveness lead him?

14. How did his decision affect his family, and particularly Esau? (Genesis 28:41)

Jacob's deceptive behavior led to such bitter turmoil between him and his brother, Esau, that he had to flee for his life to live with his uncle in a foreign land. While there, Jacob worked hard serving his uncle's household. He married and had many children. However, interestingly enough, Jacob endured the same deception from his *once friendly* uncle that he had shown to his brother years before.

Read Genesis 31:2-9.

In the box below, compare this section of the story with the directives Paul gives in Galatians 6:7-9. Fill in the blanks:

<i>Galatians 6:7 - man reaps what he sows</i>	<i>Gen. 27:24 - Jacob cheats his brother and father.</i>
<i>Galatians 6:8 - when man sows to flesh he reaps corruption from flesh</i>	
	<i>Gen. 31:6 - Jacob served his uncle, Laban, faithfully and fully.</i>

15. Evidence of God's unfailing faithfulness can be seen all throughout this story but specifically in Genesis 31:2-7. In your bible, underline all the instances that showed where God protected and was with Jacob.

Read Genesis 32:3 to 33:15.

16. What was Jacob's reaction when he found out Esau was coming to meet him with 400 of his men?
17. In Genesis 32:9-12, Jacob prays a prayer out of fear. In verse 10, what are the two words he uses to describe how God has treated him while he's been away?
18. Can you think of a time when God treated you with lovingkindness and faithfulness despite your past mistakes?
19. What measures did Jacob use to try and find favor with Esau before they saw each other face to face (hint: Gen. 32:20)?
20. Have you ever found yourself in a situation similar to Jacob's - where confrontation was imminent, and you weren't sure how it would go? What were some of the thoughts going on in your head in the moments leading up to it? Did you do anything to try and soften the blow beforehand? Write about your experience here and the outcome:

It's important to note in this story that the night before Jacob was reunited with his brother, he wrestled with God. It was at this moment that God changed his name from Jacob to Israel after he prevailed (Genesis 32:28). Go back and read Ephesians 6:12.

21. Which verse in the last half of Genesis 32 alerts us to the fact that Jacob actually wrestled with God?

22. How is the wrestling match in Genesis similar to the wrestling match in Ephesians? How is it different? List the similarities and differences between the two. Try and use scripture to back up your claims.

Jacob vs. God (Gen. 32:24)

Us vs. Kingdom of Darkness (Eph. 6:12)

23. In your own life, what are some instances when you've "wrestled with God"? Perhaps you were struggling to gain clarity over an important decision or contemplating which direction you needed to go but didn't necessarily want to. Spend some time thinking, and record here:

24. In chapter 5 we learned about the battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Paul says, "the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another..." (Galatians 5:17 NASB). According to this verse and the findings from above, how do you think this term, *wrestling*, mimics the battle you see play out between your flesh and your Spirit?

There seems to be a common misconception among the church that following God's will and being led by the Holy Spirit is a walk in the park. Hopefully, at this point in the study, you'll have come to understand why this assertion is indeed a misconception. Doing the will of God - living a holy life in service to Christ by denying self and letting the Holy Spirit guide your thoughts, actions, and behavior is anything *but* easy. It's a day in and day out battle: A wrestling match. If Israel (formerly Jacob) was here today, I can assure you he'd emphatically concur. I can imagine *his* wrestling match with God was produced out of an inner battle between his flesh and Spirit. I'd suggest his flesh might have been teeming with emotions like doubt the plan wouldn't work or maybe fear that this would be his last night alive. But, as stated above, isn't this the enemy's MO? The second we decide we're going to follow God - the moment we decide we're going to make a change, forgive and ask for forgiveness, love that person who doesn't "deserve" it, step into that role that's out of our comfort zone, accept that position we don't feel qualified for...the arrows come a flyin'. This is what the enemy did with Eve. This is what he did with Israel. This is what he did with Jesus. This is what he does with us. The world, culture, our own flesh, social structures, and even governments are the enemy's task force. With all this stacked against us, following and being obedient to God's will *is* a wrestling match. But here's the thing: Once you take a step on the path He's laid for you instead of the one you've laid yourself, you'll find that your desires start conforming to God's desires. Every step taken on His path and in His way deepens our faith, and our capacity to love and forgive others grows. We shouldn't be surprised when the arrows slung from the evil one come flying our direction and the wrestling match unrelents. For this, Peter says, we will know we are being tested (1 Peter 4:12). So keep rejoicing through the struggle. Keep praising in the chaos, and keep your eyes fixed steadily on Jesus in the storm.

* * * * *

"Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." (Genesis 33:4 NASB)

One of the most heartfelt passages of scripture, this verse records the first encounter in a long while between Jacob and Esau after the turmoil these two brothers endured. Reconciliation was, and still is, the conduit God uses to execute His grand promises and plans. What could have turned out very badly, ended in forgiveness and reconciliation. Although God had clearly promised him that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand of the sea (Genesis 32:12), it's clear that Jacob wasn't quite sure how this encounter would turn out. How often are we surprised when God's promises come through in our lives? No matter the obstacles we face, or how grim the situation may appear, God is faithful to deliver. It may not be on our timetable or how we expect, but God never leaves us if we've placed our faith in Jesus Christ. He was with Jacob and He will be with you, too. The cliché that "time heals all wounds" could definitely be

said for this situation, but all throughout the rest of Genesis (chapter 33) we see Paul's exhortation in Galatians 6:2-5 being lived out by both brothers and their decisions to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. To close today, we'll study how forgiveness and restoration are possible when we let the Spirit guide our lives instead of our flesh.

Write Galatians 6:2-5 here:

23. After the highly anticipated reunion between Jacob and Esau, Esau begs Jacob to let some of his own men help accompany his large household to their destination (Genesis 33:15). How was Esau's offer an example of Paul's directive in Galatians 6:2?

24. According to Galatians 6:2, how do we fulfill the law of Christ?

25. Record the definition of bear below:

BEAR (not the animal) -

26. Are we able to carry one another's burdens if we haven't forgiven them? Explain.

27. Does this story (at any point) give us reason to believe that Esau ever thought more highly of himself than he should have (Galatians 6:3)?

28. What evidence from Genesis 33 shows that Esau focused on his own work, bared his own load (Galatians 6:4-5) and chose to discontinue his original plan to kill Jacob?

29. What fruit of the Spirit are indisputable in Esau's reaction to seeing his brother for the first time in a long while?

30. Did Jacob "deserve" Esau's forgiveness? Why or why not?

31. How was the grace Esau showed Jacob similar to the grace God shows us?

32. Do we have to "do" anything to earn this grace? Why not?

33. Finally, because of grace from God working through Esau, what was Jacob (Israel) able to do (Gen. 33:18)?

It's incredibly easy to let past wrongs done to you consume your thoughts, feelings, and emotions - eventually leading to negative (sinful) behavior. It's much harder to recognize the injustice but forgive anyway. This is a wrestling match between the flesh and Spirit we will all experience on this side of Heaven to one degree or another. Because of Esau's decision to acknowledge the past but *choose* to focus on his own work instead of seeking out to kill his brother, he and Jacob were prosperous in their own right and lived at peace with one another. When we say "no" to our sinful nature (flesh) and "yes" to God's nature, forgiveness and reconciliation are not only possible - they become the norm. Restoration through forgiveness is a key part to living by the Spirit and fulfilling God's call on our lives. As you close today, think of your relationships. Are there any where you are choosing to focus on the harms done instead of extending grace? Prayerfully ask God to help you see that person like He does, and choose grace over unforgiveness.

Day Three - Forgiving like Jesus

Today we'll study how just like serving ourselves over serving others is the antithesis to the Christian faith, living with unforgiveness in our hearts ultimately creates a wedge in our relationship with God if left unchecked. We'll uncover the reality that forgiveness has less to do with the other person, *or us*, than it does with reflecting God to a world that desperately needs to see Him: A world enslaved.

1. Read Mark 11:25-26 and fill in the blank. "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, _____ him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive _____ trespasses".
2. What do you think the hardest part about forgiving someone is?

Jesus, during His earthly ministry, taught His disciples how to pray. In doing this, the Bible records some interesting directives He gave that, if not looked at closely, may be glanced and not taken to heart for the sake of ritual recitedness. His words are recorded in the book of Matthew as the famous "Lord's prayer". Read Matthew 6:9-13, then underline, highlight, circle, or star verses 14-15.

3. According to these verses (14&15), what happens when we do/don't forgive people?

DO:

DON'T:

4. How do you think this forgiveness is different from the forgiveness of sins, and right standing with God, that Jesus purchased on the cross?

For more clarity on this, read this excerpt from gotquestions.org

"In [Matthew 6](#) Jesus is teaching disciples how to pray and in doing so outlines how we are restored into intimacy with God whenever we have displeased Him. In fact, Jesus instructs us to build into our prayers a request for God to forgive us in the same way that we have forgiven others who have harmed us ([Matthew 6:12](#)). If there are those we have not forgiven when we ourselves pray for forgiveness, then practically speaking we are

asking God not to restore a right relationship with us after we sin. To emphasize the importance of restoring broken relationships with our brothers and sisters, Jesus states that asking for God's forgiveness for one's own sins, all the while withholding forgiveness from someone else, is not only bizarre but hypocritical. We cannot possibly walk with God in true fellowship if we refuse to forgive others. To be sure, an unforgiving spirit is a serious sin and should be confessed to God. If we have unforgiveness in our hearts against someone else, then we are acting in a way that is not pleasing to God, making our prayers and a proper living relationship with Him difficult. God will not hear our prayers unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness. If we are harder than iron in this regard, Christ's exhortation ought to soften us." (4)

5. Why do you think forgiveness is such an integral aspect of the Christian faith?
6. What does this reveal to you about the character of God?
7. Can we restore people if we haven't forgiven them? Why or why not?

Take a moment to reflect on the "works of the flesh" that are produced when we haven't forgiven someone. List some of the works that may be produced out of an unforgiving heart:

8. How do you think these works hinder our ability to be generous and do good like Paul directs in Galatians 6:6-8?
9. What did Jesus do for our relationship with God when He died on the cross for our sins? Read 2 Corinthians 5:18 for help.

God is all about reconciliation and relationship. He sent His Son to do those two very things, so why wouldn't He want us to do the same? When we hold grudges in our heart toward one another and hold back forgiveness, we run the risk of distancing ourselves from God - from His voice and from the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. While if we've placed faith in Jesus Christ, we are never distanced permanently; we *can* get a cloudy view of His will for our lives if we're walking with a spirit of unforgiveness. Just like the command to submit to our husbands in *everything* might be difficult for some, the command to forgive as Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:32) can be difficult, especially when that person doesn't "deserve" your forgiveness. Regardless, Jesus tells us to do it anyway...like He did...when we didn't deserve it.

Read Luke 23:32-43.

10. Based on this passage, did the criminal hanging beside Jesus, who had surely spent most of his days cheating people, "deserve" to be with Jesus in paradise?

11. Did his past dictate his future in this moment in time?

12. Are you choosing to continue remembering someone's past actions and/or behaviors even though they've asked for your forgiveness?

13. What is holding you back from forgiving them?

Unlike God, we don't have the ability to know people's hearts and understand with 100% certainty that they are being genuine in their apology. Maybe we've been hurt one too many times to forgive and fear of being hurt again builds walls around our hearts in an effort to self-protect. Perhaps the opposite is true, and we know we will continue being hurt *even if* we forgive, but we continue trusting that God will intervene somehow and in some way. My husband knew this last scenario all too well...

Mike spent many years forgiving each of my mistakes and praying that God would change my heart and mend our union. I was "sorry" each time, but never truly repentant. My apologies were never followed by action because I didn't walk with God nor did I fear Him. No amount of change drummed up by human works can do much to a heart that's headed for certain disaster

and beats apathetically. Despite all this, Mike kept forgiving me each time. And more importantly, he kept chasing after God. While I was chasing fulfillment in all things other than God, Mike was in the Word and on his knees in prayer seeking God with all his heart. After Jesus asked me when I was going to follow Him (that story is back on page 2), I spent the entire next year ignoring that question and doing further damage to not only myself, but my family as well. After several extramarital affairs, alcoholism, broken friendships, years worth of traumatic experiences and a mind controlled by my flesh, I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ and told Him I was ready to follow Him. And what happened next was miraculous. God changed my heart. But it wasn't before my husband would lie awake at night crying and going to battle by praying on my behalf. It wasn't before he had to reconcile with God the fact that he was a sinner, just like his wife, when God forgave him. It was because of Christ's love that he could forgive me.

That forgiveness, the kind that cancels out all the wrongs you've done and removes your transgressions as far as the east is from the west (1 John 1:9), is a powerful thing to be confronted with when you're living in sin and darkness. Right when you expect the severest of consequences (in my case it was losing my family), you're confronted with something so irregular, abnormal, and wonderful that it surpasses all human understanding. Like a bolt of lightning clashing against the darkest of the night skies, grace lights up the shadows of your heart illuminating the glory of God. That forgiveness is one that carries the weight of enough love with it to extinguish years of hurt. It's the type of forgiveness, when received, that transforms a person into becoming utterly *undone* for Jesus Christ.

As we end today, spend a few minutes thinking about the lengths Jesus went to forgive you. Tempted, persecuted, betrayed, beaten, mocked, scourged, and executed, Jesus paid it all to present you blameless in front of our perfect and Holy Father because God knew, we couldn't do it on our own. Prayerfully ask God to show you who, in your life, is in need of your forgiveness. Who in your life doesn't "deserve" it? Who could benefit from receiving God's love and the Holy Spirit's power by your forgiveness? Who could you forgive *today* that wouldn't see it coming and could quite possibly wreck their hearts for Jesus? Write their name(s) here and ask God to help you forgive them like He did.

Day Three - Consuming, Sanctification, and Distributing

Paul says in Galatians 6:5 “for each one shall bear his own load”; meaning, if we are willing and able to work, we should. We shouldn’t be lazy and effortless with the gifts God has given us. As a mature Christian, walking by the Spirit, we are to look and pray for ways to use the abilities God has entrusted to us. Last week we talked about the “double C faith” - a faith that is comfortable and complacent, not really awakened to Spirit living. Living in a way that exemplifies our forgetfulness of what we’ve been rescued from casts a negative view, to the world around us, of what following Jesus is all about. Jesus tells us that we are a city shining on a hill that cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14). If we are not putting into practice the gifts He’s given us, how do we, then, shine like a city on a hill and reflect His glory to the darkened world around us? Living the double C version of faith is not only boring, but it hinders the work of the church as a whole. You have a vital role to play in God’s church. If you’re sleeping and unaware of the freedom Christ purchased for you, you’ll miss it. Just like a body needs all parts to function as a whole, the church (the body of Christ) needs *you* to do your part in contributing to make it work.

1. What do you think it means to consume when thinking about the gospel (the good news of Jesus)?
2. What do you think it means to be sanctified?
3. What do you think it means to distribute when thinking about the gospel?
4. Furthermore, does consuming affect distributing or vice versa? How do you think sanctification plays a role in all of it?

Like a parent who has a thirty-year-old, freeloading child still living at home might have to make the painful decision to kick him out in order for him to learn how to be independent, similarly, we may have to make some hard choices in order to mature in our faith. A process is

initiated by the Holy Spirit when we've decided, whole-heartedly, to follow Jesus. Similar to how a gardener prunes dead branches off a tree in order for new growth to happen, God sanctifies us to where we are transformed more and more into the image of His son, Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). This process is called sanctification, and it typically occurs after genuine repentance of our old behaviors/self and before we see the fruits of the Spirit start to manifest in our lives - before the "new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NASB). Want to know the spoiler alert of this whole concept, though? Sanctification is an *ongoing* process; it never stops in the life of a believer...until we get to Heaven of course.

Applicably speaking, the process could look like severing relationships that have taken their toll on influencing us in the wrong direction, turning off a favorite TV show that's instigating toxic thoughts, tuning out our favorite music because the words go against what is good and honorable, ceasing negative habits that wear on our health, finally making that appointment with the christian counselor your pastor told you about, etc. Whatever your sanctification process entails, make no mistake about it: These steps aren't initiated or acted upon by our own strength, but rather God's. Once the gospel penetrates our heart deep enough to where we become awakened by the magnitude of God's infinite grace and love poured out for us, we will find ourselves in a state of *wanting* to make a break with our old selves. We will be compelled to walk by His Spirit, and for the first time, be under His control and guidance instead of our own. When this happens, we begin to move out of a consumption type faith that lacks deed and truth and into a distributive one spurred on by love and a more full recognition of who we are in Christ Jesus.

Time to take inventory

5. Did any of the examples of what sanctification could look like from the above paragraph resonate with you? Could you add to the list?

6. Think of the 5 people closest to you. Who are they? Do they speak truth into your life? Do they hold you accountable when you are drifting?

7. If the answer to those last two questions were “no”, then it may be time to do some serious evaluating of the voices you’re allowing to speak into your life. Ask God to show you the relationships that may need evaluating. Furthermore, ask that God would send people into your life that follow Him - people that would lift you up in your journey and hold you accountable to God’s way of living.
8. If the answer to those last two questions were “yes”, consider thanking these people for what they mean to you and how much you appreciate their influence in your life. Think of other ways you could show your gratitude.
9. What are some unhelpful habits you’re currently chained to that might be detrimental to your health and holding you back from God’s purpose for your life? List them below:

10. Think of some things in your life you really love or enjoy doing. Have any of these taken the place of your love for or devotion to God? What idols are you currently serving without even realizing it?

11. What material possessions do you currently own that go against the knowledge of God? Take inventory of items in your house that might be tied to occultic practices (crude games, magic 8 ball, wigi board, artwork, apparel with negative graphics, etc.) and consider throwing them away.

12. The following list has to do with what we’re exposing ourselves to. Next to each item, take note of what you’re allowing to seep into your heart and mind through your eyes and ears.
 - a. Music you listen to:
 - b. Books/magazines you read:
 - c. Shows/movies you watch:

d. Social media:

Whether we want to admit it or not, the things we watch and listen to have a massive influence on our hearts and minds. This could very well be why Solomon penned the following Proverbs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you. Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.
(Proverbs 4:24-27 NASB).

It's imperative that we guard our hearts and stay vigilant to the schemes of the enemy. We can justify the reasons why we act a certain way all day long, but until we take logical inventory of our lives and recognize where the enemy has gained a foothold, steps will be hindered in the sanctification process. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help in this process.

13. Are there any other issues we haven't discussed that you're currently being confronted with that God may want you to release, break, separate from, or dive into?

Spend some time in prayer over the inventory you just completed. Ask God to show you how to move forward with each item. By spending time in the word of God, consistently, the Holy Spirit will illuminate the answers that you seek.

Read Matthew 15:32-39

14. According to this passage in scripture, what is the first thing Jesus did after he took the seven loaves and the fish?
15. Are you more prone to thank God for what you do have or complain about what you don't have?

Sometimes we can get mad at God for placing us in certain situations. Like a soldier who may complain about the details surrounding his deployment, we may complain to God about where we are in life, the people He's placed in our life, unpleasant circumstances, disappointments, or a number of different things. Instead of thanking him for the opportunity to grow, we can become resentful and angry with our current situation and brush it off altogether - leaving someone else to deal with it. But what if Jesus would have done this - what if He would have looked at the size of the crowd opposed to the size of the food and dismissed this opportunity altogether? Instead of complaining about what He lacked, He used the moment to thank God for what He had. Next time God stations you somewhere for a season or two that may seem impossible, difficult, or unpleasant to live through, ask God what He may be teaching you through it. What branch might He be wanting to cut off in order for you to grow? How could He be using you to show someone else His light and love? Ask Him to show you the opportunity to glorify Him in how you handle whatever deployment mission He has in mind and *trust* Him for the outcome.

16. Who did Jesus entrust with the loaves of bread in this story?

17. Just to review, look up "disciple" and record definition here:

18. Who were the loaves of bread distributed to?

19. What do you think might have happened had the disciples retired early for the night or chosen not to participate in the distribution of the bread and fish?

20. What do you think happens when we choose not to participate in the distribution of the gospel - when we don't use the gifts and talents God has given us to effectively build up His bride, the church?

21. Would you consider yourself more of a consumer or a distributor of the faith? Give reasons to support your answer.

God worked through Jesus to work through His disciples in order to provide food for the people. And not just some people - upwards of 4,000 people. Had the disciples decided they were too tired to entertain the people anymore or left early to go get a mani/pedi, they would have *completely* missed the opportunity to be used by God and the spectacular miracle that ensued. The disciples were entrusted by Jesus with the job of distributing the loaves and fish. Because

they were *available*, they were able to take part in one of the greatest miracles recorded in the bible. Furthermore, how critical it is that we heed Jesus' command to deny self! Like we established in the last chapter, denying ourselves creates in us an availability to be used by God and let His Holy Spirit work through us. This miracle, undoubtedly, increased the disciple's faith and ignited in them a fresh fire to continue in their mission set forth by God. If we continue to let others bear our load of spiritual responsibility, and if we continue living a double C faith, there will be multitudes hungry but never fed.

God gave you a unique set of gifts. At the moment you made Jesus the Lord of your life, He sealed in you His Holy Spirit. With the Spirit, we are given gifts to fulfill the ultimate mission of making disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19) and reflect the light of God's glory to the world. Our gifts have little to do with *us*, but everything to do with Jesus, and He never intended for us to keep them dormant.

22. When Jesus told Peter to follow Him, Peter was fishing (Matthew 4:18). Peter was doing something he was good at and had a knack for. Jesus turned that ability into a calling on his life. He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19 NASB). What is something you are good at - a natural ability you possess?

23. Paul was zealous for the law and traditions of his ancestors. He was so passionate about upholding the Law of Moses, in fact, that he set out to destroy any movement that threatened it (Acts 8:3). However, when Jesus got ahold of him, He took Paul's passion and a character trait (his zeal) and channeled it (Acts 9:15) into making Paul one of the greatest apostles to the Gentiles the world has ever seen. What fires you up and ignites passion in your bones? What is something you have a great affinity for?

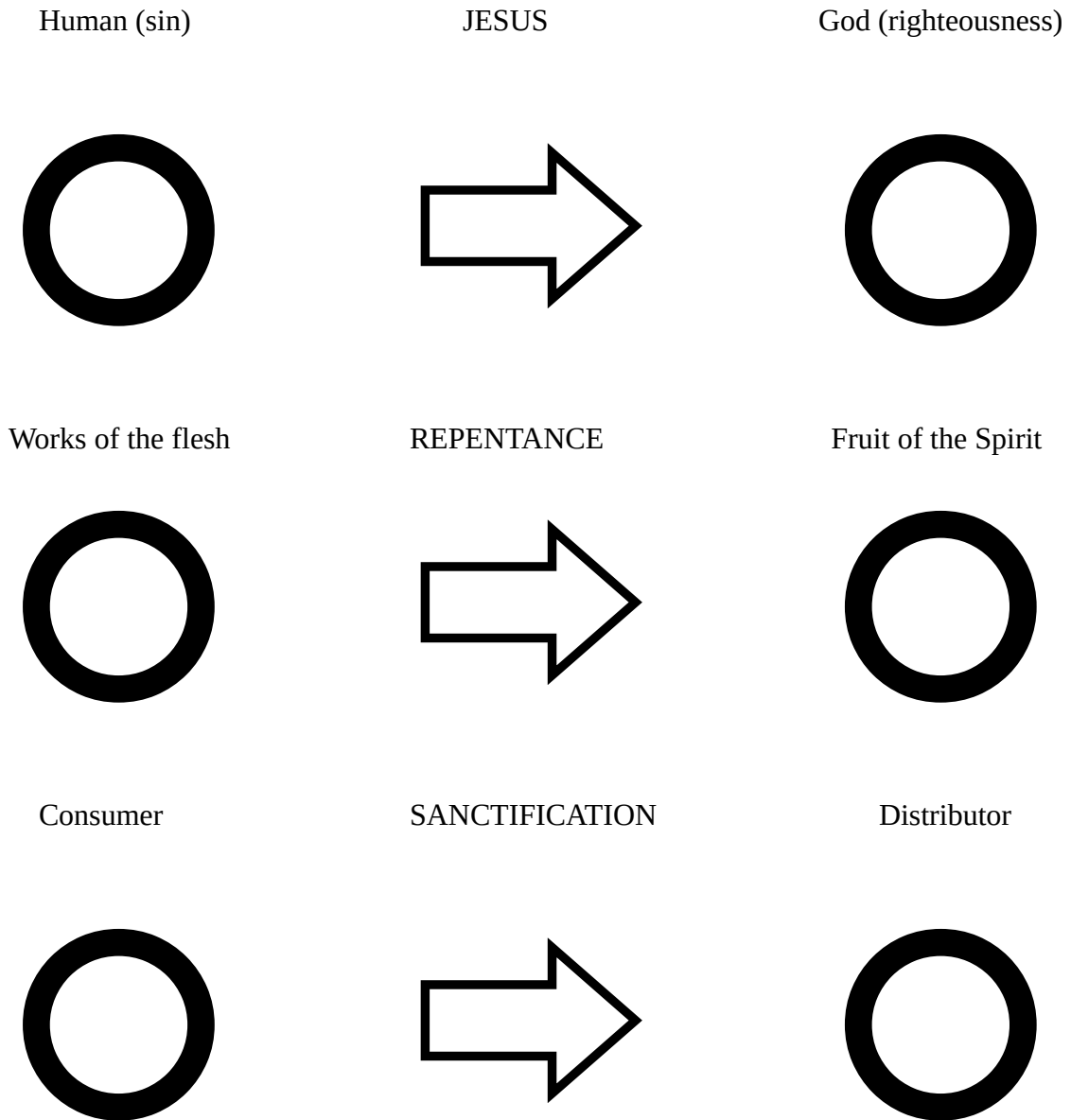
24. Esther, a Jew queen to King Xerxes, needed her faithful relative to speak truth into her situation and remind her why she was in the position she was in when the annihilation of the Jewish race hung in the balance. By Mordecai asking her, "...who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14 NASB), he affirmed something in Esther that she might have forgotten. What do those closest to you affirm about *you*? What do those around you keep speaking about you?

25. My heart breaks for women of all ages who don't fully realize the freedom in which Christ died to set them free and who may be living life in spiritual bondage to the chains

of their past. Through my sufferings and rescue story, God has revealed His purposes for my life: A call to equip and encourage those who might be allowing their past mistakes and failures to dictate their present and future, and a call to teach women how to lead well by following Jesus closely. My greatest desire is to see a revival happen in the hearts of women and homes across the world; a revival in which lives would be set on fire for the gospel of Jesus Christ and homes would be made whole by the transformative power of God's word. What does your heart break for? Which mistakes, heartbreaks, failures, pain, and hurt from *your* past could God use to dictate your future? It's likely that your spiritual gifts derive somewhere from a combination of the four questions above.

26. Brainstorm some ways you can use your spiritual gifts to move from a consumer to a distributor of the gospel. Maybe it's something as simple as serving at your church or volunteering time at the local food pantry. Oftentimes we think of these massive feats we think we are supposed to accomplish for God's Kingdom, when in all actuality, He might be asking you to check on your neighbor. Serving in God's Kingdom and distributing the gifts He's given you for the furtherance of the gospel doesn't always require life-altering changes like moving to Africa to become a missionary. Although it might, and I certainly don't recommend eliminating that possibility from the realm of what God's capable of asking His servants to do, it's more likely that He'll use you as His distributor right in your own backyard. Keep your eyes and ears open to the needs around you. How could the little you have make a big splash in eternity?

27. Examine the diagram below. Look familiar?



28. Analyze the similarities and differences between each diagram, and record your findings below. Take liberty in drawing lines, referencing scripture, and marking up this diagram as much as you can!

Day Four - Heart Posture

“But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.” (Galatians 6:4-5 NASB)

1. Is it hard for you to keep quiet when you notice a believer *not* employing the gifts God has given them? Explain.
2. What do you think the differences are between passing judgement on a fellow believer and holding them accountable?

When we point out the faults of others but fail to see our own, we aren't being led by compassion. Instead we are making a mockery of the faith by being hypocritical. This does not glorify God nor does it represent Jesus. If we are doing something out of anything but love and compassion, we need to take pause and consider our heart posture before God. Jesus said that unbelievers would know us by our *love* (John 13:35). We address hard truths with fellow believers because we love them. In every endeavor, we must check ourselves and our heart first.

3. Do you think it's important to have a relationship established before you speak "truth" into another believer's life? Why or why not?
4. In reference to Galatians 6:3, why is it important for us to not think too highly of ourselves?

Read Colossians 3:12

5. According to this scripture, list out the things we must "put on" as the elect of God:

Now, circle humility.

6. What is the opposite of humility?
7. Look up the definition of prideful and write it here:

Read the following verses and next to each, write how God responds as a result of pride:

Proverbs 16:5 -

James 4:6 -

Isaiah 2:12 -

Psalm 138:6 -

If we are prideful, we cannot possibly serve God or others. We become the centerpiece of our life instead of God being the centerpiece. Furthermore, it reflects being a Christ follower as a joke to non-believers.

8. Based on the scriptures above, what happens to our relationship with God when we become prideful and arrogant?

Read Luke 18:9-14

9. In this parable, Jesus contrasts two very different heart postures. Record the description that the bible uses for the way the Pharisee stood and the way the tax collector stood below:
10. Which one exhibited a heart position of humility and which one exhibited one of pride? Give examples from the text to support your answer.
11. Like the Pharisee, do you ever find yourself being critical of other people's flaws while praising yourself for the "good" deeds you've done?
12. Why would this behavior be contrary to everything we've studied up to this point?

13. How can we be more like the tax collector when praying to God and addressing difficult conversations with fellow believers?

Paul sheds some light, in most of his letters in the New Testament, on how we could approach necessary confrontation (whatever that confrontation may be) with fellow believers. In most of his letters, he takes time to explain *his* former behavior first - how he used to persecute the church beyond repair and actively seek out new converts in order to imprison them. He's not shy about expounding on the fact that he's the worst sinner of all (1 Timothy 1:15). This not only shows humility as he confronts the recipients of his writings, but it also conveys a level of relatability making the reader that much more receptive to what he's about to say. It's kind of like saying, "Hey, I know where you're at because I was there too...". And isn't this the truth? None of us have it all figured out, and we certainly don't want to be preached at by someone that thinks they do! You could have all the spiritual knowledge, insight, and revelation in the world, but if you don't have some burn marks to show for then there isn't any use in talking to someone currently battling flames. Furthermore, the majority of Paul's writings were written to churches after he had spent a considerable amount of time with them. A *relationship* was formed, and these recipients had seen, firsthand, the fruits of his life. Paul not only talked the talk, but he walked the walk.

If your fruits don't match up to what you're spitting out, you could have all the credentials, knowledge, and degrees in the world but it wouldn't make a bit of difference. To be blunt, we *have* to stop pretending that we're perfect and we know everything. Instead, our hearts must be postured in a way that reflects humility and sensitivity to the battles our Christian brothers and sisters are enduring. Authenticity is what relates to people - it's what meets the oppressed women at the well and offers the living water (John 4:4-26). Above all, we must be led by love. Love must be the motivating factor behind everything we do. If it's not, we need to check ourselves (1 Corinthians 13).

Sharing our testimony of God's grace in our lives can do much for the kingdom and in the lives of those we share it with, but we have no business addressing *anyone* with a heart posture of pretentiousness. We address issues with individuals to build up not to tear down. Displaying a phony version of perfection to hurting brothers and sisters does nothing for the glory of God and the edifying of His bride, the church. As we close today, think about your story. What obstacles have you overcome and how has God rescued you? Pray for God to show you opportunities for you to shed His light onto brothers and sisters of the faith who may be hurting. And don't be surprised when He puts people in your path that are currently battling the same fires you once did.

Day Five - "Well Done"

This letter comes to an end by Paul chronicling certain affects that will be made apparent in the life of someone who is walking by the Spirit as opposed to the flesh. In a day when false teachers abounded - compelling the early church to maintain the tradition of outward works (specifically circumcision) as a way to earn salvation - Paul reminds the churches of Galatia that outward works are futile. It's the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14) and the work He did that resulted in our salvation. We've touched on the first few of the directives Paul lays out through our topical studies above, but as we finish the conclusion of his letter to the Galatians, let's circle through the remaining exhortations and see how we can apply them to our lives today.

1. Read Galatians 6:7-9. What do you think Paul means by this?
2. Now skip a few verses, and read Galatians 6:12. Who were "those" who desired to make a good showing in the flesh?
3. What were they trying to do?

Read Matthew 23:27-28 and Matthew 23:33.

4. Reading this in light of what you've already studied about these false brethren who wanted to pervert the gospel of Christ in order to potentially garner a following, make a name for themselves, or appear righteous in front of man - what is God's reaction to people who deliberately twist the truth and try to make a "good showing in the flesh" (Galatians 6:12 NASB)?
5. What sentence awaits these people?
6. How would you equate this sentencing with the 'corruption' Paul talks about in verse 8 if we sow to the flesh?
7. What might sowing to the flesh look like in your life?
8. What's produced out of sowing to the Spirit? Is it always easy to sow to the Spirit? Why or why not?

Paul makes it clear that these false teachers, in perverting the truth of God's grace, were clearly sowing to their flesh and their desire to be known, respected, gain power and influence, etc., and it was working. Paul told us back in chapter 1 that the purveyors of this false gospel sought the favor of people more than the favor of God (Galatians 1:10). In preaching a works based salvation, not only were these treacherous teachers sowing to their own flesh, but they were trying to get the early church to believe in *themselves* (aka sowing to their flesh) rather than what was done for them on the cross.

We may be remiss, or just plain naive, if we think this form of deception stopped with the churches in Galatia and isn't happening in our world today. All one needs to do is go to any local bookstore and peruse the aisles (the Christian aisles at that!) to see how much emphasis is put on *self* instead of what Christ accomplished on the cross. Even from famous evangelical platforms, you'll find this deception, or one of its kind, lurking. We have to be aware and stay vigilant. Sowing to the Spirit won't always garner you a place in the world's spotlight, but it will garner you a spot in eternity - and that, my friends, is better than anything the world could offer.

9. Paul's very next message of perseverance is made evident in Galatians 6:9-10. Sowing to the Spirit won't yield the same response from the world that sowing to the flesh will. Keeping this in mind, what are some ways we can persevere despite the opposition we are going to face?

10. Why might one grow weary in doing good?

11. Do you ever grow weary when doing good? What is your typical response when you become burnt out or run down in the mission of sharing your gifts and talents with the world in order to spread the gospel message?

As distributors (disciples) of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it can be challenging. Sometimes we may feel like we're doing a lot of pouring, but we're not really being poured into. Weariness can sneak up on us like a bad habit if we let it. We can sulk in our spiritually fatigued state or get impatient with the lack of results in our "sowing" and stop. Paul knew hardship quite well when he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote the following: "And He (the Lord) has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NASB). Paul was no stranger to weariness, but Paul also knew the secret to finding strength

amidst the chaos that seemed to follow him no matter where he went. That strength didn't lie with Paul, but instead with the One who created him. When you feel like giving up, remember whose glory this enslaved world needs to see. Rely on His strength to substitute your weakness and press on knowing the hope ahead.

12. In a day in an age where likes, loves, tweets, re-tweets, and hashtags are the benchmarks for "success", how can we know that the good we're doing in this dark world will garner us a "well-done" on the front porch of eternity?

13. Explain how the fruits of the Spirit that Paul listed out in Galatians 5 could be used as indicators that we are on the right track in our spiritual walk.

Make no mistake about it, sowing to the Spirit will produce the fruits of the Spirit Paul outlined. Sometimes it takes encouragement from fellow believers to acknowledge the "good" our lives produce. And then, sometimes, we may not always notice the good we do. We may never hear how sharing our rescue story with that stranger passing by changed the trajectory of their family forever. We might not fully understand how our pain, suffering, and trials brought hope to that family down the street. We may not comprehend how our lives are affecting the lives of those around us, and that needs to be ok. Our "well done" doesn't come from people, it comes from Jesus. When we're standing before Him on the day of judgement, his "well done" will be the only one that matters.

14. Using Galatians 6:12-15, explain how the false teachers, with their twisted message of truth, were being hypocritical.

15. How was their behavior contrary to Paul's? Think about the message they were preaching as opposed to the message he was preaching.

16. Do you see any of this behavior in the pulpit today? Explain.

17. Paul says for the ones who understand that the cross isn't about what you can do for yourself, but what Jesus did for you, peace and mercy be upon them (Galatians 6:16). How might one experience "peace and mercy" by understanding this.

Paul ends his letter to the church by emphatically reminding them that no amount of human works can achieve what's already been done - for them and for us. He emphasizes the amount of hypocrisy on display for those trying to make a good showing of their flesh, by saying even the ones preaching circumcision won't do it themselves. Their boasting came from what they were accomplishing in their congregations (Galatians 6:13). Yet, Paul's message was completely opposite. It was one of hope. A hope not anchored in self but in the One who beckons us to die to self, and follow Him. Paul knew, and had the brand-marks of Jesus to show for (Galatians 6:17), that dying to self and following Jesus is freedom. It's this freedom that causes life to come from death, and it's this freedom that says no matter where you've been or what you've been through you are worthy because you have a redeemer that calls you His. This is the freedom we must cling to. This is the gospel we must distribute.

God is in the business of bringing dead hearts to life, beauty from ashes, restoration from demolition, joy from sorrow, and reconciliation from separation. He went to great lengths to purchase your freedom, and we mustn't forget it. When people, seemingly *good* and well known people, try to get you to follow them with their effective communication skills and charming personalities, follow Jesus instead. When the ways of the world are enticing your trust, trust Jesus instead. When there's an opportunity to receive recognition and accolades the world gives, choose the "well done" Jesus provides instead. And while this enslaved world in which you're living tries to lure you in with a false identity and faux perception of freedom, stand firm in Jesus Christ. Dear sister, know that He already accomplished the work so you didn't have to, and know that He is the sustainer of your freedom as you share that freedom with others who are enslaved to this world.

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