

The Book of Galatians, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 12: Doing Good to All; Bearing Burdens

Galatians 6:1–10

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

As Galatians draws toward its close, Paul shows what life in the Spirit looks like in the practical life of the church. The doctrinal threads of the letter now bear fruit in concrete community: gentle restoration of the fallen, mutual burden-bearing that fulfills the law of Christ, humble self-examination, support for those who teach the word, and persevering generosity. The climactic principle is that of sowing and reaping, which warns that our choices have real and lasting consequences and ties the reaping of eternal life to persevering in sowing to the Spirit. The lesson should present holy, loving community not as an optional add-on but as the natural outworking of the gospel of grace.

The teacher should give particular weight to the sowing and reaping passage, which carries the heaviest doctrine here. It reinforces a theme woven through the whole letter and consistent with our heritage: that salvation is preserved through a persevering, obedient faith, and that how we live truly matters. The promise that we will reap eternal life if we do not give up assumes that giving up is possible, and so it stands with the letter's earlier warnings against falling away. At the same time, this is not a gospel of earning; it is the call to keep sowing to the Spirit out of the grace already received, trusting God for the harvest in due season.

Pastorally, this passage is a portrait of the kind of church the gospel creates. Aim to form students into people who restore the fallen gently rather than judging them, who both carry others' burdens and humbly let their own be carried, who test their own work instead of comparing, and who do not grow weary in well-doing. Help them see that every act of good is a seed sown, and that a life patiently sown to the Spirit yields a harvest of eternal life.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul says, "if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (6:1). What is the goal and the manner of dealing with a fellow believer who has fallen into sin, and how does this differ from how people often respond to others' failures?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul addresses the delicate moment when a believer is "caught in any transgression." The goal he sets is not punishment but restoration, and the manner is "a spirit of gentleness." The word restore was used for setting a broken bone or mending a net, a careful, skilled work aimed at making something whole again. The fallen brother is not to be discarded but repaired.

Contrast this with our common instincts. When someone falls, especially someone who had a reputation, people often respond with harsh judgment, gossip, or a quiet satisfaction. Paul calls for the opposite: a gentle, humble movement toward the person for the purpose of healing. The aim of all loving correction is always restoration, never the destruction of the one who fell.

Note who is to do this work: “you who are spiritual,” that is, those walking in the Spirit, bearing his fruit, including the gentleness Paul just named. Restoration is not for the harsh or the proud but for those mature enough to handle a wounded soul with care. The manner of the correction reveals the maturity of the corrector.

Underline the warning that follows: “Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” The one who helps the fallen must remember that they are equally capable of falling. This humility keeps restoration gentle and guards the helper from the pride that comes just before a fall.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Restoration, not punishment, as the goal of correcting the fallen (Galatians 6:1)
- Gentleness as the required manner of restoration
- The spiritually mature, walking in the Spirit, as those fit to restore
- Humble self-watchfulness guarding the helper from the same fall

Discussion Prompts

- What is the goal of confronting a fallen brother or sister?
- How does gentle restoration differ from judgment and gossip?
- Why must the one who restores keep watch on himself?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul tells us to keep watch on ourselves when we help the fallen, lest we too be tempted. When someone around you stumbles, does your first instinct tend toward judgment, gossip, or gentle restoration, and what would it take to grow in the latter?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the mirror toward our instinctive reaction to others’ failures. It is sobering how quickly the human heart, even the religious heart, moves toward judgment when someone stumbles. There can be a hidden pleasure in another’s fall, a sense that it makes us look better by comparison. Paul calls us to examine that reflex.

Help students notice the forms judgment takes. It may be open criticism, or the quieter sins of gossip dressed up as concern, distancing ourselves from the fallen, or a smug gratitude that we are not like them. Each of these treats a wounded person as a target rather than a patient in need of care.

Point to the root that gentleness grows from. We move toward the fallen with gentleness when we remember our own weakness and the grace we ourselves have received. The person who knows how much they have been forgiven, and how easily they too could fall, finds judgment hard and mercy natural.

Call for growth in this very area. Invite students to consider a recent time someone fell and to ask honestly how they responded. Then encourage them to cultivate the humility and gentleness that would move them, next time, toward restoration rather than condemnation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The heart's reflex toward judgment when others fall
- Gossip and distancing as subtle forms of condemnation
- Gentleness rooted in remembering our own weakness and forgiveness
- Mercy toward the fallen as a fruit of received grace

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your instinct go first when someone stumbles?
- What hidden satisfaction can we take in another's fall?
- How does remembering your own forgiveness soften your response?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul commands, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2). What is the law of Christ, and how does the practical work of carrying one another's burdens actually fulfill it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul gives one of his tenderest commands: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Some burdens are too heavy to carry alone, crushing weights of grief, temptation, illness, or hardship, and God designed the church so that we get underneath them together. To bear another's burden is to share the weight that is pressing them down.

Define the law of Christ. It is not a return to the law of Moses but the new covenant ethic of love that Jesus taught and embodied, summed up in his command to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). Christ bore our burden of sin at the cross; we fulfill his law by bearing one another's burdens in love. Burden-bearing is cross-shaped living.

Show how this fulfills the law in a way mere rule-keeping never could. The Judaizers wanted to fulfill the law through external markers like circumcision. Paul says the law is truly fulfilled when love gets underneath a brother's weight and helps carry it. This is what God wanted all along, a community that loves like Christ.

Make it concrete. Bearing burdens takes practical shape: showing up in a crisis, listening without fixing, helping with a need, praying through a long ordeal, walking with someone through temptation. The law of Christ is fulfilled not in grand gestures but in the steady willingness to share another's load.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Burden-bearing as fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)
- The law of Christ as the new covenant ethic of love (John 13:34)
- Christ bearing our burden as the pattern for bearing one another's
- Love fulfilling the law in a way external rule-keeping cannot

Discussion Prompts

- What is the law of Christ, and how does it differ from the law of Moses?
- How does carrying a burden together fulfill that law?
- What does practical burden-bearing look like in real life?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul calls for mutual burden-bearing. Are you more comfortable helping carry others' burdens than letting others help carry yours, and why is it often so hard to admit that we need help?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses on a hard truth: burden-bearing runs in two directions, and many of us are far more comfortable giving help than receiving it. We will gladly carry another's load while refusing to let anyone near our own. Paul's command requires both.

Help students examine their reluctance to be helped. Pride tells us we should manage on our own. Fear tells us that if people saw our true struggles, they might think less of us. A false self-sufficiency keeps us isolated under weights we were never meant to carry alone. Refusing to let others help is not strength; it is a quiet refusal of the community God gave us.

Show that receiving help is itself an act of love and humility. When we let others bear our burdens, we give them the gift of obeying the law of Christ, and we honor the body of Christ as God designed it. A church where only some are allowed to be needy is not yet the family Paul envisions.

Encourage a step toward openness. Invite students to consider whether they are willing to let someone help carry a burden they have been hiding, and to take one step toward honesty with a trusted brother or sister. Mutual burden-bearing begins when someone is brave enough to be carried.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Burden-bearing as mutual, both giving and receiving help
- Pride and fear as barriers to letting others carry our burdens
- Receiving help as an act of humility that honors the body
- Authentic community requiring honesty about our needs

Discussion Prompts

- Are you more comfortable helping others or being helped, and why?
- What makes it so hard to admit you need help?
- What burden could you let someone help you carry this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says “each will have to bear his own load” (6:5), just after saying we should bear one another’s burdens (6:2). How do shared burden-bearing and personal responsibility fit together rather than contradict each other?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul seems to say two opposite things in the same breath: “bear one another’s burdens” (6:2) and “each will have to bear his own load” (6:5). The apparent tension dissolves once we see the difference between the words. The burdens of verse 2 are crushing weights too heavy for one person; the load of verse 5 is the pack each person is responsible to carry, the duties and accountability that are properly our own.

Explain how the two fit together. We are called to help each other with the overwhelming weights of life, and we are each responsible before God for our own walk, choices, and accountability. Helping one another does not erase personal responsibility, and personal responsibility does not excuse us from helping one another. Mature community holds both.

Apply it to two opposite errors. Some people refuse all help and try to carry every crushing burden alone, ignoring verse 2. Others try to offload onto everyone else the personal responsibility that is rightly theirs, ignoring verse 5. The healthy believer carries their own load faithfully and lets the family share the burdens that are too heavy.

Bring it to accountability before God. Paul notes that we will each give account for our own work. This sober reality keeps us from both excessive dependence and prideful isolation, as we take responsibility for our own walk while gladly sharing the heavy loads of others.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The distinction between crushing burdens and one’s own load (Galatians 6:2, 5)

- Mutual help and personal responsibility held together
- The error of carrying everything alone versus offloading our duties
- Personal accountability before God for our own work

Discussion Prompts

- How do bearing others' burdens and bearing your own load fit together?
- Which error are you more prone to, isolation or offloading?
- How does accountability before God shape both?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul warns, "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself," and tells each to "test his own work" rather than compare with others (6:3-4). Where are you tempted to measure yourself by comparison with others, and how would honestly testing your own work before God change that?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul warns against self-deception: "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." He prescribes a cure: "let each one test his own work," rather than finding his sense of worth by comparison with his neighbor. The comparison game is a trap, and Paul wants us free of it.

Expose how comparison works. We measure ourselves against others to feel superior, or we measure ourselves against others and feel crushed. Either way, we have made our neighbor the standard rather than God. Comparison breeds pride in those who think they come out ahead and despair in those who feel they fall behind, and both are forms of self-deception.

Offer the better way of testing our own work. Instead of asking how we stack up against others, we bring our own lives before God and his word and ask honestly how we are doing in his sight. This kind of honest self-examination produces neither pride nor despair but humble, realistic growth.

Make it personal and concrete. Invite students to notice where they habitually compare, whether in spirituality, success, parenting, appearance, or service, and to redirect that energy toward honestly testing their own walk before God. The freedom Paul offers is the freedom to stop keeping score against everyone else.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-deception in thinking we are something when we are nothing (Galatians 6:3)
- Testing our own work before God rather than comparing with others (Galatians 6:4)
- Comparison breeding both pride and despair

- Honest self-examination producing humble growth

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to measure yourself against others?
- How does comparison breed both pride and despair?
- What would it look like to test your own work before God instead?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says, “let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches” (6:6). What does this teach about a believer’s responsibility to support the teaching of God’s word and those who give themselves to ministry?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul gives a practical instruction: “let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.” Those who benefit from the teaching of God’s word have a responsibility to support, materially and otherwise, those who give themselves to that teaching. The flow of good things runs both ways between teacher and taught.

Explain the principle behind it. The work of teaching and preaching the word is essential to the church, and those devoted to it deserve the support of those they serve. Paul makes this argument elsewhere as well, that those who proclaim the gospel should be supported by it, just as the ox is not muzzled while it treads the grain (1 Corinthians 9:11–14; 1 Timothy 5:17–18). Supporting sound teaching is part of valuing the word.

Apply it to congregational life. A church shows what it treasures by what it sustains. Generously supporting faithful teaching of the word, and honoring those who labor in it, reflects a high view of Scripture and of the ministry God has given to build up his people. Neglect in this area often signals a low view of the word itself.

Guard against distortion. This is not a call to enrich teachers or to make ministry a business, and Paul elsewhere warns against greedy teachers. It is a call to honor and sustain the genuine, faithful labor of teaching God’s word, sharing good things with those who feed us spiritually.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The responsibility to support those who teach the word (Galatians 6:6)
- Material support for gospel labor as a biblical principle (1 Corinthians 9:11–14; 1 Timothy 5:17–18)
- Supporting sound teaching as an expression of valuing Scripture
- Honoring faithful ministry without making it a means of greed

Discussion Prompts

- Why should those taught support those who teach?
- How does a church's support reveal what it treasures?
- How do we honor teaching ministry without distorting it?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul urges, "let us not grow weary of doing good" (6:9). In what area of doing good are you most tempted to grow weary or give up right now, and what would help you persevere?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul exhorts, "let us not grow weary of doing good." He knows that doing good is tiring, and that good people get worn down. The danger is not usually a dramatic decision to stop loving, but a slow exhaustion that tempts us to quit when the results are not visible and the gratitude is missing.

Help students name where weariness threatens. It may be in caring for a difficult family member, serving in the church, raising children, persevering in a hard marriage, or showing kindness to people who never seem to change. Doing good without apparent return is one of the great tests of the Christian life.

Offer what sustains perseverance. Paul anchors endurance in the promise of harvest: "in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." We keep going not because we always see fruit now, but because we trust that God's harvest is coming. We also persevere by drawing on the Spirit, leaning on the church, and fixing our eyes on Christ, who did not grow weary in doing us good.

Encourage one act of persistence. Invite students to identify the area where they are most tempted to give up doing good and to recommit to it this week, trusting God for a harvest they may not yet see. The call is simply not to quit before the season of reaping comes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9)
- Perseverance anchored in the promise of a coming harvest
- Endurance sustained by the Spirit, the church, and the example of Christ
- Faithfulness measured by not giving up rather than by visible results

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to grow weary in doing good?
- What helps you keep going when you see no results?
- How does the promise of harvest sustain your perseverance?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul gives a solemn principle: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap ... the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life," adding that we will reap "if we do not give up" (6:7-9). What does the law of sowing and reaping teach about how seriously our daily choices matter, and how does it connect perseverance in sowing to the Spirit with reaping eternal life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries the heaviest doctrinal weight of the lesson, drawing together a theme that runs through the whole letter. Paul states an unbreakable principle: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." The moral universe is not random. As surely as seed determines harvest in a field, the kind of life we sow determines the kind of harvest we reap. God will not be fooled by appearances.

Unfold the two harvests Paul names. "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." Every choice is a seed. A life sown to the flesh, given over to its cravings, yields decay and ruin. A life sown to the Spirit, walking in him and doing good, yields a harvest that ends in eternal life. The daily, ordinary choices of our lives are not small; they are seeds with eternal consequences.

Draw out how seriously this means our living matters, against any cheap view of grace. Some imagine that, because we are saved by grace, the manner of our living is finally irrelevant. Paul says God is not mocked. We cannot sow to the flesh year after year and expect to reap eternal life, any more than a farmer can plant weeds and harvest wheat. This does not overturn justification by faith; it reveals that genuine, saving faith sows to the Spirit, and that the harvest of eternal life comes at the end of a life persistently sown that way.

Notice the crucial condition: we will reap "if we do not give up." The promise of reaping eternal life is held out to those who persevere in sowing to the Spirit. This stands with everything the letter has taught about a living, persevering faith, and against the idea that the harvest is guaranteed regardless of whether we continue. Giving up is possible, and Paul urges us not to, precisely because the harvest hangs on our not quitting. Yet this is not anxious earning; it is the patient, grace-empowered sowing of those who trust God for the harvest in his time.

End with both sobriety and hope. The principle is sobering: we really will reap what we sow, and God is not deceived. But it is also full of hope, because it means no good seed is wasted. Every act of love, every choice to walk in the Spirit, every refusal to grow weary, is a seed that God himself will bring to harvest in due season. Help students take their daily choices seriously as the sowing of an eternal harvest, and keep sowing to the Spirit without giving up.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The certain principle of sowing and reaping, for God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7)
- Two harvests: sowing to the flesh reaps corruption, sowing to the Spirit reaps eternal life (Galatians 6:8)
- The seriousness of daily choices as seeds with eternal consequences
- Genuine saving faith expressed in a life sown to the Spirit, against cheap grace
- Eternal life reaped by those who persevere and do not give up (Galatians 6:9)
- Persevering not as anxious earning but as grace-empowered sowing that trusts God for the harvest

Discussion Prompts

- What does sowing and reaping teach about how much our choices matter?
- How does this passage warn against treating grace as if living were irrelevant?
- Why does Paul tie reaping eternal life to not giving up?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole passage. Paul calls us to do good to everyone, “and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (6:10). Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, this week, to sow to the Spirit by doing good to someone, beginning with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the passage into a clear, practical call: “as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” The whole life of Spirit-filled community comes down to sowing good seed, beginning with the family of God and reaching out to all. The lesson should end by moving students toward one concrete act of good.

Help them see the priorities Paul sets. We do good to everyone, with no one excluded from our love, and we give special attention to our brothers and sisters in Christ, the household of faith. The church is meant to be the first place our goodness lands, a family that takes care of its own even as it blesses the world.

Press for one specific seed. Ask each student to name one concrete way they will sow to the Spirit this week by doing good to someone, restoring the fallen, bearing a burden, supporting a teacher, encouraging the weary, beginning with the household of faith. The aim is a single, deliberate act of love.

Close by lifting their eyes to the harvest. Every seed sown to the Spirit is gathered by God for a harvest of eternal life. Send students home not merely resolved to try harder, but encouraged that their smallest acts of good, done in the Spirit and not given up, are seeds the faithful God will surely bring to harvest.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doing good to all, especially the household of faith (Galatians 6:10)
- Love for the world rooted first in care for the family of God
- Concrete acts of good as sowing to the Spirit
- The certainty of God's harvest for seed sown in the Spirit

Discussion Prompts

- What is one concrete way you will do good this week?
- Why does Paul give special priority to the household of faith?
- How does the promise of harvest encourage your everyday acts of good?