

The Body of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: Bearing One Another's Burdens

Galatians 6:1–10

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine and ethic at the center of this lesson is the law of Christ fulfilled through burden-bearing love within the body. Paul, having defended the gospel of grace throughout Galatians, now shows what gospel freedom is for: not self-indulgence, but serving one another in love (Galatians 5:13), restoring the fallen, carrying burdens, and doing good. What is at stake is the recognition that practical, sacrificial love for one another is not an optional add-on to church life but its very fabric and a fulfillment of Christ's law (v. 2; compare John 13:34–35). A congregation that holds sound doctrine but does not actually bear one another's burdens has missed something central to what Christ commands.

Several points deserve careful handling. First, restoration (v. 1) introduces the church's gentle, redemptive response to a sinning member, aimed at saving the erring; this prepares the ground for Lesson 10 on restoration and discipline, and quietly affirms that a Christian can fall and be restored (consistent with our study's rejection of "once saved, always saved"). Teach restoration as the goal, with gentleness and self-watchfulness, not harshness. Second, hold together the apparent paradox of verses 2 and 5: we carry one another's crushing burdens, yet each bears his own load of personal responsibility before God. Mutual care does not cancel personal accountability, and personal responsibility does not excuse us from helping others. Third, the promise of verse 9 (a harvest in due season) is the antidote to the very real weariness of long obedience in love.

The formational aim is to make burden-bearing concrete and personal. It is easy to admire this passage and avoid its cost. Help students examine their actual response to others' struggles (move toward, or hope someone else handles it), their willingness both to carry and to be carried, and the places they have grown weary in doing good. Press toward one concrete burden to help carry, or one to let others help them carry. The goal is a congregation that is not merely doctrinally sound but a true community of practical, persevering, burden-bearing love, which is itself a powerful witness to the watching world (John 13:35).

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" (v. 1). What does this command reveal about how the church is meant to respond to a member who falls into sin, and why is the goal restoration rather than condemnation or mere tolerance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 1 sets the tone for the whole passage with the church's response to a fallen member: "restore him in a spirit of gentleness." The word restore was used for setting a broken bone or mending a net, a careful, healing work.

Stress that the goal is restoration, not condemnation and not indifference. The church is to be neither harsh (crushing the fallen) nor permissive (ignoring the sin), but redemptive, gently working to bring the brother back to wholeness.

Note who is to do this: "you who are spiritual," that is, those walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), marked by the fruit of the Spirit, including gentleness. Restoration is the work of mature, gentle members, not the harsh or the self-righteous.

Connect to the seriousness of sin and the possibility of falling. The passage assumes a real Christian can be caught in real transgression and needs real restoring. This is consistent with the New Testament's call to ongoing faithfulness, against the idea that the saved cannot fall.

Anticipate Lesson 10. This gentle, personal restoration is the first and most common form of the church's care for the straying, before any more formal steps. Most restoration happens quietly, one gentle brother at a time.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Restoration, not condemnation or indifference, as the church's goal.
- Gentleness as the spirit of restoring a fallen member.
- The spiritual and mature as those fit to restore.
- The reality that a Christian can fall and be restored.
- Personal, gentle restoration as the first form of the church's care.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the goal restoration rather than condemnation or tolerance?
- What does the word restore (mending, resetting) suggest about the work?
- Who is qualified to restore a fallen brother, and why?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul tells those who help a fallen brother to "keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted" (v. 1). When you become aware of someone else's failure, are you more tempted toward harsh judgment or toward a quiet pride that thinks it could never happen to you? How does honest awareness of your own weakness change the way you would help?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows the warning, “keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted” (v. 1). The one who helps the fallen must guard his own heart.

Name the two dangers. One is harsh judgment, looking down on the fallen from a height. The other is a quiet pride that thinks, that could never be me, which is itself the seedbed of a fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Show how self-awareness changes everything. The person who knows his own weakness helps gently, humbly, as one beggar showing another where bread is found. Awareness of our own vulnerability produces compassion.

Aim for a posture of humble watchfulness: helping others while honestly remembering our own capacity to fall, and guarding against the pride that precedes a fall.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-watchfulness when helping the fallen.
- Harsh judgment and prideful self-confidence as twin dangers.
- Awareness of one’s own weakness producing compassion.
- Humble watchfulness against one’s own temptation.

Discussion Prompts

- When you see another’s failure, do you lean toward judgment or false security?
- How does honest awareness of your own weakness change how you help?
- What does humble watchfulness look like in practice?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (v. 2). What is “the law of Christ,” and why does Paul say that carrying each other’s burdens is how we fulfill it? What does this teach about what God most wants to see in His church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a central doctrinal block. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (v. 2). The law of Christ is the law of love, summed up in loving your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14) and supremely modeled in Christ Himself (John 13:34).

Explain the contrast with the false teachers of Galatians. They wanted to bind the old law’s yoke on people. Paul says the law that now governs us is the law of Christ, fulfilled not by ritual but by self-giving love that carries others.

Draw out the staggering claim: burden-bearing love is how we fulfill the law of Christ. This is not a minor virtue but the heart of what God wants from His people. Love for one another is the defining mark of Christ's disciples (John 13:35).

Apply it to the church's priorities. A congregation can be busy and orthodox and still fail at this central thing. God most wants to see His people actually carrying one another in love, which is the fulfillment of His Son's law.

Ground it in the gospel. We bear others' burdens because Christ bore ours; He carried our sins and sorrows to the cross. Burden-bearing love is the overflow of grace received.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The law of Christ as the law of love (Galatians 5:14; John 13:34).
- Burden-bearing love as the fulfillment of that law.
- Love for one another as the defining mark of disciples.
- Orthodox busyness that can still miss this central thing.
- Christ bearing our burdens as the ground of our bearing others'.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the law of Christ, and how does burden-bearing fulfill it?
- Why is this practical love so central to what God wants in His church?
- How does Christ bearing our burdens move us to carry others'?

Question 4

Student Question:

Burden-bearing requires both the humility to carry others and the humility to let yourself be carried. Which is harder for you, drawing near to help someone else, or admitting your own burden and letting others help you? Why?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses both directions of burden-bearing: carrying others and letting ourselves be carried. Both require humility, and most of us find one harder than the other.

Help the self-reliant see their difficulty. Some readily help others but cannot bear to admit their own need or accept help. Their independence, though it looks strong, isolates them and robs the body of the chance to love them.

Help the passive see theirs. Others find it hard to move toward someone else's burden, held back by busyness, awkwardness, or fear of getting involved. They must learn to draw near.

Aim for the harder direction. Whichever is more difficult for the student, press one concrete step: a burden to help carry, or a need to admit and a hand to accept.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Burden-bearing as both carrying and being carried.
- The self-reliant who cannot admit need or accept help.
- The passive who struggle to move toward others' burdens.
- Humility required in both directions.

Discussion Prompts

- Which is harder for you, helping others or letting yourself be helped?
- What drives that difficulty?
- What is one concrete step in the harder direction?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul gives what sounds like a paradox: "bear one another's burdens" (v. 2), yet "each will have to bear his own load" (v. 5). How do these two fit together, and what does it teach us about the balance between mutual care in the body and personal responsibility before God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This doctrinal block resolves the apparent paradox of verses 2 and 5: "bear one another's burdens," yet "each will have to bear his own load." Different words are used: a crushing burden (baros) we help carry, and a load (phortion) of personal responsibility each must carry.

Explain the harmony. Some weights are too heavy to bear alone, grief, crisis, the aftermath of sin; these we carry together. Other responsibilities are properly our own, our own accountability before God, our own duties and choices; these no one can carry for us.

Guard against two errors. One is a false self-sufficiency that refuses help with crushing burdens, misusing "bear your own load." The other is a false dependence that shirks personal responsibility, misusing "bear one another's burdens." Both distort Paul.

Note the accountability dimension. Verse 5 looks toward each person's answer before God (compare 2 Corinthians 5:10). Mutual care never cancels personal responsibility; we will each give an account.

Apply it wisely to church life. A healthy body carries one another's crushing burdens while still calling each member to bear his own load of responsibility, neither neglecting the struggling nor enabling the irresponsible.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The distinction between a crushing burden and one's own load.
- Carrying together what is too heavy to bear alone.
- Personal responsibility and accountability before God (v. 5).
- Guarding against false self-sufficiency and false dependence.
- A body that both carries the struggling and calls each to responsibility.

Discussion Prompts

- How do verses 2 and 5 fit together rather than contradict?
- What kinds of weight are meant to be carried together, and which alone?
- How does mutual care coexist with personal responsibility?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul warns against self-deception: "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (v. 3). Where might pride or self-sufficiency be keeping you from the humble work of burden-bearing, either by making you feel above it or by making you unwilling to be helped?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question follows verse 3: "if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Pride is the great enemy of burden-bearing.

Show how pride blocks both directions. It makes us feel above the humble work of carrying others, and it makes us unwilling to admit our own need and be carried. Either way, self-importance isolates.

Expose the self-deception. The proud person imagines a strength and standing he does not have. Honest self-knowledge, seeing ourselves as we are before God, frees us for the lowly love of burden-bearing.

Aim for one place where pride is hindering burden-bearing, and a concrete act of humility: stooping to help, or admitting need.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride as the enemy of burden-bearing.
- Self-importance that feels above helping or below being helped.
- Self-deception versus honest self-knowledge.
- Humility that frees us for lowly love.

Discussion Prompts

- Where might pride be keeping you from burden-bearing?
- Does it make you feel above helping, or unwilling to be helped?
- What concrete act of humility would counter it?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says, "let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (v. 9). Why does Paul assume that doing good will tend to make us weary, and what does he offer to sustain us in the long, often unrewarded work of loving and serving others?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 9 names a real danger: "let us not grow weary of doing good." Paul assumes that sustained well-doing tends to tire us. Love over the long haul is wearying work.

Validate the weariness honestly. Helping people is often slow, unrewarded, and sometimes unappreciated. Burdens recur; people relapse; gratitude is scarce. It is no surprise that we grow weary.

Point to Paul's sustaining promise: "in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." There is a harvest coming. God Himself guarantees that good done in faith is never wasted, even when the results are unseen and delayed.

Apply the timing. "In due season" means God's time, not ours. The temptation is to give up before the harvest. Perseverance, not intensity, is what reaps. The promise is to those who do not give up.

Ground perseverance in faith, not results. We keep doing good because God has promised a harvest and because love is the law of Christ, not because we always see fruit now.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The real weariness of sustained well-doing.
- The promise of a harvest in due season.
- God's timing, and the temptation to quit before the harvest.
- Perseverance grounded in God's promise, not in visible results.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul assume doing good will tend to make us weary?
- What does he offer to sustain us in long, unrewarded love?
- How does the promise of a harvest change how we persevere?

Question 8

Student Question:

Think of an area where you have grown weary in doing good, where serving, helping, or loving someone has worn you down. What is feeding that weariness, and how might Paul's promise of a harvest "in due season" renew you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question makes verse 9 personal: where have you grown weary in doing good? Most students can name a place where loving or serving has worn them down.

Help them diagnose the weariness. Is it lack of visible results, lack of gratitude, the sheer length of the road, doing it in their own strength, or neglect of their own renewal in Christ? Naming the cause helps.

Apply the harvest promise to that specific place. God sees the unseen good; the harvest is coming; the call is not to quit before due season. Renewal often comes from lifting our eyes from immediate results to God's sure promise.

Aim for one weary place to renew rather than abandon, leaning on the promise of a harvest in due season.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Naming a specific place of weariness in doing good.
- Diagnosing the cause of the weariness.
- Applying the harvest promise to that place.
- Renewing rather than abandoning the good work.

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you grown weary in doing good?
- What is feeding that weariness?
- How might the promise of a harvest in due season renew you?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul commands, "as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (v. 10), and he frames the whole passage as fulfilling the law of Christ through burden-bearing love. Why does Paul give a special priority to doing good within the family of faith, and what does it say about a congregation if its members do not actually

bear one another's burdens? How central is this kind of practical love to what the church is meant to be?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest block, gathering the passage's vision. Verse 10 commands doing good to everyone, "and especially to those who are of the household of faith," and the whole passage frames burden-bearing as fulfilling the law of Christ. Practical love is central to the church's identity.

Explain the special priority. We are to do good to all people as we have opportunity, but with a special priority for the family of faith. This is not partiality born of favoritism but the natural love of a family for its own, the household caring first for its members (compare 1 Timothy 5:8).

Draw the diagnostic for a congregation. If a church's members do not actually bear one another's burdens, restore the fallen, and do good to one another, then for all its activity it is failing at something central to what Christ commands. The law of Christ is fulfilled in such love, or it is not fulfilled at all.

Make the central claim: this practical, burden-bearing love is not peripheral to the church but near its heart. Jesus said the world would know His disciples by their love for one another (John 13:35). The church is meant to be a visible community of carried-and-carrying people.

Hold together love within and love beyond. The priority on the household of faith does not cancel doing good to everyone. A church strong in internal love overflows in good to the world. Both belong to the law of Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doing good to all, with special priority for the household of faith.
- Family love for one's own, not favoritism.
- Burden-bearing love as central to the church's identity.
- Love for one another as the world's sign of true disciples (John 13:35).
- Internal love overflowing in good to the world.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul give special priority to the household of faith?
- What does it say about a church if its members do not bear one another's burdens?
- How central is this practical love to what the church is meant to be?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Galatians 6:1-10. Having seen that the church is meant to be a community that gently restores, carries burdens, and does not grow weary in doing good, name one specific burden God is calling you to help carry, or one you need to let others help you carry, and what is the first step?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone, turning the passage toward one concrete act of burden-bearing. The lesson has shown the church as a community that restores, carries, and perseveres in love.

Press for specificity in either direction: a particular burden to help carry (a person to move toward, a need to meet, a fallen brother to gently restore), or a particular burden to let others help carry (a need to admit, a hand to accept).

Guard against vague good intentions. The whole lesson warns that admiration without action changes nothing. Name the person, the burden, and the first step.

Close on the law of Christ. To carry a burden this week is to fulfill the deepest law of the kingdom and to make the love of Christ visible. Invite the student into that costly, beautiful work.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A concrete act of burden-bearing, carrying or being carried.
- Specificity over vague good intentions.
- Gentle restoration of a fallen brother where needed.
- Fulfilling the law of Christ through visible love.

Discussion Prompts

- What one burden is God calling you to help carry?
- Or what burden do you need to let others help you carry?
- What is the first step, and when will you take it?