

Spirit-Filled Living Series

Sharing Sin Struggles (Gal. 6:1-6)

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Sharing Sin Struggles

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: I Can't Do That

1. I was having a conversation with someone, and that person was talking about someone else who they thought was consistently treating them in a way that was inappropriate. As they explained the situation, it became clear that the other person was not acting contrary to any specific passage of Scripture. However, the other person was not being very considerate about how their actions were affecting the person I was talking to. Perhaps the principle from Philippians 2:4 of looking out for the interests of others was being violated.
2. As the conversation went on, it was clear the person I was talking to had tension with the other person (was in conflict), they were upset the other person was acting the way they were, and the situation was having a negative impact on the relationship. Several negative statements about the other person were made by the person I was speaking with.
3. I suggested to the individual I was in conversation with that it would be a good idea to go and talk to the other person about the situation because they might not even be aware of the impact their actions were having. Instead of complaining about the other person (I knew this person was not coming to me looking for advice or counsel), they should take steps that would lead to a possible resolution and reconciliation. I said this was what Jesus taught in Matthew 18 when He said, "Now if your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private".
4. The person I was speaking with immediately responded, "I can't do that." This person thinks of themselves as a Christian, and they have been part of the church for a long time—several decades. Even so, there was an immediate rejection and dismissal of the way Jesus teaches His people to live. Why? Probably because it would make them feel uncomfortable.

B. The way we respond to other people doing wrong matters. When we are confronted with other people doing wrong, even if the wrong isn't directly against us, our commitment and love for Jesus will influence how we respond to these types of situations. As disciples, Jesus wants us to develop certain relational habits that are healthy and help foster peace and reconciliation. Ignoring and complaining about others doing wrong is not the way God wants us to handle these types of situations.

C. In Galatians 6:1-6, instruction is provided to train and equip disciples how to respond to and addresses situations in which a person is doing wrong. While this instruction can apply to and be implemented with parents and their children, spouses, extended family members, neighbors, coworkers, and friends, the immediate context is focused on relationships within the local church community. Paul is teaching the people in the churches of Galatia what to do when they observe other disciples doing wrong.

II. Be Ready to Help Others

- A. Following a detailed explanation of what it means to live a Holy Spirit filled life in chapter five, the sixth chapter of the letter to the churches in Galatia opens with instruction about how living a Spirit filled life impacts the Jesus-centered community and relationships within the church. The pursuit of a gospel-created Spirit filled lifestyle will change how those who are connected to Jesus relate to one another. There is a certain culture and expectation within the community of disciples that relationships will be conducted in a specific way. These Jesus-centered relationships have habits of interacting with one another that is not common anywhere else. The culture of the church community is distinct from the cultures of every other human society and organization.
- B. The culture of the church and the type of relationships that are normalized within the church are described as follows:
 - ¹ Brothers *and sisters*, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. (Gal. 6:1)
- C. As stated in the last chapter, disciples who are following Jesus will be focused on living a life drenched with Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God empowers disciples to implement and obey the way of life described in the word of God so that the word of God is fulfilled in disciples as they act according to the new nature God has given them. In living faithfully before God, disciples do not live in sin. However, Paul knows the human condition well. He understands that even individuals whose hearts are set on obeying God and who have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in them will still occasionally get off course (“even if a person is...”, v. 1). Instruction is provided for how to respond to a situation in which a person who belongs to God finds themselves entangled in going beyond the proper moral boundaries established by God (“caught in any wrongdoing”, v. 1).¹ These individuals appear to be in over their head and they can’t get out on their own; the heavy load is unbearable—they are in need of help (“another’s burdens”, v. 2).²
- D. Surprisingly, these instructions are given from the perspective of the person who intervenes to help the person who is caught in wrongdoing, not the person who is responsible for committing the wrong. The perspective presented by Paul will impact our approach to this topic. In other writings, Paul provides instructions for the person who is struggling with sin, but here, Paul provides instructions to those who are helping others with their sin. The people who are discipling others are the focus here.
- E. Before providing the solution to the problem, Paul identifies the type of person who is qualified and prepared to effectively carry out this task (“you who are spiritual”, v. 1). While all disciples can be spiritual and anyone in the church has the potential to do the spiritual work Paul is

¹ Paul could either mean a person is surprised and taken unaware by wrongdoing or the person who finds the disciple doing wrong didn’t expect it. Robert Stutzman, [*An Exegetical Summary of Galatians*](#), 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 232. Given the writing perspective and topic focus, it seem more likely that Paul is referring to the person who is surprised to find another disciple caught in wrongdoing.

² Ronald Y. K. Fung, [*The Epistle to the Galatians*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 291.

talking about, not every disciple is currently ready or prepared to do so. All Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, but not all Christians are led and walk by the Spirit so the fruit of the Spirit appears in their lives.³ In this, Paul shares the perspective of Jesus. Not every person is in a good position to be able to adequately help others work through the wrong they are doing (Mt. 7:3-5). Some may even try to use another person's faults as a weapon against them rather than providing the medicine needed to heal a wound.

- F. Every disciple can become a spiritual person who can help others who are caught in wrongdoing. However, there are specific qualifications for being competent to do so. According to Paul, a spiritual person is a person who has the Holy Spirit living in them (Gal. 4:6, Rm. 8:9), understands the message of God (1 Cor. 2:13), has a knowledge of God's will by possessing spiritual wisdom and understanding (Col 1:9), possesses discernment (1 Cor. 2:15), has grown into spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 3:1)—through nourishment from Jesus (1 Cor. 10:3-4), is walking in the Spirit and is not living for the flesh (Gal. 5:16), and is living obediently to the commands of God as they accept spiritual authority (1 Cor. 14:37, Phil. 2:12-13). This is a brief description of a spiritual person from Paul's perspective.⁴ These are the types of disciples who are qualified and capable of helping others caught in wrongdoing.
- G. What should we be doing when we become aware another follower of Jesus is stumbling by being caught in wrongdoing? The first Christian life relational habit is to intervene for the benefit of the other person ("restore such a person", v. 1). This is a command to action, and disciples are therefore obligated and required to do it—this isn't optional and it can't be safely ignored. The standards God has for relationships within the church might be higher and more involved than we normally think or realize. If other people are trapped in a pattern or habit of wrongdoing, it is our responsibility to point it out and help the other person correct what they are doing.
- H. As spiritual people, it should be our desire to help the person who is stumbling spiritually and set them right again on the proper path of the Christian life.⁵ Like a fishing net being repaired, a broken bone being set, or a damaged wall being fixed, our goal in this spiritual correction is to put the person and their life back in order so they can be complete and whole. To be restored is to be brought back into full harmonious relationship with God and the people of God.⁶ We are to help others "mend your ways" (2 Cor. 13:11). Restoration is a process rather than a one-time event.⁷
- I. As this restoration process is being carried out, it should be done in a particular way. Two descriptions of the manner of restoration are provided. Restoration should be done humbly with a kind demeanor. The person helping others be restored from wrongdoing need to possess an emotional disposition that is mild and even tempered empowered by the Holy Spirit ("in a

³ John R. W. Stott, [*The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 161.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4, Galatians 5:16-25

⁵ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [*The Epistle to the Galatians*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 286.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, [*Galatians*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 375.

⁷ Douglas J. Moo, [*Galatians*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 375.

spirit of gentleness”, v. 1). Gentleness is a character trait that is fruit produced by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Restoration should not be harsh, heavy handed, or cruel. There is to be a warmth and tone of love connected to the type of spiritual correction that fixes wrongdoing and leads to restoration. Yes, there are times when a firm hand and stern correction are necessary, but we should strive to be as gentle as possible in every situation.

- J. Another attitude that those who help others overcome wrongdoing are to have is cautiousness and self-examination (“looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well”, v. 1).⁸ The spiritual danger and temptation for those who are helping others with their sin struggles is pride and self-righteousness.⁹ It can be easy to start thinking that we are morally superior to others because we are not struggling with the wrongdoing that other people are struggling with. We may be tempted to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to be thinking (Rm. 12:3). Every spiritual success and all spiritual progress come to us as a gift from God (1 Cor. 4:6-7). The only reason we can do the right things and act the way God wants is because God first worked in us to enable us to do so (Phil. 2:12-13). Those who are involved in making disciples should not think they are spiritually superior to those they are helping. If we want to compare ourselves to anyone to determine how spiritually successful we are, we should compare ourselves to Jesus—the only standard that matters. If we exclusively compare ourselves to Jesus rather than other people, we will easily maintain our humility and avoid prideful self-righteousness.
- K. We must have the courage to overcome the many reasons we use to reject and ignore this command. The excuses and self-justifications seem endless. We are familiar with the type of thinking that we use to dismiss our need to obey this command such as fear, feeling uncomfortable, worrying about a negative reaction and the pushback we will experience, the possible damage that might be done to the relationship, our own guilt and sinfulness (including feeling unqualified, accusations against us could be made, not being able to control our emotions), the possibility of it leading to an quarrel, etc. The bottom line is that confronting and correcting those who do wrong for the purpose of restoration is a natural, expected, and required part of relationships within the church.
- L. Not only is neglecting this command rampant in the church for the above reasons, but it is also common for our disobedience to go a step further. We don’t just reject and ignore this command; we are hostile to it. When our wrongdoing is pointed out to us, we act offended. We label those who faithfully carry out this command as judgmental, unloving, and self-righteous. We assume those who confront other people’s wrongdoing for the purpose of helping them grow spiritually are the bad person—the villain in the story. Who are they to tell someone else they are wrong? This is directly contradictory to God’s perspective. Confronting others because

⁸ The three logical options for the nature of this temptation are: 1) anger at the offender, 2) self-righteousness and pride, 3) the same sin that is being committed by the offender. The most likely option is number 2 given the content of verses 3-4. Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 375.

⁹ Robert Stutzman, *An Exegetical Summary of Galatians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 235, Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 298, Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 274.

of their wrongdoing for the purpose of restoring and building them up spiritually is good and loving (Gal. 6:9). Not only does this perspective happen, but people also get angry at those who obey this command—even within the church! Our disobedience of this command is not just rejection and neglect; it is also hostility and opposition to what God tells us to do.

- M. Helping others respond to and gain victory over their sin struggles shouldn't become a witch hunt. We aren't supposed to be the Sherlock Homes sin detective in which we go searching to uncover all the moral deficiencies of those around us. Instead, we should respond the way God desires us to when clear and obvious patterns of sin cross our path as we are doing life together. While an awareness of other people's sin should not be sought out and we should give others the benefit of doubt, when other people's sin is forced on us, we must respond for the benefit and well-being of the other person.
- N. Deciding to intervene to help another person shouldn't be an immediate reaction made in an emotional moment, but a thoughtful decision motivated by love and concern for the other person. We shouldn't develop an attitude of being the moral police. There is a specific procedure outlined for restoring a child of God who is doing wrong and what to do when they refuse (Mt. 18:15-17, 2 Cor. 5:16-20, 1 Thess. 4:3-8).

III. Be Ready to Endure Difficulties Created by Helping Others

- A. If we obey this command of God to restore those who are doing wrong, we will naturally encounter the challenges that result from doing so. These unavoidable difficulties are experienced because we are being faithful to God. The first command naturally leads to a second command, which is also the second relational habit that should exist in the culture of the church. As we are carrying out the restoration process, we must also develop the habit of this second command.
- B. Here is the second God given command for how relationships are supposed to work within the church because of Spirit-filled living:
 - ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks that he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for boasting, but* to himself alone, and not to another. ⁵ For each one will bear his own load. (Gal. 6:2-5)
- C. The second relational habit for genuine disciples is to patiently endure the challenges created by the weaknesses and faults of others ("Bear one another's burdens", v. 2). Helping others makes our lives more difficult, which is why we are told to endure something unpleasant or difficult.¹⁰ Helping others carry the weights of life will impact those who decide to get involved. These burdens are heavy weights that a person must carry for a long time leading to a need for help.¹¹
- D. The immediate context identifies the burden as helping others fix their wrongdoings. However, this is not the only burden disciples are to help one another with. While sin is the occasion and immediate circumstance, Paul uses sin as the launch pad to bring in other burdens as well. Helping others with their sin struggles is not the only type of burden we should help one

¹⁰ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Galatians 6:2 "bear"

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another with—all of life's burdens should be our concern (Rm. 15:1). Any weight that a person is carrying that they are not equipped to handle (a pressing need (Tit. 3:14)), can be assisted with. These burdens could be spiritual, physical, financial, emotional, or relational. Disciples can make life easier for one another as we help individuals carry the weights of life that create genuine needs.

- E. Paul further explains what he means in another text:

¹ Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not *just* please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to *his* edification. ³ For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written: "The taunts of those who taunt You have fallen on me." (Rm. 15:1-3)

- F. If this relational habit is developed in our life, we will be living a life of love and doing that which God desires us to do ("and thereby fulfill the law of Christ", v. 2).¹² In chapter five we were instructed that loving others is the fulfillment of the law of Jesus—living as Jesus requires (Gal. 5:14, 1 Cor. 9:21). Here, the same language and wording is used, indicating one of the expressions of love for others is intervening to help them fix the wrongdoings they are trapped in. Correction is an act of love, and it is good (Gal. 6:9). Even though many view this type of relational activity as inappropriate and judgmental, God says it is good and loving. We need to decide whether we will adopt the values of the culture or the values of Christ on this issue.
- G. As we help one another with the burdens of life, we must be mindful of those who are unwilling to take proper responsibility for themselves ("each one will bear his own load", v. 5). The term for "load" here is a different one than the one used earlier in verse 2 and refers to the regular responsibilities, duties, and burdens of life that are proper for us to carry ourselves.¹³ An unwillingness to carry the burdens God places on us is laziness. Disciples should not take advantage of the kindness and generosity of others. Those who think their problems are other people's responsibility misunderstand the way and instruction of God. While other people can help us, we are ultimately responsible for ourselves. In a culture that tends to blame others for our problems, this should not be the case for a disciple. Since each person is responsible for themselves, it is just as inappropriate to try to take credit for the success of others ("he will have reason for boasting, but to himself alone, and not to another", v. 4). If another person is able to have victory over a sin issue, we should not take credit for that success just because we helped them.
- H. Paul is referring to the future judgment of God when every person, including disciples, will stand before Jesus and be accountable for themselves. When our lives are assessed by God, the only aspect that we are responsible for is ourselves. We will not be evaluated on the types of situations we have to navigate in life. We won't be corrected for how other people treat us. Our rewards will have nothing to do with the way other people respond to our efforts to spiritually impact them. Each person is responsible only for ourselves.

¹² Romans 13:8-10

¹³ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [The Epistle to the Galatians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 291.

- I. Here is how the reality being referred to is explained:

⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for his deeds *done* through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

- J. This important truth helps us avoid both pride and despair in a healthy way. Other people's success or failure in life, and especially spiritual things, is not our responsibility—it is theirs, and they will stand before God and be accountable for it. Another person's fruitfulness and spiritual progress is not up to us. Another person's indifference and spiritual failure is also not our fault. We can do our best to spiritually invest in the lives of others, but the impact of our effort is the responsibility of the other person, not us. Knowing this creates a healthy differentiation that enables us to connect with others while not allowing their responses to control us.
- K. Everyone is responsible for carrying their own load but at the same time, we are responsible for helping one another with their own load. Discernment is needed to know when others are in genuine need of help verses those who might be trying to avoid their personal responsibility for dealing with the situations that God has given them. The Holy Spirit will help us take these commands and know how and when to apply them to the various situations of life in a way that is pleasing to God. When we observe some people doing wrong, we will cover it in love because it is a rare moment of weakness and the person doing the wrong knows the wrong they did and are repentant of it. In other cases, we will need to intervene because the person doing wrong isn't aware they are doing wrong and they are blind to the negative impact they are having on themselves and those around them.
- L. We must realize that every disciple has personal responsibility to carry burdens. All of us will have to carry burdens in this life at one point or another—perhaps even every day until this life is over. No one is permanently burden free. No one is exempt from this reality. We will become discouraged, frustrated, and possibly even angry at God if we go through life with the expectation that we should have a burden free life. God does not promise a burden free life.
- M. The burdens we are responsible to carry will look different. For some, they will carry the burden of relational stress from a difficult spouse/marriage or a child who has wandered away from God. Others may have a physical burden due to some bodily malfunction, a major ongoing ailment, or chronic pain. Some disciples carry general burdens such as having to endure an unpleasant and stressful work environment. The types of burdens we are responsible for carrying that can't be alleviated by our efforts or wisdom vary greatly. However, God uses them all to do a good work in our lives, the lives of others, and to bring about His good plan.

IV. Be Ready to Teach God's Word to Others

- A. Interjected within this instruction is a reference to the word of God. Apparently, in Paul's thinking, the teaching of the word of God is closely tied to restoring a wrongdoer and bearing one another's burdens in some way. This becomes evident when we realize Paul clearly picks up the same focus following this interjection (Gal. 6:7-9). In Galatians 6:1-5, the topic of focus is dealing with a person who is doing wrong. There is the interjection in Galatians 6:6, and then

the focus returns to the restoration process in Galatians 6:7-10 (which we will cover next week). Therefore, verse six sits in the middle of a discussion on the same topic.

- B. Here is the interjection connected to the discussion, but the specific way it is connected is not directly stated:

⁶ The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. (Gal. 6:6)

- C. While uncertain, it appears Paul is providing a relevant example of what it looks like to help one another carry our burdens related to the teaching of the word of God.¹⁴ How instruction in the word of God is connected to helping others be restored from wrongdoing and carrying one another's burdens is not stated directly, but it appears as if the apostle Paul is assuming the truth and relevance of a text in Psalms:

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. (Ps. 119:9)

- D. Doing what is morally good and a life of purity before God requires a knowledge and implementation of the word of God. How is a person restored? Through learning from and living by the word of God. The word of God informs disciples what they should do, and the Holy Spirit's power enables disciples to carry out the principles of the word of God. A life that is morally good is defined by a life of faithfulness and obedience to the word of God. If a person is going to be restored to a state of wholeness and health in the Christian life, they must learn to conform their life to the message and standards of the Bible. True restoration with God is impossible while living contrary to the word of God.
- E. In this example, the burden of financial support is provided by those who are taught by the teachers within the church who spend a significant portion of their time teaching the word of God to others ("The one who is taught the word is to share all good things", v. 6). The burden of studying, knowing, and explaining the word of God is provided by the teacher ("the one who teaches", v. 6). In this manner, there is a mutual burden sharing within the church community.
- F. We need to take careful note of the fact that the wrongdoing is defined by, the correction happens aligned with, and the restoration process play out according to the word of God ("the word", v. 6). Unfortunately, this good command of God can be abused and weaponized. Instead of attempting to restore those who are doing wrong, this command is used as justification to condemn and mistreat those who hurt us or are doing something we don't like. We aren't supposed to correct other people according to our own personal desires or preferences. Doing so usually leads to manipulation. Instead, disciples are to confront and correct violations of the word of God—genuine moral missteps (wrongdoing). We don't create or set the standards by which we hold others accountable, God does. This command should not be used as a club with which to beat others so that we can get our own way.

¹⁴ It is likely Paul used this specific example of bearing one another's burdens because it is needed and useful to the situation happening in the Galatian churches with the false teacher's emphasis on the need to obey the Law. It might be the case that the church stopped financially supporting the teachers of the church that Paul set up for them. While speculative, this scenario is entirely possible. Timothy George, [Galatians](#), vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 420.

- G. Paul expects disciples to know the word of God well enough to be able to accurately apply it to various sin issues in a way that helps others cease and move away from a variety of sinful courses (Rm. 15:14). Those who are spiritually mature are commanded to do it. God expects mature disciples to be competent enough in their knowledge and use of the Bible to know how to use it to guide others out of various forms of wrongdoing in which people get stuck. We are to understand the word of God well enough to help others use it to navigate life. This spiritual work is not merely the work of a pastor or elder. This is the responsibility of every spiritual disciple within the church community.
- H. Do you know the Bible good enough to be able to do this? Do you know what the Bible says and the instructions it gives for dealing with the common sins we encounter in the lives of others? If not, we need to start paying more careful attention to the word of God and learn how to respond to different wrongdoings. Too often, we set the bar too low for God's expectations of us in the Christian life. Generally, people think God doesn't expect or require much from them. The Bible presents a very different picture. We are commanded by God to be able to use His word to restore others in the church who are sinning. This ability is a proper expectation that God has for us because He has provided us with everything we need to do it.

V. Conclusion

- A. Disciples need to be aware that they have the responsibility of helping others who are unable to free themselves from wrongdoing. While this is a costly act of love for the benefit of another person, this course of action follows the example of Jesus. We burden ourselves to help others with the burdens they are carrying, all while not neglecting personal responsibility. This self-sacrificial loving action is both required and expected by God.
- B. We need to learn to develop relational habits that do not come naturally to us. Intervening to help another person stop doing wrong and be restored to God is a learned skill. We will have to fight against our default human nature to obey this command of God. However, the benefits of doing so are peace, joy, and healthier relationships.