

“Weed ‘Em and Reap”

Galatians 6:1-10

Series: Be Free Week 6. Freedom from Destructive Decisions

The Rev. Dr. Douglas C. Hoglund

The Woodside Church

July 12, 2026

Vines. They keep creeping toward me. In the church office we have this nice little countertop covered with plants. And then someone gave us a new plant – it’s large, leafy and lethal. It’s vine is crawling across the countertop. It looks like it’s planning to strangle the whole terrarium. The truth is: its stalks are stalking me. It’s headed straight for my office. The vine I fear the most is Poison Ivy. I am highly allergic. If I just touch its leaves my limbs turn to raw meat, my face swells up like the Elephant Man.

My wife tells me the burning, itching rash is really my body’s reaction to the poison ivy oil. Over the years I’ve tried countless remedies to combat the rash. I vow not to touch it only to find myself unconsciously scratching it raw. I coat myself with calamine lotion until I am covered with a nice pink crust. The only remedy is a steroid which stops the reaction from the inside. In the same way, deadly sins are my soul’s reaction to temptation, stress, hurts, struggles in my life. When I brush up against one of these they might cause me to swell up with pride, break out in greed, get a rash of envy, burn with anger, itch for lust and excess.

In Galatians, Paul tells us the true way to Be Free is Grace – a free gift from God we don’t have to earn. Like the steroid, it also works on the inside. The Law cannot save us and set us free. Nor does freedom mean going wild and indulging desires. Grace sets us free from the restraints of the Law. Grace delivers us from burning itch of temptation. Grace removes the rash of sin and restores us to a healthy relationship with God. We receive God’s grace, His gift of freedom and salvation, by faith. We place our lives in Jesus’ hands and He fills us with the Holy Spirit. God lives in us. Like the steroid, the Spirit stops the power of sin from the inside. The Spirit helps us to stop feeding our sinful, selfish nature. The Spirit guides us to grow spiritual fruit. It sounds simple and easy. So why do we keep rubbing up against sin?

One fatal mistake: we try to live the Christian life alone. In America we equate freedom with independence. We’ve been independent of Great Britain for 250 years. But are we independent of each other? At the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Ben Franklin reportedly said, “We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.” We need each other. I do not produce my food, manufacture my car or pump my water. We are not independent but interdependent. In fact, the more interdependent we become, the freer we are to contribute our unique part.

We like being interdependent...until it comes to faith. Then suddenly the walls go up. For some reason, one’s relationship with God is supposed to be private – a solo act. Keep it to yourself, keep it a secret, keep quiet about it. People even go so far as to say, “I can be a follower of God or Jesus without any connection to a congregation. I’m spiritual not religious. It’s just me and God and I don’t need anyone else.” The Bible says the opposite. How can you be a follower of Christ if you aren’t part of the Body of Christ? God built us with a need to network. Jesus frees you from the prison of isolation and independence. He makes you a part of His community. He plants you in His garden with other believers. The bottom line: if you want to get rid of sin’s weeds, other believers are what you need. How do we help each other?

First, we help each other **Gently Weed Out Sin**. Paul writes,

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. Galatians 6:1

The phrase, “caught in a sin” can mean either a Christians’ secret sins have just been revealed or a brother or sister in Christ is trapped by sin too powerful to stop. In both cases, the response is the same. Notice Paul does not say other believers should criticize, kick out, condemn or condone the sin. We “restore that person gently.” When weeds infiltrate a garden, you can violently rip them out, but they will come right back. You can spray weed killer on them but you’ll destroy the good plants. You can ignore them and let them take over. Or you can gently, patiently uproot them one by one and restore the garden to good health and order.

Helping fellow believers uproot a sin weed is difficult work. Paul gives some very specific directions on how to do this.

But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load. Galatians 6:1-5

You can’t help someone else out of the pit of sin if you are not on firm ground. I remember one mission trip to the Dominican Republic when we dug many ditches for walls and columns. Because it was hot, difficult work, we kept trading places. Soon the ditch was so deep and the side walls so fragile it was tricky to get the person out without a collapse. The one above needed to be on firm ground while offering a helping hand to the one below.

As you attempt to gently restore someone caught in sin, Paul advises, “watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” One temptation is to fall into the same trap of sin. If someone has a problem with money, alcohol, sex, anger or self-pity you might get so close to the edge the walls collapse and you wind up with them in the pit. Another mistake is to start off comforting them and wind up enabling them. A third temptation is pride – instead of offering a helping hand you fold your arms and look down in judgment.

Instead of complicity, condoning or condemnation, Paul recommends collaboration – literally “working together.” His advice seems contradictory:

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...for each one should carry his own load. Galatians 6:2,5

Everyone has burdens: problems I can’t handle alone. My struggles and weaknesses are not the same as yours. I’m no better than you. You’re not superior to me. Each of us can use a helping hand. We need each other. This requires trust, honesty, openness and love. Some of my issues I can’t see. I need you to speak the truth in love with me. I can do the same for you. We can help each other work through it. That’s how we carry each other’s burdens. At the same time there are changes I need to make, weeds I need to pull, sins I need to stop and you can’t do that

for me. Nor can I take responsibility or control of you. These are the loads each of us carries. And this requires love – a genuine, gentle, non-judgmental concern for a fellow believer. This is why Paul adds,

The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Galatians 5:14

When you are caught in sin it is my responsibility to lovingly, patiently, gently restore you just as it’s your responsibility to lovingly restore me.

Second, we **Sow Seeds in the Spirit**. Paul continues,

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:9-10

In Galatians 4, Paul points out there are two natures inside a Christian, the selfish sinful nature and the Spirit. He brings up both natures again in this verse but notice you sow the same seed in both cases. Even something good, if sown in selfish ground, will produce a bitter awful harvest. The love of a parent, one of the purest forms of love, can become controlling and smothering if it is used selfishly. Your career, if pursued for selfish reasons, can become all consuming. Even the Bible, used by powerful people, can create crusades and inquisitions. But when family, marriage, career, finances, faith and time are planted in the Spirit, when they are willingly offered up to God, they become the way Jesus cares for your soul and pours eternal life into this world. Selfishness will destroy a marriage, a family, a career, a life. The Spirit will fill all these with the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness. Don’t numb your soul. Nurture it.

Third, **Reap and Share**. Paul finishes this passage with,

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9-10

What is the point of all this seeding and weeding? To give love away. Why does Jesus gather us into the church – so we could hold worship services, study the Bible, make friendships, comfort each other? Those are all good things but they fall short of our mission: to love God, love people and make disciples of Jesus. We need to “Share with Others:” share the saving Good News of Jesus Christ, share our resources with a hungry needy world, share our hope in a dark and discouraged world. As I said last week: no tree can eat its own fruit. It must give it away. We must give away the fruit of the Spirit to the family of believers and beyond.

I see your love for the family of believers – especially through our growth groups and microchurches. I just heard one of the Woodside guys say to me with tears in his eyes, “The thing I love most about Woodside is my Growth Group. Those guys are there for me. They inspire me. They mean the world to me.” Want to receive the love of God and the fruit of the Spirit? – Put down roots in a Growth Group or a Microchurch and start to grow.

One the highest callings and most important gifts of love we give is sharing God’s Word with the next generation. We need adults to teach in our Sunday School, Adventure Club,

School of the Rock and Vacation Bible School. Do we want our children to be raised by iPhones or by Jesus? Let's raise a generation of kids who love the Lord and live by the Spirit!

I also see your love reaching beyond the family of believers. We could have celebrated Woodside's 80th birthday with a big party for ourselves. Instead, our elders decided to spread seeds of God's love. Woodside is joining forces with Bucks County Opportunity Council and a new charity called Angel Housing Solutions to help families living below the poverty line become self-sufficient. Angel Housing Solutions purchased a building with four apartments in Warminster. Two will be rented at the regular rate while two will be highly subsidized for those working to get on their feet financially. Woodside family, you gave over \$70,000 to subsidize one of these apartments for at least four years.

Last week the Bucks County Herald ran a story on your gift. Kathy Beveridge, from Angel Housing Solutions, explains the reason for their charity,

Increasing access to affordable rental housing is the most effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty and increasing economic mobility in the United States.

The first Mom and two children who moved into one of the Warminster apartments says,

Life is not easy. Now, with housing, it's helped with everything. It's very difficult to make progress when you don't have a stable home. It was definitely a big sigh of relief. What I always wanted for myself, now I have for my children.

With approximately 80 families in Bucks County looking for affordable rental housing, the need is great. Kathy Beveridge says,

It's our hope the example of Woodside Church will inspire other organizations and individuals to join us and help in whatever way they can.

We all need each other to grow as God intended. Make no mistake, Satan will keep spreading the poison ivy of sin into the soil of your life. That's why we need to trust one another, love one another, bear one another's burdens. You don't need to tell everyone your troubles. You just need to have one or two close Christian brothers or sisters who know everything that's going on inside you. Let God weed, seed and feed your faith through a brother or sister in Christ. Then give the fruit of the Spirit you reap away.