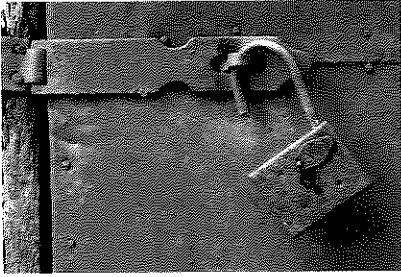


The Life That Makes a Difference



Topic

God's glory

Theme

Believers should perform good works for God's glory.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will make God's glory his or her motivation for living.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 15
- Paper and pencils

Scripture Focus

Galatians 6:6–18

Summary

Good works cannot earn salvation, but God rewards the good works Christians perform with pure motives. Paul sought to glorify Christ in his ministry to the Galatians. He endured persecution as he served Christ, but he gloried in the cross and offered words of blessing to all who valued Christ's work on the cross.

Outline

- I. Expect a Satisfying Reward for Ministry (Gal. 6:6–10)
 - A. Support your teacher (6:6)
 - B. Sow to the Spirit (6:7, 8)
 - C. Sustain your focus (6:9, 10)
- II. Establish a Sincere Motive for Ministry (Gal. 6:11–18)
 - A. The Judaizers' selfishness (6:11–13)
 - B. Paul's selflessness (6:14–18)

Memory Verse

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

GETTING STARTED

Keeping Up Appearances

“Keeping up appearances” means to act as if everything is fine and normal when it isn’t. Most everyone has kept up appearances at one time or another.

ASK: When, if ever, have you kept up appearances?

ASK: What motivated you to do so?

Paul wrote to the Galatians about their motives for the Christian life. He emphasized the importance of proper motives that lead to meaningful service and lives. A person who “keeps up appearances” spiritually speaking won’t make much of a difference with his life.

Obligated to Attend

At every wedding ceremony, including your ceremony if you’re married, there are guests that aren’t particularly happy to be there. They are the ones daydreaming about fishing, playing golf, shopping, or napping. These guests are attending the wedding out of obligation. They are doing the appropriate thing but for the wrong reason.

ASK: How did you respond when you were obligated to attend an event that you wanted to skip? (Q1)

ASK: What motivated your response? (Q2)

Paul wrote about proper motives in his letter to the Galatians. He challenged his readers to do good for God’s glory. A person who serves God out of obligation won’t make much of a difference with his life. But God can do great things through a believer who serves Him for His glory.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Paul closed Galatians with a strong appeal for his readers to live for what really matters.

I. Expect a Satisfying Reward for Ministry (Gal. 6:6–10)

The Judaizers had stressed that what a person does is more important than what he is. Paul argued throughout Galatians that good works, or keeping the law, cannot earn salvation. But good works are not unimportant or unnecessary. Christians should practice good works and should expect God to reward them based on their motives for carrying out those good works (1 Cor. 3:10–14).

A. Support your teacher (6:6)

Paul reminded the Galatians that faithful teachers had built the Galatians’ spiritual lives. So, he laid down a principle for them to follow: “Let him that is

taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Gal. 6:6). The Greek word Paul used for “communicate” most likely refers to financial support. To some degree, all Christians are recipients of the teaching ministry of others. We all are indebted to those teachers and should be supportive of and loyal to them.

The Galatians had drifted perilously close to spiritual danger because they had not remembered their teacher Paul. He had won many of them to Christ and had grounded them in the faith. However, instead of truly valuing Paul and his teaching, they had embraced the false teaching of the Judaizers.

In verse 5 Paul stressed that each person should take personal responsibility for himself. However, he did not want the Galatians to carry this matter of individual responsibility too far, thinking that their Christian teachers should be responsible for their own financial support. The Galatians needed to maintain a balance in this matter.

ASK: What characterized the teachers who were deserving of the Galatians’ financial support (v. 6)? (Q3) *They taught the Word.*

ASK: Why didn’t the Judaizers deserve financial support? (Q4) *They taught their own doctrine.*

B. Sow to the Spirit (6:7, 8)

Following directly on his instruction to support the Christian teachers, Paul gave his reasons for the challenge. The Galatians were not to deceive themselves by thinking that they could legitimately shortchange their teachers. God will not be mocked, that is, treated with contempt (6:7). Those who treat God’s servants lightly are treating God lightly. In moving away from Paul’s teaching, the Galatians had actually turned their backs on God, Who was the source of Paul’s doctrine.

In addition, the Galatians needed to remember the law of sowing and reaping. Those who are careless in their sowing reap a skimpy harvest. Whoever desires a good harvest must sow in a good place. The application is clear: the Galatians needed to be committed wholeheartedly to Paul and to his gospel of grace. Their rejection of Paul and flirtation with the Judaizers would only make their lives barren.

READ: Galatians 6:8.

Believers must choose how to invest their lives (6:8). If they sow to their flesh to live for the desires of their sinful natures, they will reap corruption. In Galatians 5:19–21, Paul listed some of the corrupting works of the flesh. License leads to all sorts of evils. On the other hand, “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Those who have been liberated by Christ from their bondage to sin are free to live in the Spirit. However, they only have the potential for a fruitful life. To enjoy the harvest of spiritual life as God designed it, they had to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).

ASK: Is it possible, at least for a while, to sow to the flesh and yet appear to

be a godly person? Explain. (Consider Acts 5:1–11.) (Q5) *Yes. Godliness can be faked and merely lived outwardly while the heart remains corrupt.*

When a believer commits his or her daily life to the control of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit produces His fruit in that believer (5:22, 23). The harvest of spiritual fruit does not just happen. It requires the supernatural working of the Spirit, but it also requires the faithful sowing by the believer. We must make full use of our time, energy, and skills for the most important things in life.

ASK: What blessings come to those who sow to the Spirit? (Q6) *Victory over the flesh, participation in God's service, comfort during affliction.*

C. Sustain your focus (6:9, 10)

Doing what is right does not always result in immediate benefit. For this reason, Paul addressed both the Galatians and himself when he said, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (6:9).

ASK: How do you think Paul felt about ministry after learning about how the Galatians had wandered from the truth? (Q7) *Discouraged, disappointed, ready to give up.*

Not only must Christians sow in the right field, they must patiently wait for the right time. As any farmer knows, a long period of work precedes the harvest. Similarly, we must serve faithfully and must patiently trust that in His time God will give His promised reward.

ASK: What are some worthy motives for ministry? (Q8) *To glorify God, to see people grow in Christ, to earn Christ's praise in Heaven, to lay up treasures in Heaven.*

ASK: How have your motives for serving God encouraged you not to quit serving Him? (Q9)

Hard work produces weariness. Weariness is not necessarily a problem, but it can set us up for problems. Weariness in God's work could cause us to lose heart and to become disillusioned. When our efforts are not immediately rewarded with observable benefits, we can lose our focus on pleasing God and begin to pity ourselves.

To endure in our work for God, we must remember that (1) our work is for Him as our grateful response to His grace in our lives; (2) our work helps other believers as we bear one another's burdens; and (3) our work is guaranteed a reward, for God has promised that “in due season we shall reap.” If we keep our focus on these truths, rather than letting it get blurred by our feelings, we will be able to keep on for God.

ASK: How has your patience in Christian service been rewarded? (Q10)

ASK: What are some examples of spiritual sowing that often do not bear immediate results? (Q11) *Witnessing, praying for the needs of others, discipling a believer, giving generously to the church, teaching a Sunday School class.*

The Galatians may have felt like giving up on doing good, but Paul reminded them that this life serves as a time of opportunity for service (6:10). Believers should take advantage of every opportunity to “do good unto all men.” Believers have the obligation to live out good and godly lives in families, neighborhoods, schools, and places of employment. As unbelievers see the fruit of the Spirit producing practical deeds of goodness in the lives of believers, they may recognize a powerful testimony to the grace of God.

Believers should especially care for the needs of God’s family members. Paul urged the Galatians to do good “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (6:10).

II. Establish a Sincere Motive for Ministry (Gal. 6:11–18)

A. The Judaizers’ selfishness (6:11–13)

Paul did not usually write his letters himself. He dictated them. The letter to the Galatians is an exception to the rule. He wrote it entirely in his own handwriting (6:11). He must have felt compelled to write the letter personally, because the Judaizers had attacked him personally. Furthermore, the Galatian churches were the fruit of his first missionary journey, so they had a special place in his heart.

In the last few verses, Paul reminded the Galatians about the threat they faced from the Judaizers. Not only were the Judaizers teaching wrong doctrine, but they had wrong motives. Because the Jews in Galatia were persecuting Christians, the Judaizers were trying to escape persecution by adding the Jewish regulations to Christianity (6:12). Their doctrine, therefore, was not built on genuine conviction, but was an attempt to avoid the offense of the cross (5:11).

By adding Jewish regulations to the gospel, the Judaizers advanced an inconsistent theology. If circumcision was necessary, then it was necessary to keep the whole law. If the whole law was necessary, then the death of Christ was unnecessary. However, Christ’s death was not only necessary but also totally sufficient for the spiritual needs of all people. In trying to maintain good relations with the Jews, the Judaizers had undermined the gospel.

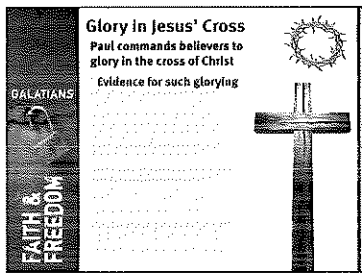
B. Paul’s selflessness (6:14–18)

After unmasking the Judaizers’ motives, Paul disclosed his own motives. He was selfless, for his chief goal was to serve the Lord, Who had saved him. The Judaizers gloried in their ability to control people, but Paul gloried in the cross of Christ (6:14).

READ: Galatians 6:14.

At one time in his life, Paul had prided himself on his knowledge of the Jewish laws and traditions (1:14). When he learned of salvation by God’s grace through the death of Christ, he abandoned his pride and trusted in Christ.

ASK: Why must God’s servants glory in the cross of Christ instead of in themselves? (Q12) *All that is deserving of glory in our lives results from God’s grace that was initially extended to us through the cross.*



RESOURCE: Display resource 15. **ASK:** What might be some evidence that a believer glories in the cross? (Q13) (Record or reveal answers.) *The believer doesn't clamor for attention; praises the Lord a lot; prays for strength and wisdom; volunteers for menial tasks; rejoices to serve God.*

Circumcision and the rest of Jewish law couldn't give spiritual life. Only God's grace through Christ can save sinners and transform them into a new creation (6:15).

READ: Galatians 6:15.

Paul wrote sternly to the Galatians to address their flirtation with the Judaizers that had put them in grave peril. Several times throughout the book he reassured them of his love for them by calling them "brethren" and "my little children." As he closed the letter, he gave a word of blessing to "as many as walk according to this rule" and to "the Israel of God" (6:16), a reference to believing Jews who experienced attacks by the Judaizers.

READ: Galatians 6:17.

If anyone doubted Paul's sincerity or integrity, all he had to do was see Paul's body. The Judaizers boasted about circumcision, but Paul bore in his body scars as a result of persecution (6:17). The Judaizers tried to avoid persecution by the Jews (6:12), but Paul didn't make such compromises. In Galatia the Jews led in stoning Paul and leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19). By God's enabling, Paul had survived the abuse and stood firm for Christ. His welts, bruises, and scars testified to his commitment to Christ and challenged the Galatians to stand fast in liberty.

ASK: How much persecution might a believer be willing to endure if he or she is motivated by self-glory? (Q14) *Most likely none.*

READ: Galatians 6:18.

In his closing salutation, Paul linked three important truths together. He addressed the Galatians as "brethren." His strong words had been born of loving concern. He had not rejected them, even though they were on the verge of abandoning him. Then he blessed them by "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Grace was the theme of the gospel and of this letter. Finally, he called for Christ's grace to be "with your spirit." The Judaizers had focused on the physical rite of circumcision, but the Christian life is a matter of the spirit. The Galatians were spiritual people in Christ, and they needed to live as spiritual people.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

What Do You Want on Your Tombstone?

READ: 2 Timothy 4:7.

These were among Paul's final words. Distribute paper and pencils to the

learners. Instruct them to write a brief statement that they would like to have on their gravestone as a testimonial to their lives.

Choosing to Serve God

ASK: What one specific charitable deed will you perform today out of love for the recipient and the Lord? (Q15)

ASK: How might you give glory to God for your service? (Q16)

ASK: With whom will you share the message of the cross this week? (Q17)

Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Make God's glory the motivation for living.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 6:14. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.

Living by Faith	
1.	8.
2.	9.
3.	10.
4.	11.
5.	12.
6.	13.
7.	

Galatians

FAITH & FREEDOM

