GALATIANS

Living in Grace-Shaped Community

Day 1: Restoring, not rejecting

Read : Galatians 6:1-10; Romans 15:5; 1 Cor 10:12

In Galatians 6:1 Paul speaks about *restoring* each other *gently*. The word "restore" literally translates to mean "to mend something torn that needs to be put back together". It's the same word that would be used in reference to torn fishing nets that needed to be mended together. This is exactly the gentle posture that Paul is calling the Galatians, and us, to take with those around us that have fallen into brokenness or sin in their lives.

If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

- GALATIANS 6:1

There can be a temptation in the church, and in our communities to judge those who are struggling. Especially if it's a sin that we personally don't struggle with or have a hard time relating to. This temptation of judgement can lead us to gossip about them, condemn them, or even out-right reject them from our communities. Often, this is due to our own pride and self-righteousness, or even our fears around what they are struggling with. Whatever the reason, Jesus never asks us to judge or reject anyone. Jesus simply calls us to love one another, just as He has loved us. When we remember ALL the mistakes we've made, ALL the ways that Jesus has loved us through them, and ALL the times we've been forgiven, that should cause us to pause before we pass judgement on anyone. Of course, loving like Jesus doesn't mean that we don't speak the truth, hold others accountable, have healthy boundaries, or have hard conversations. In fact, many times that is the most loving thing that you can do, because that's what is needed in order to restore them to Him. Our motivation and goal should always be to restore what was broken, through the guidance and strength of Jesus Christ.

- Can you think of a moment in your life where you needed mending? How would the outcome have been different if you had been rejected instead of restored?
- Is there someone in your life that needs restoration? Is God calling you to gently restore them & point them back to Jesus? What's the next step you need to take?

Day 2: Carrying burdens, not loads

Read : Galatians 6:2-5; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

When we initially read these verses in Galatians, verses 2 & 5 can seem a bit contradictory. Why does it say "carry each other's burdens", AND "each should carry their own load"? What's the difference, and how do we know if it's a burden or a load?

User Guide:

How to use this study guide:

- **Pray** : Ask God to reveal Himself to you.
- **Read :** Read the daily scripture, take notes, and write down anything the Spirit reveals to you.
- **Study :** Read the daily study section and prayerfully answer the discussion questions.
- **Act** : Take a step, even if it's small, to put what you are learning into action.
- **Gather & Share** : Gather with your GUMC small group and use the discussion section to share what you have learned, ask the hard questions, and receive prayer for anything you are struggling with.

- NOTE: If you need help finding a group - Reach out to our Discipleship Director, Melonie at: meloniep@gumchurch.com

This is one of those instances where the translation into English makes these verses tricky because we often use the words burden & load interchangeably. However, if we look to the original Greek word "burden", it means a heavy load, or authority bearing down on someone with great personal or eternal significance. This is a call for communal support, encouragement, and compassion in times where we are carrying something too heavy to carry alone. This could be overwhelming anxiety or depression, sickness, loss, or tragedy. As a community of believers, we are called towards empathy and compassion for those around us who are suffering.

The second mention in these verses is the word "load". This translates to "our personal responsibilities", and literally used for "a daily backpack that soldiers would carry". Loads are our own personal obligations and tasks that God calls each of us to do alongside Himself, and not dependent on others to do for us. God equips each of us with the abilities and strength to fulfill these personal needs, and calls us to healthy boundaries when others try to place their personal "backpacks", or responsibilities, on us. We are responsible for our own choices, feelings, mistakes, and peace. There is a difference in supporting someone going through a hard time, and taking ownership of their responsibilities. Healthy Christian community invites us to have grace & compassion for others without controlling, fixing, rescuing, overextending, or avoiding accountability.

- Is there a "burden" you feel God calling you to help someone carry? Is it bringing them a meal, taking them out for coffee, or maybe just a note of encouragement?
- Is there a "load" that you have been carrying, or that someone has been carrying for you, that needs to be given back to it's rightful owner? Ask God for wisdom in what steps you need to take to return it, or take it back, in a loving way.

Day 3: Giving with grace, not for approval

Read : Galatians 6:6; Matthew 6:1-4; Luke 6:32-36

WHY we give to others, is one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves. Sometimes we give because the love Christ gives us creates a spirit of generosity towards others inside of us. This is giving from grace and not expecting anything in return. Other times we give because we are afraid to disappoint, we are trying to earn favor, or we have a fear of losing relationship with someone. In both instances the outward action is the same, however, the motivation inside our hearts is very different. One is transactional with the goal being reciprocal giving, and the other is relational with the goal being to simply share the love the Christ has given to you with no expectation of reciprocation. Knowing that we are already loved and accepted by Christ allows us to give freely from grace, without needing to always be available, say yes, or meet everyone's expectations. We can give generously, without giving endlessly. Ask yourself these questions this week to determine whether your generosity is rooted in love, or whether it's driven by fear, guilt, or dependency on others or on their reciprocation.

- Can I say no without feeling guilty?
- Would I still do this if no one noticed or thanked me?
- Do I feel resentful because I'm giving beyond my capacity or limits?
- Do I feel responsible for making sure others are okay (managing other's emotions)?
- When someone is disappointed in me, can I remain at peace?
- Do I feel valued for who I am, or for what I do?
- Can I give generously, without expectations, trusting God with the outcomes?

GUMC Small Group Discussion

Use these questions for your weekly small group:

1. Which day represented the easiest, and hardest, relational principle for you to practice? Why?

- **Day 1 -** RESTORATION OVER REJECTION: telling the truth with gentleness to make room for growth
- **Day 2** - BURDENS OVER LOADS: helping without taking each others responsibilities
- **Day 3** - GENEROSITY OVER APPROVAL: giving out of love and grace without needing to earn approval
- **Day 4** - LOVE OVER CONTROL: cultivating faithfulness & leaving the outcome & growth to God
- **Day 5** - FAITH OVER BURNOUT: doing good while honoring our God-given limitations

2. Share your burden or load from Day 2:

Is there a burden that you need help with? Is there a load that you need to give over to God or to others?

Day 4: Sowing love, not selfishness

Read : Galatians 6:7-8; 1 Corinthians 3:6-9;

When Paul speaks about sowing and reaping in our relationships, it reminds us that our choices have consequences. He's not saying that the motivation behind our sowing should be to control outcomes, or to produce a desired response. We can't control the outcome, and if our inner motivation is truly selfishness to gain what we want, instead of love, then we aren't sowing seeds that will build our community. We are only responsible for the seeds we sow, but God is the one who makes them grow. There will be times that we sow kindness and someone responds with indifference, or when we sow truth and clarity someone responds in misunderstanding. Paul is not promising that every good action or choice will produce exactly what we want. However, he is saying that what we cultivate and the motivation behind it matters. Take time to think about the seeds that you've been sowing in your relationships lately. What seeds are you sowing in your relationships & in the community around you?

Seeds that harm	Seeds that build
Gossip, assumptions	Curiosity, listening, honest conversations
Resentment, avoiding responsibility	Accountability, forgiveness, ownership
People pleasing, overextending	Truth in love, healthy boundaries

Day 5: Do good, even when it's hard

Read : Galatians 6:9-10; Matthew 11: 29-30; Philippians 4:13

In these verses, Paul encourages us to persevere in doing His good work. He is recognizing that many times doing good isn't easy. Goodness can look like having a hard conversation, holding someone accountable, or establishing a boundary that allows us to love without resentment. Other times it may look like continuing to be faithful without receiving any recognition, reciprocity, or immediate desired results. It's not surprising that doing good could make us weary. Paul isn't calling us to toxic positivity, or to ignore our weariness. He's also not calling us to ignore our exhaustion, work past our limits, tolerate unhealthy patterns, or become responsible for everyone's wellbeing. Just as it says in vs. 10, "as we have the opportunity", God isn't asking us to be unlimited, omnipresent, or all-powerful. He isn't calling us to burn ourselves out doing good things, while striving to be God. He knows and understands our limits. He is calling us to do His good work, WHILE being yoked to Him (Matt 11:29-30) and to use His strength & guidance as we work alongside Him.

Let us not become weary in doing good.

- GALATIANS 6:9

- What causes you to grow weary in doing good? Is your weariness because of the work itself, or because of unrealistic expectations you have placed on yourself or you have allowed others to place on you?
- How could you practice doing the goodness that God has called you to do in His strength verses continuing to strive on your own? What needs to change?
- What is one meaningful act of goodness that God is calling you to do this week, or to continue doing, where you need His strength to persevere?

3. Are there areas where you have grown weary in doing good?

What would need to change in order for you to persevere in doing God's good work that He's calling you to do?

What is keeping you from making that change?

4. Questions or thoughts:

Write down any additional questions or thoughts you wanted to share with your group this week: