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# Spiritual Posture & Perspective

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## Overview

Genuine community can only be enjoyed in relation to the Gospel-focus of the participants. Any self-image that is “out of step” with the Gospel is destructive and will lead to either a false sense of self-righteousness or an overly self-deprecating devaluation. When the Gospel is more clearly understood, adherents are free to engage one another in vulnerable relationships that make everyone better.

## Comparisons

- Provoking – Competing with others; comparing my own strengths with their weaknesses so that I may perceive that I outdo them
- Envyng – Competing with others; comparing my own weaknesses with their strengths so that I may confirm my perceived inability to outdo them
- Both are from Conceit or self-centeredness

## Consider this...

“The Gospel creates a whole new self-image... Only the Gospel makes us neither self-confident nor self-disdaining, but both bold and humble... We look only at our own responsibility to take what we have and are, and offer it to God as a sacrifice of gratitude for what Christ has done.”<sup>1</sup>

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Passage: Galatians 6:1-5

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## Application

- Embrace true freedom from self-valuation
- Recognize your own faults when you see others’ fall
- Celebrate Realistically and Bear Burdens well
- Be Content

## Ask yourself...

*What faults do I see in others that I am unwilling to engage?*

*What faults do I see in myself that I am unwilling to engage?*

*What will you do to wage war against sin and embrace the Gospel?*

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<sup>1</sup>Keller, 159

## Galatians 6:1-5

**Intro:** The Christian life was never meant to be lived out of the context of a local church. American individualism has been confused with Christian living, and many people have come to misunderstand what a local church is, so the Christian life has been yanked from its rightful context. The result has been an increasing lack of distinction between the world and the Church, unhealthy relationships inside the Church, pseudo-Christian voices affirming all manner of ridiculous things in the name of Christianity, and a growing dissatisfaction felt among those who have 'tried the whole church thing.' What is the posture and perspective of a local church? How is the Christian life lived out in such a context? Well, the Bible has something to say about it.

### Preaching introduction:

This passage can be viewed in 3 (4) distinct sections.

(3 if you count only the verses 1-5 of chapter 6, but 4 when you realize that the main point is in the closing of the preceding chapter)

- 1) Main Point (5:25)
- 2) Dealing with Family Sin (v1)
- 3) Dealing with Family Pain (v2)
- 4) Dealing with Family Posture and Perspective (v3-5)

### EXPOSITION of the passage:

#### 1 MAIN POINT

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*5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

*26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

- **Spirit initiated and Spirit empowered life is a reality for Christians.**
  - Life produced *by* the Spirit of God will inevitably be lived *in* (empowered by, guided by, and accountable to) the Spirit of God; and such a life will always contradict worldly pursuits.

- **Such a life is ALWAYS to be lived in Gospel-centered Community.**
  - Many Christians in America may be more American than Christian; but what we need is a more Christian understanding of Christianity in community.
    - Individualism is an American essential.
      - Marks of American Individualism are: rugged independence, personal autonomy, and the superiority of self-interest.
        - Former American president, Herbert Hoover said, “[American] individualism differs from all others because it embraces these great ideals: that while we build our society upon the attainment of the individual, we shall safeguard to every individual *an equality of opportunity to take that position in the community to which his intelligence, character, ability, and ambition entitle him...*”<sup>2</sup>
    - Individualism is the antithesis of genuine Christianity.
      - Marks of genuine Christianity are: admission of utter dependence, reliance on caring community, humble submission toward others, and peaceful self-sacrifice.
        - Jesus Christ said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to love **one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for **one another**” (John 13:34-35).
          - Ray Ortlund - “The kind of God we really believe in is revealed in how we treat one another. The lovely gospel of Jesus positions us to treat one another like royalty, and every non-gospel positions us to treat one another like dirt. But we will follow through horizontally on whatever we believe vertically. Our relationships with one another, then, are telling us what we really believe as opposed to what we think we believe... [When] the gospel grips us at the level of conviction, we obey its implications whatever the cost. Therefore, if we are not treating one another well, then what we’re facing is not a lack of niceness but a lack of gospel. Our deficit is not primarily

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.hooverassociation.org/hoover/americanindv/american\\_individualism\\_chapter.php](http://www.hooverassociation.org/hoover/americanindv/american_individualism_chapter.php)

personal but theological. What we need is not only better manners but, far more, true faith.”<sup>3</sup>

**If we live by the Spirit, if we truly believe the Gospel, then we will walk by the Spirit – we will live as God’s Spirit commands and enables.**

**But what does this look like in a practical application?**

## **2 DEALING WITH FAMILY SIN**

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### *1a Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression...*

- **Family interaction is going to be messy!**
  - “*Brothers*” – Let’s all notice that Paul is referring to his audience again as ‘brothers.’
    - This reminds us that he is not merely exhorting and admonishing some random assembly, a social network, or an interest group.
      - Paul is pastorally addressing members of his spiritual family.
  - “*anyone*” – Not just anyone ‘anyone,’ but anyone of YOU... If anyone of the household of faith, *the family to which you belong*, is caught in sin/transgression, then you are to restore him/her.
    - Paul says elsewhere, “*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*” (1 Cor. 5:12)
    - And again he says, “*When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?*” (1 Cor. 6:1)
      - The idea is that the Bible understands a distinction between those who are part of the family of God and those who are not. But this is not the only distinction we find in the NT; **we also find distinct local expressions of God’s family in the form of local congregations/churches.**
        - Paul and Barnabas appointed elders/pastors for each assembly of believers in Lystra and to Iconium and to

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<sup>3</sup>Ray Ortland is senior pastor of Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and serves as a Council member with The Gospel Coalition. <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/rayortland/2014/05/24/one-anothers-i-cant-find-in-the-new-testament-2/>

- Antioch before they went on to somewhere else (Acts 14:23).
- Paul appointed Titus to find pastors for each town's congregation in and near Crete (Titus 1:5).
  - The church/congregation of Christians in Antioch decided to send financial support to the church/congregation of Judea, which was distributed by the pastors/elders in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).
  - Paul demands that a local church remove an unrepentant, sinning member from being counted among them (1 Cor. 5:1-2).
- *“caught in transgression”* – This carries the idea of one who has been overtaken by sin.
- We are foolish to think that sin is only found in others, and we are foolish to think that sin is merely a harmless appendage we wear.
    - What does it look like to be caught in sin/transgression?
      - Gill – “...through negligence, for want of caution, and so is carried away, either (1) through the treachery of his own heart, and the power of corruption; or (2) through the temptations of Satan, who goes about, and comes on the back of them, lays snares for them, and attacks them unawares, and takes all advantages of them; or (3) by the ill examples of others, whereby they are drawn aside, and into sin.”<sup>4</sup>
    - What are the real dangers of sin?
      - Sin results in slavery and bondage (Rom. 6:16).
      - Sin leads into more and greater sin (Rom. 6:19).
      - Sin brings shame and guilt (Rom. 6:21).
      - Sin ultimately ends in death and destruction (Rom. 6:23).
    - Who might be ‘*caught in sin*,’ and thus who should be wary of such a tendency within themselves?
      - Proverbs 20:9 – “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin?’”

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<sup>4</sup>Gill, See his commentary on Galatians 6:1

- Ecclesiastes 7:20 – “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”
- 1 John 1:8 – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

*1b you who are spiritual should restore him...*

- **YOU are responsible for your sinning brother.**
  - The “*spiritual*” people Paul has in mind are not some elite group, but regular church members who are living “*by the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:25).
    - Who are those who have been given life in the Spirit?
      - ALL CHRISTIANS
    - Who are those who are now living lives empowered by the Spirit?
      - ALL CHRISTIANS
    - So, who are the ‘*spiritual*’ ones who are responsible for a sinning brother?
      - ALL CHRISTIANS – especially those of the same local family
        - Important note: Christians should not be quick to condemn or attack their brothers and sisters, but neither should Christians be fearful or lazy about confronting destructive sinful patterns and behaviors. **Genuine love demands correction and encouragement.**
  - The term “*restore*” is translated from the Greek term *κατηρτίσω* (*katartizō*)
    - *katartizō* – fit together; join together for full destination or use – often the term was used to speak of setting a dislocated bone
      - Restoration may be (and often is) painful, but it is far less painful and destructive than leaving the situation alone.
        - The idea of restoration may be clearly seen in this passage from James 5:19-20 – “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

*1c in a spirit of gentleness.*

- **Christian brothers and sisters do not set out to harshly condemn; they set out to gently restore.**
  - Gentility is the by-product of having the right (Gospel) perspective. Remember that gentleness is one of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). Only then may we enjoy boldness and humility in concert.
    - Humbly, a brother or sister in Christ may come to help me confront my sin, but we both know that they are not able to judge me against themselves. For neither they nor I are free from sin.
    - Boldly, a brother or sister in Christ may come to help me confront my sin, because we both know that sin is a danger to us all. For we both have been freed from it and have need of constant reform.

*1d Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

- **You are not above any sinful brother.**
  - This is both an exhortation to remain humble in your approach and a reminder that sin is contagious.
    - Luther reminds us – “If David who was a hero of faith could fall so badly after he had withstood so many different temptations, who are we to think that we are more stable? These object lessons of God should convince us that God hates pride.”<sup>5</sup>
    - Barnes – “Remembering how liable you are yourself to err; and how much kindness and indulgence should therefore be shown to others. You are to act as if you felt it possible that you might also be overtaken with a fault; and you should act as you would wish that others should do toward you... The doctrine taught by Paul is, that such is human infirmity, and such the strength of human depravity, that no one knows into what sins he may himself fall. He may be tempted to commit the same sins which he endeavors to amend in others; [indeed] he may be left to commit even worse sins. If this is the case, we should be tender while we are firm; forgiving while we set our faces against evil; prayerful while we rebuke; and compassionate when we are compelled to inflict on others the discipline of the church.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Luther, Galatians 6:1b

<sup>6</sup>See Barnes' Notes on the Bible <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/galatians/6-1.htm>

Therefore, we ought to deal with, and not ignore, family sin; and we should do it with humble hearts as we remember the Gospel and live empowered by God's Spirit. This is what it means to love; this is what it means to walk by the Spirit.

### 3 DEALING WITH FAMILY PAIN

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#### *2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

- **Let us not forget that Christ has commanded all who would be His disciples!**
  - As we have already seen, there is not a new lawlessness promoted by New Testament Christianity, but a free and loving obedience to our Father's loving commands. Add to this that Christ Himself also makes demands upon our lives, and no Christian should ever imagine him or herself to be free from obligation before the Lord.
    - Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to love **one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for **one another**" (John 13:34-35).
- **Brothers and Sisters in Christ endure pain together.**
  - Bearing one another's burdens is not a rare event for only few Christians; this is to be the daily grind of everyone who shares in the heritage of Gospel-centered community.
    - On the one hand, we bear one another's burdens in the form of showing grace for each other's flaws.
      - Romans 15:1-2 - "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."
        - Martin Luther - "If we can overlook our own shortcomings and wrong-doings, we ought to overlook the shortcomings of others in accordance with the words, "Bear one another's burdens."<sup>7</sup>
    - On the other hand, we bear one another's burdens in the form of mutually carrying the heavy weight of life under the sun.
      - 1 John 3:16-17 - "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

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<sup>7</sup>Luther, Galatians 6:2

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

- John Stott - "It is very impressive that to 'love our neighbor,' 'to bear one another's burdens,' and 'fulfill the law' are three equivalent expressions."<sup>8</sup>

**Therefore, we ought to bear one another's pains and bear with one another's weaknesses. This is what it means to love; this is what it means to walk by the Spirit.**

#### **4 DEALING WITH FAMILY POSTURE AND PERSPECTIVE**

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*3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

- **You are not as awesome as you think you are.**
  - 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 - "Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

*4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.*

- **Don't compare yourself with others.**
  - While comparing ourselves with others is destructive, praising God for His gracious "fruit production" in your own life is very beneficial.
- **Examine your own thoughts, words, and deeds.**
  - We would likely have much less to say about the shortfall of others if we spent just a bit more time on introspection. Our hearts are deceitfully wicked, and we are often surprised at the sin we find there.

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<sup>8</sup>Platt, 127

- **Celebrate what God has produced in you.**
  - There is always much to be thankful for when we consider the work of God's sanctifying Spirit in us. We have not obtained what we will be, but we are not what we once were!

### 5 For each will have to bear his own load.

- **God gives each one a load to bear, and we are to contently rest in God's sovereignty and His grace.**
  - How can we "bear one another's burdens" and "bear our own load" at the same time?
    - First, burdens are different than the load each is given to bear.
      - Burden - *baros* - heavy weight; troublesome circumstance
      - Load - *phortion* - individual nontransferable cargo; like a pack for a person or freight of a ship
    - Second, we must give an account for our load alone and no other.
      - Calvin - "To destroy sloth and pride, he brings before us the judgment of God, in which every individual for himself, and without a comparison with others, will give an account of his life. It is thus that we are deceived; for, if a man who has but one eye is placed among the blind, he considers his vision to be perfect... The apostle affirms that the false conclusions to which we are thus conducted will find no place in the judgment of God; because there every one will bear his own burden, and none will stand acquitted by others from their own sins."<sup>9</sup>
    - Third, God Himself never leaves us to carry the load alone.
      - He is our Fortress (2 Sam. 22:2-3); Deliverer (Psalm 70:5); Strength (Isaiah 12:2); Salvation (Psalm 27); Comforter (Jer. 8:18); Refuge (Prov. 14:26); Redeemer (Job 19:25); Maker and Husband (Isaiah 54:5); Friend (John 15:14); Great God and Loving Father (Galatians 4:6)
    - Fourth, God gives us the load and calls us to trust Him with it.
      - Job 38:1-7, 12 - "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? I will question you... 'Where were you

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<sup>9</sup> Calvin, Galatians 6:5

when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements – surely you know! On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ...Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place?..”

**Therefore, let us examine our own hearts, test our own works, and trust in God’s sovereign oversight. With this perspective, we may lovingly engage one another in the ways outlined in this passage. This is what it means to love; this is what it means to walk by the Spirit.**

#### **APPLICATION of the passage:**

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- Gospel-centered Community is essential to the Christian life.
- Genuine love includes both loving confrontation and a compassionate engagement in life together.
- Our perspective must be grounded in the knowledge that God is the sovereign Lord and He is our loving Father.

#### **MY PRAYERS concerning this passage:**

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- 1) May God make us a Gospel-centered Community at FBC Diana
- 2) May God produce real love in us for one another
- 3) May God grant us peace and contentment as we rest in His sovereign care

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