

LESSONS IN GALATIANS 5 & 6

(Several Independent Lessons Brought Together)

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# Lesson 1: Becoming a Good Fruit Inspector IAW Galatians 5 & 6

## Background of Galatians

The Galatian church was founded by grace in the preaching of Paul, but later was led astray by a legalistic group commonly known as “Judaizers”. The Judaizers held that one was saved by grace in Jesus Christ **plus** the keeping of the **Mosaic Law**, especially circumcision. Paul writes the letter to the church to emphasize that salvation is by grace alone. The Law can only serve as a tutor and to condemn us because anyone seeking to keep the Law must keep the entire Law perfectly at all times. Of course, we cannot do this; a single sin condemns us. We must wholly depend upon the saving work of Jesus Christ in His perfect life in the flesh, His death on the cross for our sins, and through His resurrection giving us His victory over sin and death.

Paul’s arguments against legalism are set forth in Chapters 1 through 4. He continues in Chapters 5 and 6 to show how we fulfill the will of God in our daily lives.

Throughout Galatians, Paul is making a big distinction between the flesh and the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned nineteen times and the flesh seventeen times. In Chapter 5 alone, the Spirit is mentioned seven times and the flesh five times.

Flesh in the New Testament is the Greek work sarx, which refers to the physical body (Gal 2:20), the human race (John 17:2), the sinful nature (Col 2:11), man (Gal 1:16), individuals (Rom 3:20), and evil human desires (1 Pet 4:2). In this context flesh is referring to the inner human inclination to sin. In the New Testament, the flesh is regarded as weak and unable to achieve holiness by itself. In sanctification the Spirit of Christ indwells a person at his/her new birth, thereby enabling the person to achieve a measure of holiness, as indicated in Galatians 5:16. This is the point Paul is trying to get across to the Galatian believers.

We see that “the Spirit” is mentioned alongside with “the flesh,” in contrast to our natural sinful being. He has been graciously given by God to change us and conform us to the image of Christ. The Spirit of God is the focus in these passages.

Walk by the Spirit is a command and could be translated “keep on walking” because it is a present imperative verb. Walk has to do with the manner of life and the path that one is taking. Paul is giving instruction that this is to be a new way of life. In addition, the Spirit does not force the believer to walk with Him; instead He waits for the believer to depend on Him.

## Galatians 5 and Freedom in Christ

(1) It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (2) Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. (3) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. (4) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. (7) You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. (9) A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. (10) I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. (11) But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. (12) I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

(13) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (14) For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (15) But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

(16) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

(25) If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (26) Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (NASU)

### Themes of Galatians 5

In verses 1 through 12, Paul establishes that Christ has set us free from the yoke of slavery to the Law. He emphasizes that love resulting from faith in Christ is the fulfillment of the will of God. The attitudes of legalism are a distraction from living in the grace of Christ. The grace of Jesus gives us freedom from the Law.

Verse 13 reiterates that we are free from the Law but warns against licentiousness. We must serve each other in the love of Christ.

Verse 14 establishes the greatest principle of the chapter: that love equals fulfillment of the Law.

Verse 15 asserts that licentiousness will prevent us from fulfilling loving each other.

Verses 16 through 18 describe the principle of walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit means we are in submission to the Spirit and doing the will of God. Our motivations, speech, and behavior is all guided by the Spirit, so sin in the flesh has no manifestation in our life while we are in the Spirit. The principle makes clear that we are either submitted to the Spirit of to the flesh at any given moment; it is impossible to be in any other condition.

Verses 19 through 26 provide a test that allows us to understand if we are in the Spirit or the flesh. If we are submitted to the sin nature in the flesh, attitudes and behaviors described in verses 19 through 21 are manifested in our lives. If we are submitted to the Spirit, we bear the fruit of the Spirit, described in verses 22 and 23, which is a summary of the character of Christ. Verse 24 emphasizes that we belong to Christ and are actively killing the desires and passions of sin in the flesh. Verse 25 tells us that we live by the Spirit, so we should be walking in the Spirit. Verse 26 ends the chapter with a warning not to give ourselves to boastful pride and enviousness.

### Applications of Galatians 5

We know that God created each one of us for fellowship with Himself. We further know that He desires to be the source of the full satisfaction of all of our needs. (See Psalms 81:16; 90:14; 91:16; 145:16; Isaiah 55:2; Jeremiah 31:25; Ephesians 3:19)

If we are created for fellowship with God and satisfy our needs in the context of our relationship with God in Christ Jesus, then every other way that we try to satisfy our needs will result in something less than satisfactory and will lead to bondage – an addictive behavior.

God is infinite. If we try to satisfy our need for the infinite (our relationship with God) with anything from this world (inherently finite), there may be a temporary satisfaction, but it will always lead to a need for more. Usually, more and more is needed to receive less satisfaction for a shorter time – the mark of addiction.

If we walk in the Spirit, which is the living out of our relationship with God in Christ, we shall be satisfied. We see that our highest needs (love, joy, peace, etc.) are satisfied in the person of Jesus Christ and that the fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of Christ’s character in our lives.

On the other hand, if we walk according to the flesh, we see the bondage of sin becoming manifest in our behaviors. As Christians, we have a choice, but the natural man does not have a choice – he is a slave to sin.

It is illogical for any of us to behave differently from the way we are designed by God (as expressed weakly in conscience and in the Law, but made perfect in the Spirit of Christ). We can easily see that all sin is inherently insane. Yet, we all sin. It is the nature of the flesh, and we will always sin if we walk apart from the Spirit.

This leads us to the important point – how do I know I am walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh? How can we walk in the Spirit and avoid sin in the flesh. We respond in several ways:

* **Hear the Spirit**. The Spirit is speaking directly to the heart of the Christian continuously. The Spirit never contradicts the Bible; so we can hear the Spirit better if we know the Bible. We need to hone our ability to hear the Spirit because the flesh and the world like to counterfeit His voice.
* **Cherish the Fruit of the Spirit**. We can experience and cherish the fruit of the Spirit, especially love, joy, and peace. If we see the characteristics of these cherished elements of the Fruit diminished, we need to quickly examine the choices and attitudes we have had prior to this awareness to see where we have departed from the Spirit. I personally believe the admonition of the Bible to rejoice always (many places, but Philippians 3 & 4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16 especially) is particularly valuable. Don’t let the enemy take away your joy in any circumstance – the joy only comes in Christ.
* **Heed not the flesh** (even in doing good). We avoid trying to ‘be good’ in ourselves, but merely to do what is good. (The Bible **never tells us to be good** – in fact, it tells us that there is no good in any of us except for the Spirit of Christ. The Bible only tells us to do good. See Romans 3:10ff.) Trying to be good only gives strength to the flesh, subtly building our pride and separating us from the Spirit. We can envision this by seeing a child walking alongside its parent. It is much better for the child to walk hand in hand with the parent so they cannot be separated. However, children often do not want to take Mom’s hand. If they walk alongside, Mom is happy and the child feels proudly independent. However, get into a crowd or a dangerous situation, and the child must take the parent’s hand in order to be secure. How often have we seen a child try to run across a street and stumble? Yet in Mom’s hand, even a stumble does not result in a fall, and the child is delivered to the other side of the street safely. Pride is opposed to our relationship with God. Since trying to be good results in building a prideful attitude, it diminishes our ability to walk in the Spirit.
* **Heed the Spirit**. We learn to quickly obey. It is always a challenge to be obedient to God in the ungodly world, but it is very desirable to quickly obey rather than delaying in obedience. In this way, we more easily learn to hear the Spirit and more quickly walk in the Spirit. Heeding the Spirit is another way of saying listening to and obeying the Spirit. We listen to the Spirit in our prayers. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 admonishes us to **pray always** (pray without ceasing), which implies that we spend most of the time listening to the Spirit rather than expressing our requests before God. Beyond prayer, we find ourselves loving others in practical ways. One of those ways is when we see people caught up in sinful behaviors, and we want to see them delivered. However, the beginning of Galatians 6 spells out some conditions for helping others.

Merely stating these points is insufficient. We need more practical ways to watch our hearts. We need ways to warn us when we are not walking in the Spirit and to avoid submitting to the flesh.

If we walk in the Spirit, which is the living out of our relationship of trust in God through Christ, we shall be satisfied and shall be obedient to the Lord. Continuing to walk in the Lord brings about spiritual growth. However, this is very simple to say and much more challenging to do. If we walk according to the flesh, we see the bondage of sin becoming manifest in our behaviors.

In so many ways, our lives are filled with subtle ways of trusting in the flesh rather than trusting in the Spirit. Consider the following ways that we are tempted to trust in the flesh:

1. Trying to keep all of the laws of God (this also includes all forms of perfectionism).
2. Following a series of steps prescribed as the “must do” things to succeed in a matter.
3. Following a program prescribed by man that is contrary to the principles of God’s Word.
4. Following a program to achieve ungodly goals (such as various get-rich quick schemes).
5. Doing anything that is not established in God’s love or that is founded in selfishness.
6. Doing anything that fails to give glory to God or which glorifies man over God or which causes people to seek or trust in the institutions of men (such as the government) rather than seeking and trusting God.

**Number 1** is directly addressed by Paul in Galatians. It is the primary theme of the book.

**Number 2** is exemplified by any number of programs that are offered by various ministries. They have a variety of excellent goals, but are merely subtle ways of trusting in the flesh. For instance, “X” steps for spiritual growth (3, 4, 5, 10, etc.), steps for overcoming…, or any of the 12-step programs represent excellent goals. However, there is a subtle principle of “if you do these steps (and follow this program religiously), then you will achieve (your goal).”

**Numbers 3 through 6** should be obvious because they are replacing clear principles of God with fleshly (and sinful) goals or actions. However, there is the problem that the temptations are never presented in such an obvious way.

In any case, we need to examine the consequences of failing to walk in the Spirit by falling into these traps. Walking in the Spirit produces the Fruit of the Spirit, which is a manifestation of the character of Christ in our life. The Fruit of the Spirit is in stark contrast to the deeds of the flesh. But we need to recognize that the deeds of the flesh are often merely the symptoms of sinful attitudes that have gained control in our lives, and the list in verses 19 through 21 is obviously a partial list that could be extended almost indefinitely – how many ways can we “miss the mark” (sin)?

Walking in the Spirit requires us to trust in the Lord. Just as children walk with their parent because they trust the parent, we are to trust in the Lord and how the Spirit is leading us. Children often do not know where the parents are taking them. In the same way, we do not know where the Spirit is leading us, except we know the He works all things together for our good because God loves us and we love God. We trust God because we are confident of His love, which is proven in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Part of the benefit of this trust is spiritual growth manifest in the Fruit of the Spirit.

When we trust in the flesh by any of the modes noted above, we are not trusting in the Spirit or the Lord. This has a deadly consequence. Our actions of trusting in the flesh are giving power and influence of the flesh – in contrast to giving the Spirit power and influence over our life. Sin dwells in the flesh, so we are giving power and influence to our sin nature. Sin is a subtle enemy, mimicking the serpent in the Garden, so the consequences are not necessarily immediately obvious. Adam and Eve immediately became aware of their nakedness because they were no longer in fellowship with God, but their bodies also immediately started to die – it simply took centuries for their body to die physically.

In the case of a 12-step program, as an example, the goal of deliverance from the behavior is very often achieved – sobriety or victory over a destructive behavior. What is not seen is how a person may be trusting in the steps of the program instead of trusting in God – subtly making the program a form of a god and feeding confidence in the flesh (i.e., pride). We are told explicitly to take no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3-4) (in the example of Saint Paul). We may gain the victory of achieving a (noble) goal, but we end up losing control to sin in some other way. By trusting in the flesh, the sin nature is given a part in forming our mind sets in opposition to trusting in the Lord. The sin nature may seem to be allowing us to win control, but we are actually losing control, leading to sinful behaviors enslaving us in some other area of our life – and perhaps a return to the original behavior that we thought we had conquered, thus dashing our hope. The very activity we pursued to give us hope and freedom has led to our bondage again – because we trusted in something (anything) other than the leading of the Spirit.

The only way we can enjoy true self control is by giving our control to the Spirit – walking in the Spirit and bearing the Fruit. The only true hope fulfilled is in Christ our Lord. He alone can set us free from the bondage of sin.

An important message of Galatians 5 is that Christ alone delivers us from sin and its bondage. The glorious hope of salvation is only realized in everyday life when we are trusting in the Lord and walking by His Spirit. Indeed, it is only by His leading that we are able to glorify Him in both word and deed.

### Effects of Doing the Deeds of the Flesh

When we examine Galatians 5:19-21, we see several categories of sinful behaviors:

* Sexual sins (immorality, impurity, sensuality).
  + Immorality is often referring to immoral sexual acts, but any act in violation of the Law is immoral. Immoral sexual acts should be construed as any sexual act outside of the context of marriage between a man and a woman. This includes adultery, fornication, incest, and so forth.
  + Impurity or uncleanness is anything that is unwanted or which doesn’t belong as part of something. In application, it includes unwanted thoughts or fantasies, often sexual in nature, such as viewing pornography or reading titillating novels to spur fantasies. It can also apply to attitudes and actions that are willfully unholy. Anything one is trying to avoid doing that they end up doing can be considered an impurity. The Mosaic law had many stipulations of uncleanness.
  + Sensuality is a focus on gratifying feelings and emotions. Again, this is often something sexual, but it could also include compulsive eating or other physical gratification. It includes indecency, voyeurism, debauchery, lasciviousness, licentiousness, and so forth.
* Lack of self-control emotionally (envying, outbursts of anger, jealousy; i.e., emotions are out of control) and behaviorally (drunkenness, carousing or partying repeatedly and to excess)
  + Envy and sinful jealousy are closely related. Envy is an emotion where a person strongly desires status, an object, or condition observed in another person. Jealousy refers to guarding something (especially a relationship or status) that one has to exclude anyone else having access to it. Sinful jealousy occurs when a person has no right of ownership or exclusivity.
  + Outbursts of anger indicate that anger is out of control, but it can extend in principle to any emotion being out of control.
  + Drunkenness indicates that one has consumed so much of a substance (alcohol) that they cannot control their behavior. Carousing refers to a person willfully surrendering their control resulting in wild behavior.
* Divisions (factions, dissensions, disputes, enmities, strife, hatred, variances, wrath, murders)
* Idolatry (including greediness, coveting, witchcraft, and materialism)

…and things like these – those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. It seems like there are an endless list of synonyms for the list above. Those without Christ inherently practice such things, meaning that they have the **intent to do** these behaviors.

As Christians, we may sin at times in any of these ways, but the **intent of our heart** which we inherit through the Spirit of Christ is not to participate in these behaviors. (If we have such intent, we need to check our relationship with Christ.)

Even as Christians, we probably still retain any number of compulsive behaviors, and even addictions. An **addiction** is defined as (1) a strong and harmful need to regularly have something (such as a drug) or (2) do something (such as gamble) or an unusually great interest in something or a need to do or have something. A **compulsive behavior** is defined as performing an act persistently and repetitively without it necessarily leading to an actual reward or pleasure. Compulsive behaviors could be an attempt to make obsessions go away. The act is usually a small, restricted and repetitive behavior, yet not disturbing in a pathological way. Compulsive behaviors are a need to reduce apprehension caused by internal feelings a person wants to abstain or control. The main idea of compulsive behavior is that the likely excessive activity is not connected to the purpose to which it appears directed. Furthermore, there are many different types of compulsive behaviors including, shopping, hoarding, eating, gambling, trichotillomania and picking skin, checking, counting, washing, sex, and more. (One member of our ministry had a compulsive behavior of biting his fingernails when he was under stress. He was so compulsive that he bit back his nails into the quick. A co-worker saw his fingers one day, which were turning black near the tips, and insisted that he go to the company clinic. The doctor sent his to the hospital where they found that the man was attacked by a flesh-eating bacterium. When he got back to work in a few days, he reported that the doctors told him that if he had come in later, they would not have been able to treat him and he would have died.) Even when a behavior is not immediately life-threatening to the body, it is to the soul.

The context of Galatians 5 is clearly addressing Christians in contrast to unbelievers. Even if we are not an addict or substance abuser, we may all struggle with compulsive behaviors which are driven by the same spirit of sin in the flesh. We need to be vigilant to spy out fleshly behaviors and to cleanse them from our lives. In this we need the help of God in the strength of the Spirit – often through His help using other people as His instruments.

### The Fruit of the Spirit

There is but one fruit of the Spirit, which is the character of Christ manifest in our lives. As we look at the manifestation of the fruit, we see attributes which are attitudes, emotions, and behaviors all at the same time. The ordering of the list of attributes is not an accident. Love is clearly the most important attribute of the Fruit, followed in order by joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When we come to faith in Christ, love, joy, and peace are the first attributes that appear, and self-control is pretty close to last. On the other hand, when we are doing the deeds of the flesh, love, joy, and peace are the first to go from our life.

Certainly, the other attributes are critical to our life in Christ, but love, joy, and peace are supremely important. Because love, joy, and peace are quick to come as we walk in the Spirit and quick to go when we are in the flesh, they can be used as a barometer of our spiritual walk.

Let’s examine spiritual fruitfulness versus deeds of the flesh:

Fruit Attribute Deeds of Flesh Attributes

Love Self-centeredness, sensuality, enmities, envy, jealousy, fears, anxiety, immoral, hatred, lustful (especially combined with pride)

Joy Depression, sorrow, sadness, dissatisfaction, idolatry

Peace Divisions, conflicts, frustrations, strife, fidgety, anxious

Patience/longsuffering Impatience, intolerance, edginess, irritation, apt to give up quickly, inability to endure even slight difficulties or hardships

Kindness Uncompassionate, unmerciful, not sympathetic or empathetic, uncaring, unkind

Goodness Abusive, crude, rude, un-giving, ungenerous, ungodliness

Faithfulness Unfaithful, disloyal, uncommitted, faithlessness, unreality, lying, treachery

Gentleness Harshness, roughness, impolite, severe, callous, insensitive, ungodliness

Self-control Outbursts of anger, drunkenness, carousing, addictions, compulsiveness

We notice that the lists for the deeds of the flesh are much longer than for the Fruit. There are so many ways to sin, to miss the mark. Besides avoiding the deeds of the flesh, we need to cherish the Fruit of the Spirit. In fact, cherishing the Fruit is the key to walking in the Spirit. If we cherish the Fruit, we will quickly miss them if they are absent from the moment. This will allow us to be good **Fruit Inspectors** of our heart.

## The Practice of Fruit Inspection

The master Fruit Inspector knows what the good fruit looks like. The fruit inspector also knows the bad fruit, just like a currency inspector can spot a counterfeit bill because of its differences from the real thing. The key to inspection is to know the real thing so well that any deviation is noticed. It is the same with walking in the Spirit.

From the context of Galatians 5 (actually, the whole of Scripture), love is the most important. 1 Corinthians 13 helps to provide some definition on the godly love that is part of the Fruit, But the best image of this love is that demonstrated by Jesus Christ as He was born into human form, emptied Himself to live as we do, overcame all temptations in our behalf, went to the cross for our sins, and otherwise finished everything needed in order to reconcile the most high and holy God to mankind. Jesus did it all, leaving only our acceptance of His free gift to partake of eternal glory with Him. We must meditate on the grace of His love continually and be exceedingly grateful for His redemption in order to begin to grasp the nature of His love. When we do this, our lives are filled with thanksgiving toward Christ and we don’t need to think about submitting to Him – it’s the only thing that will make any sense.

The problem with love is that there are so many ways to depart from true love which are deceptively similar emotionally and in behavior. The sin nature will counterfeit the love in the form of prideful lusts if we are not alert to the schemes of the devil. Also, there is brotherly love and parental love which are quite genuine but not the same as the love of the Fruit, so we can be deceived into believing we are showing love – because we are, but the wrong form of love to indicate the submission to His will.

The joy is also a good indicator. There are more commands to rejoice in our relationship with the Lord than any other form of command in the Bible. When we have experienced this joy, we know that it is a condition of the Spirit that transcends the circumstances of daily life. We can be in awful circumstances and still be joyful. Take as an example Paul and his companions locked in a Philippian jail and singing hymns of joy to the Lord. Consider our brethren recently being beheaded by Islamic extremists while singing praises to God. Thus, we are to “rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice” (Philippians 4:4) and rejoice always as in 1 Thessalonians 5:16. The rejoicing is in our relationship with the Lord, never in our daily circumstances. Even in our adversity, our joy from the Lord allows us to continue rejoicing even when we are tired, emotionally drained, or even sorrowful in our feelings. Have you ever been joyful at a memorial service for a departed loved one – joyful that they are together with the Lord and knowing that we shall be with them in heaven eventually yet sorrowful that they are no longer with us? We indeed can only be joyful by faith in Christ and the promises of God; our feelings can be quite contrary. Remember too that if was for joy that Christ went to the cross for us bearing our sins.

Peace is also a good indicator. This peace from God is “the peace that surpasses all understanding” and cannot be experienced by the world. When you have experienced it, you can try to describe it to another person, but words fail you. If your companion has experienced it, they will recognize your struggle and know what you are trying to say, but someone who has never had this peace will remain clueless. It is a peace that allows you to remain at peace when the world seems to be falling down all around you. The world says, “If you can be at peace in this (chaotic) situation, you don’t understand the circumstances.” But the truth is that you do understand and you are at peace anyway because God has provided it through the fruit of the Spirit. The peace from God is founded on the peace we have with God through Christ. We were once enemies with God by nature, but Christ has changed our heart with His presence so that now we are no longer enemies. We consider how He has done this and respond in thanksgiving in order to cherish the peace we have in Christ.

So, when you start walking in the Spirit, which is doing the will of God, you will have love, joy and peace almost immediately. As you continue walking in the Spirit, the other attributes will be growing more and more visible in your life. The Fruit will grow in each of us somewhat differently because we are all being conformed to the image of Christ, but we are deformed by our past sins in different ways. The result is that one may grow quickly in kindness while another will grow in faithfulness, as an example. But all of us will grow in love, joy, and peace.

We must seek to grow in thanksgiving to God for the work of Christ in our salvation as a foundation for cherishing His love, joy, and peace in the Fruit of our daily walk. As we grow in an “attitude of gratitude” toward God, we are increasing in our ability to cherish the Fruit. As we cherish the Fruit, we will notice evermore quickly when it diminishes. When it does, we must immediately inspect the attitudes of our heart and look at the decisions and actions we have made just prior to their diminishing. Then we can respond by repenting of our decisions and bad acts and go back to following the Spirit. That allows us to follow the will of God more closely. When we are doing the will of God, we will soon enjoy the satisfaction and fulfillment in life that comes from doing His will. So we can see the process of being a good Fruit inspector:

1. Put on your relationship with Jesus as the first thing in the day.
2. Give thanks always to God for who He is, His lovingkindness, His provision, and His promise that He is with you always through everything.
3. Prayerfully seek His will and purpose for you each day and in each decision.
4. Cherish your Fruit (especially love, joy, and peace), seeking to grow in your awareness of its presence in your life.
5. If the Fruit diminishes, quickly stop, consider your recent decisions and actions and repent of any ungodliness you discover, as indicated by the deeds of the flesh.
6. Rejoice in your restoration.

Following this process prayerfully will help you to grow in spiritual maturity and make you a good fruit inspector of your life.

## Galatians 6 and the Obligations of Spiritual Victory

(1) Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (2) Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (3) For if anyone thinks 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 in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. (5) For each one will bear his own load. (6) The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*. (7) Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. (8) For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (9) Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. (10) So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

### Themes of Galatians 6

Verses 1 through 6 establish that if anyone (in Christ) sins unintentionally that someone who is spiritually mature enough to know how to overcome the sin **must** lead them back to righteousness through love. There is also a warning to stay humble in order to avoid temptation.

Verses 7 through 10 lay out the principle of sowing and reaping together with its consequences. We sow to the Spirit as we walk in the Spirit. We sow to the flesh at all other times. A side issue raised in verse 9 is that it sometimes takes a seemingly long time for the fruit to become manifest.

### Applications of Galatians 6

Galatians 6:1 contains a command to “restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”

We need to take commands seriously because we are obligated to do them in order to fulfill the will of God. It is not an obligation of the Law, but of love. Our first obligation of love is to our Lord and savior, namely to respond to His will motivated by extreme love and gratitude for His great work in redeeming us of our sins. Our second obligation is to love each other because He has commanded us to **love one another**. (See John 13:34; John 15:9-17, especially verses 12 and 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 1 John 4:7-21, especially verses 7, 11, 12; and 2 John 5.) If we love each other in a practical way, we first want to see each of us to come to repentance in order to spend eternity with Christ and secondly to be delivered from the bandage of sin.

Salvation is only the first step in deliverance from sin, and it is a life-long process. None of us are exactly like everybody else in our process of maturing spiritually. We each come from a different place at an appointed time. However, our destination is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Being conformed to the image of Christ is equivalent to consistently walking in the Spirit. How many of us are perfect in our walking in the Spirit? – None! Even Saint Peter and Saint Paul had flaws in their walk. However, they also had a lot of spiritual victory. We should never be self-satisfied with our spiritual maturity, but, like Paul, press on toward the upward calling in Christ Jesus (see Philippians 3).

Galatians 6:1 says if we notice someone caught up in any trespass (a sin which they are committing unknowingly), we should restore them. It does not mean that we are going around seeking to find out people’s sins in order to find a work for us to do in their restoration. It is not a task given to every Christian. It is a task for the “one who is spiritual” – this is a person who is mature enough to recognize and understand the nature of the sin because they have spiritual victory over that particular sin. Others may be familiar with the sin, but do not have victory over it, so they do not understand the attitude they need to adopt or change in order to gain that victory.

We must all understand that victory over sin *only* exists in our Lord Jesus. We gain victory when we adjust our attitudes in such a way that we are able to trust Him and His finished work on the Cross in application to the issues that underlie that sinful behavior. The victory is never gained by our own strength. If we trust in our own ability to conquer a sin, we will fail (often with increasingly bad consequences). That is why we must do the restoration corrections with a spirit of gentleness (and compassionate grace). All of us are susceptible failure if we become prideful or desire to exercise control over another person. We must continually put on an attitude of humility (“looking to yourself”) in order to avoid falling into the temptation traps.  
 Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another’s burdens. In other words, we are to help each other. This is an act of love, which is why we fulfill the law of Christ when we do so. What kinds of burdens are being addressed here? Anything that brings sorrow or which prevents us from experiencing the joy of the Lord is certainly a burden. Whatever cares are so attached to us that we cannot seem to let go and put them in the Lord’s hand (as in 1 Peter 5:7) are a burden. Effectively, an anxiety or fear that we cannot seem to shake is attached to an area of our life where we are not able to realize the love of Christ, because 1 John 4:7-21 shows us that perfect love casts out all fears. We know that while we dwell in the flesh, we lack perfection, but the more we are perfected in the love of Christ, the easier it is to cast off fears and anxieties. We may feel burdened by the obligations of the Law (or commandments). This occurs when we are trying to be Christ-like in the power of the flesh rather than merely walking in the Spirit of Christ and naturally fulfilling the law of Christ (and the will of God).

Very often we are burdened by our personal histories. Very few of us have grown up in a fully functional family that is dedicated to the Lord. We had fallible parents and siblings. Still, the grace of God has covered a multitude of sins. But, many of us have also grown up with parents who had compulsions, obsessions, or addictions. As children, we didn’t have the ability, maturity, or knowledge to deal with the circumstances of everyday life, and we adopted bad personal theologies. For instance, some parents taught us that we could never be good enough or perfect enough to be acceptable. We strive for an unattainable perfection that only brings great frustration to us. The foibles of our earthly fathers often became our image of God the Father. How are we to learn the truth of God’s love for us? Someone else must demonstrate it for us. That someone is a spiritual person to help us in our trespass sin of imputing human errors to the perfect heavenly Father.

The one who is called on to help the other can indeed feel superior, but this is a sin of pride. The helper must be a person who is walking in the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, so honest self-examination (fruit inspection) is important.

Verse 6:5 tells us that each of us must bear the consequences of our own decisions.

Verse 6:6 encourages the people who are helped to understand the Word of God in application to their life issues are to encourage their teachers with good things – things that will promote their continued ability to minister to others.

### Sowing and Reaping

We may deceive ourselves, but God is not deceived. God ensures that what we sow in our lives will be reaped just as assuredly as planting seeds in order to reap a crop. Nobody can live in a manner that makes God look foolish; God will not allow it to go on because He is a righteously jealous God. He is a righteously just God and will bring all things into judgment. If we behave in a manner that is wicked (in open rebellion against the will of God), we can be assured that we will be judged. If we behave badly (doing evil), He will act to correct our bad behavior just as any loving parent would discipline a child to teach good behavior. The “Law of Sowing and Reaping” is one way we are disciplined by the Lord.

Sowing and reaping is directly tied to walking in the Spirit or doing the deeds of the flesh. If we walk according to the Spirit, we are doing the will of God and fulfilling His commandments naturally, sometimes unconsciously. If we are doing the deeds of the flesh, we are always **not** doing the will of God. All of our acts submitted to sin in the flesh are corrupt, no matter how good they may seem in the eyes of others or (through self-deception) ourselves. Sowing and reaping is simply saying that we will bear the consequences of our heart decisions and submission. It is equivalent to saying, “Each must bear his own load.” (as in 6:5).

As we see in Galatians 6:7-10, especially verse 8, if we sow to the flesh, we will reap corruption. What is spiritual corruption? It is the deeds of the flesh as described above. We should each seek to avoid corruption in our lives, but if we are sowing to the flesh we should also hope for the corruption to be manifest as ready for harvest very quickly rather than much later. The principle is that weeds bear a fruit quickly, so they can be dealt with quickly. If one doesn’t deal with the weeds, they will multiply rapidly and choke out the good things we desire to grow.

In Galatians 6:9-10, we are told that if we sow to the Spirit, we will bear eternal life (fellowship with God), and that we should not lose heart if the crop is slow to develop. Good things are worth waiting for. Good seed grows a bountiful crop, but it takes longer to bring the crop to fullness and readiness to harvest than it does for weeds. The sowing to the Spirit is the same as walking in the Spirit. The more we walk in the Spirit, the more conformed to the image and character of Christ we become. In eternity, we have a reward that cannot be tarnished nor diminished. We will have greater intimacy with God as a result.

### A Quick Summary

The summary of all the commandments of God is (1) to love God with our entire being and (2) love our neighbors as ourselves. If we live daily in submission to the Spirit of Christ, we automatically fulfill the commandments in every detail. We will not sin. We will live with daily purpose. We will enjoy a life of satisfaction and fulfillment. We will live a life without regrets with the approval of God…and men.

If we consider that God loves us perfectly and that His will for us is only for good (as expressed in Romans 8:28), we should recognize that all sin results in that which is bad for us. Nobody should seek that which is evil for oneself. It is insane to continually do harm to oneself, so all sin is insanity. The ultimate insane asylum is hell.

# The Restore Ministry

## The Source of Addictions

***We are created individually for God’s greater purpose and to have fellowship with Him***

* We are Created Beings (Souls); God is our Creator. He has made each of us individually and uniquely and given us talents, interests, and abilities suitable to fulfill His purposes for our lives.
* We were created to be relational – in relationship with God and with other people; God’s intent is that all relationships be founded in love.
* God reveals Himself to us, but we do not always accept His revelation, because of sin in us and in the world around us. God reveals Himself in His Creation, in our hearts, by His Spirit, through His servants (prophets & preachers of righteousness), through Scripture, and ultimately in Jesus Christ, who is the culmination of God’s work of redemption.
* God created mankind in innocence, providing a single test having a consequence of death (separation from God, which is spiritual death, and introducing the processes bringing forth physical death because God is the source of all life). The first man, Adam, rejected God’s original design purpose of fellowshipping with Him. Even so, God provided for the redemption of all those descendants of Adam who would trust in Him.

While each of us has an individual purpose especially designed into our life by God and purposed for us from before the foundation of the world (see Ephesians 2:1-10), the greater common purpose is to fellowship with God. Every one of us has a place within our heart which can only be satisfied through a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

## Without a personal relationship with God there is a “hole” in our soul

* It can *only be filled* by a personal relationship with God through Jesus
* God is infinite - Everything in the world is finite (therefore, nothing in this world can satisfy the need to fill this void)
* The hole in our soul creates:
  + Emptiness (Feelings of incompleteness)
  + Dissatisfaction (A lack of fulfillment in life)
  + Loneliness, even in a crowd
  + Strong desires to be accepted by others, to fit into the crowd
  + Depression (emotional and spiritual)
  + Spiritual pain
  + Unfocused anger
  + Generalized frustration leading to hopelessness
  + Fears, general anxiety
  + Lack of confidence
  + Lack of self-worth
* In our sin, we seek to fill the infinite void with finite things from the world
  + Some of these things may be positive
    - Things that exercise your talents and God-given interests and passions
    - Things that benefit others and incur their appreciation or where you see the beneficial results
    - Things that build strong positive (godly) relationships
  + Some of these things may be negative
    - Substances (Food, clothing, Alcohol, drugs, etc)
    - Sexual relations or behaviors outside of God’s will for us
    - Activities that harm your godly relationships (workaholism, etc.)
    - Unbridled imaginations (fantasizing, pornography, etc.)
    - Anything done to excess, thereby throwing your life out of balance
    - Some things may appear to be good but are truly harmful
      * Religion (without a true relationship with Christ)

### The things or behaviors that we use as a substitute for God fulfilling our lives cannot satisfy – They are finite (temporary), but He is infinite (eternal)

* Even the satisfaction we get is only temporary and diminishes over time
* In our sin, we seek MORE of the same, but
  + It satisfies less and less, so we need more and more
  + What satisfaction we get is effective over shorter and shorter times, so we seek more frequently
* This results in BONDAGE to the activity, substance, or substitutionary relationship

### At this point a person is caught up in some form of addiction. (Spiritual Bondage)

### Breaking the spiritual bondage

* Only a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ can break spiritual bondage
  + Living through the Spirit of Christ.
  + Transforming the mind (see Romans 12:1-2)
  + **Walking by the Spirit of Christ**.
* Substituting a new substance or behavior for an old one only changes the chains
* Stopping an addictive behavior without establishing a relationship with Christ will only be effective for a while.
* When someone reverts back to a prior bondage, it is increasingly difficult to break again

### When we “Know” Jesus we have complete access to freedom from spiritual bondage

* KNOW Jesus = victory & spiritual liberty
* NO Jesus = continued bondage to sin

### Knowing Jesus

* We surrender our lives to Christ, making Him LORD.
* Christ sets us free, giving us a new heart which leads us to seek and to do the will of God
* We respond in **love** (with thanksgiving, not under compulsion).
* The Spirit of Christ reveals to us the will of God
* We obey the Spirit (walk in Him) (the Lord provides the time, strength, and other resources to do His will)
* The Fruit of the Spirit becomes manifest in our life (5:22-23)

### We can be alive in the Spirit and still fail to obey Him, thereby manifesting the deeds of the flesh (prior or even new sinful behaviors).

* The Spirit and the Flesh (sin nature) are opposed to each other
* The spirit of sin is able to counterfeit the loving urgings of the Spirit through lusts, deceitful thoughts from the world around us, and replay of old thought patterns.
* We are also prideful enough to think that we can do good behaviors in our own strength
* If we TRY to be good, we are giving authority to the flesh, not the Spirit.
* True repentance is needed to return to or even to begin walking in the Spirit.

### Walking in the Spirit

Galatians 5 shows us the way to enjoy freedom/liberty in our lives. The principle is that we give our control to the Spirit of Christ out of loving gratitude for His saving grace, and He directs our paths, resulting in bearing the fruit of the Spirit, which is the sinless character of Christ.

*Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, and Self Control.*

* We gain fulfillment in life by ***“walking”*** (Thoughts, Words, Actions) in the Spirit
* The more we obey the Spirit, the more our life satisfaction grows.
  + Godly self-image, self-respect, self-esteem (not based in pride), and personal confidence

### Helps to Walking in the Spirit

* Loving the Lord with your entire being in all that you do
  + Worshiping Him, Praying in gratitude and adoration, Seeking to know Him all the more (He reveals Himself in Scripture, consider it like a diary of God.)
* Experiencing the Lord through true Christian Fellowship
  + Stimulating each other to love & good deeds -Encouraging each other in the Lord.
  + Speaking the truth to each other in love
  + Correcting each other in the truth of God’s Word with gentleness & respect
  + Receiving correction from others with gratitude and humility
* Seeking to honor the Lord’s name through our life (Exemplifying His love and Grace)
* Seeking to serve the Lord through serving others
* Honestly evaluating our behavior – both good and bad (often through the eyes of others)
* Cherishing the Fruit of the Spirit in your life, especially **joy** and **peace**. If you see your fruit diminishing, quickly check the decisions you have been making to see if they are consistent with the Spirit and God’s Word.

## Summary

God’s key purpose common to everybody’s life is to be in a loving relationship with each one of us. However, God is pure and holy, and sin cannot be in His presence. God has provided a means of redemption through Jesus Christ, God in human form, who has fulfilled the Law of God in His perfect life (His design rules for how we are to live our highest and best life); took all of the sins of mankind upon Himself and paid the price, death, through His death on the Cross; and provided us His eternal life and victory over sin and death in His resurrection for all who will trust in Him. However, our sinful natures oppose believing and trusting in Jesus for our salvation. The sin nature is prideful and deceives us into thinking we can deliver ourselves apart from Christ. Unless we repent in our heart and confess our behaviors as wicked, we will remain in our sin. When we do repent in our heart and trust in Christ, inviting Him into our lives as our Lord, He is faithful to deliver us from our sins and breaking of our bondages to sin.

## Lord, I can’t; You can; You take control; Thank You, Jesus!

## WHAT IS ADDICTION?

The term *addiction* is appropriate for describing alcoholism, compulsive drug abuse, overeating, gambling, sexual addictions (including pornography), and many other forms of continuous unhealthy behaviors, which take control over ones thoughts, activities and lifestyle in general.

**Definitions:***Addiction -* an unhealthy [pathological] relationship with a substance, or activity that produces a desired mood swing. The word “addiction” refers to the result; *Total dependence upon the substance or activity*.

*Addict -* One who is dependent upon and controlled by their substance(s) of choice. Craving the intensity of what it does for them they learn to trust it because it seems to work every time.

There are two “parts” in the effects of substance abuse:  
*Primary effect*;   
The initial high - Experiencing euphoria, excitement or pleasure is considered a positive experience. But this does not last very long and then there is the…  
   
*Secondary effect*;  
The “come down” - Experiencing lack of excitement, drowsiness, foggy headed, hangovers, etc. are considered negative experiences and motivates the user to consume more of the substance of choice to regain the primary affect.

### Alcoholism and Addiction affects the inner workings of the mind:

We humans love positive experiences. When we find something that produces a positive experience our mind will “signal” us to do it again. The more intensely positive, the more the brain likes it and will “request” it.

*Mild positive signals are called* ***urges*** *while stronger positive signals are called* ***cravings****.*

On the other hand, we dislike and avoid negative experiences. When we find something that produces a negative experience, our natural thinking is “I don’t want to do that again!” The more intensely negative -- the more the brain hates it and will signal you to avoid it.

*Mild negative signals are called* ***dislikes*** *while stronger negative signals are call* ***aversions****.*

Alcoholics / Addicts develop a strong ***aversion*** to getting clean and sober. This will lead them to becoming physically dependent on their substance of choice.

***FACT; CONTINUED USE OF INTOXICANTS WILL LITERALLY CHANGE THE WAY BRAIN CHEMISTRY OPERATES.***

***THERE IS A “REVERSING” AFFECT WHERE WRONG BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES SEEM RIGHT, AND RIGHT SEEMS WRONG.***

*These affects can be restored back to being normal. However; once this type of damage is done it becomes more difficult. Usually the addicted person will require help in doing so. Medically supervised detoxing may be necessary.*

***Learning spiritual discipline and self control will be essential in becoming healthy once again.***

***THE GOOD NEWS:***

*Through a relationship with Jesus, growing spiritually, and exercising self-control the MIND will be restored!! The cravings will disappear. At this point the addiction is literally GONE. There is no need to consider one’s self as an addict any longer … a new creation has been born!*

### FACTS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

**1**. For every single addict there are many family members and friends affected.

* Arguments / Disagreements / Divorce
* Theft or Financial abuse
* Missed commitments
* Physical, Emotional abuse
* Developmental problems in their children
* Deaths

**2.** The person who has never experienced addiction will not fully understand it.

* Confused…the pieces of the puzzle are missing.
  + Unable to relate to the cravings and behaviors.
  + Addicts do not disclose all they are experiencing due to shame, guilt or fear.

**3.** “Enabling” is a very common mistake made by parents, spouses and friends.

* Parents often blame themselves for their addicted child’s problems and often feel obligated to fix it.
* The addict will usually take advantage of enablers to their own benefit.

### A CLOSER LOOK AT ENABLING:

Definition: To make feasible or possible. To supply with the means, knowledge, or opportunity to be or do something. In this case, to make drugs/alcohol more easily obtained or used.

Examples:

* Repeatedly bailing them out - of jail, financial problems, other "tight spots" they get themselves into. Coming to the "Rescue" and softening or removing the natural consequences
* Giving them "one more chance" - ...then another...and another.
* Ignoring or avoiding the problem – Keeping the peace because they get defensive when you bring it up or you hope that it will magically go away.
* Joining them in the behavior when you know they have a problem with drinking, using drugs, gambling, etc.,
* Joining them in blaming others for their own feelings, problems, and misfortunes.
* Accepting their justifications, excuses and rationalizations – Such as: "It helps reduce stress …I’m not hurting anyone.”
* Doing for them what they should be able to do for themselves.
* Trying to "fix" them or their problem.
* Trying to control them or their problem.
* Allowing them to control you.
* Covering up for their behavior.

***There may be some things in our own lives we will need to address***

## Forgiveness – Essential in the Christian Walk

***1. Common problems with forgiving others***

We’ve all heard people say things like -

* “If they don’t repent, I don’t have to forgive”
* “I don’t know how to forgive him for what he has done … I can’t!”
* “If forgiving means forgetting, I cannot do it”

But what does God’s Word say?

**“Forgiveness” in the Old Testament:**

“Forgive”- *Nasa* = to lift up, take away or carry off, (the offense or sin)

Genesis 50:15-20

Joseph’s brothers asked him to forgive (nasa) their sin against him, hoping he would not repay them for the evil they had done. His answer must have boggled their minds … We read that first Joseph *wept* … and then he said: “Do not be afraid, for *am I in the place of God*?”

* Joseph realized that *all sins* are primarily against God
* He knew that it is *God’s* forgiveness that is of *primary importance*
* He knew *God* was the ultimate “Judge” in this situation – not himself
* We can clearly see the Holy Spirit at work in Joseph’s response
* All he did to “lift up, take away or carry off” the offense was to leave it in God’s hands
* This enabled him to have inner peace, a clear mind and to see that something ‘good’ actually came from the events of the past and the evil which had been done to him !!
* He demonstrated a certain peace within his heart and mind … with Grace
  + Allowing God to be God
  + Not trying to get even
  + Not harboring anger or resentments
  + Seeing beyond the circumstance with an eternal perspective
* This is contrary to “Man’s Way” of thinking

In the Old Testament we don’t find direct commands to forgive one another but we find examples of forgiveness among people … always an act of grace

Conversely, in the New Testament there are many commands to forgive one another – something very new (shocking) to the Jewish culture.

**“Forgiveness” in the New Testament:**

*Charis* = A divine influence upon the heart. A favor done without conditions; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God. This is “***Grace”***

*Charizomai* = to graciously lay aside a person's sin by Grace. To “***Forgive”***

*Aphiemi* = to cancel a debt or an offense, to let go or put away. To ***“Forgive”***

Jesus proved His love for *all of us* when He took the penalty for our sins upon Himself … death

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8*

The Apostle Paul wrote extensively on God’s Grace in his letters:

He always used the word “Charizomai” to express forgiveness.

*“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32*

Jesus used the word “Aphiemi” to express forgiveness

*“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” Luke 23:34*

* Each of them are instructing us to demonstrate God’s Love and Grace toward the one(s) who have sinned against God and/or against us
* We are called to be ambassadors of His Love & Grace ... In His power, not our own
* In His last few breaths, Jesus pleaded for those who were killing Him!
  + Jesus was not condoning their actions … He gave it all to God
  + We must realize that all sin is primarily against God
  + We must also see things from an eternal perspective like Joseph, Paul & Jesus
  + We must understand that God is the ultimate source of forgiveness
  + We must learn to “let go” of the hurt, disappointment and anger by “lifting them up”, “put them away” directly into the Hands of God

Jesus provided the way for all mankind to possess the Grace of God through His Holy Spirit, dwelling in us and given freely to all who would receive Him.

* All Christians have access to the Holy Spirit, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – He is IN US !!

*“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” 1 John 4:15*

***2. Is it necessary to “forgive myself”?***

This “concept” is taught by many self-help groups, counselors and others

Many Christians are told they need to forgive themselves … why?

* Typically they are feeling guilty about something, convicting and condemning themselves
* We *don’t* find any mention of forgiving ones self in the scriptures
* We *do* find commands to forgive others and to be peacemakers

**God’s Word is very clear … HE is the source of love, forgiveness & peace**

*Joseph asked; “Am I in the place of God?” Genesis 50:19*

*Paul wrote; “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”*

*Romans 8:1*

*John wrote; “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” 1 John 3:20-21*

***3. All of us are subject to being in denial about our own actions & behaviors***

*“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

*1 John 1:8-9*

***4. Some people are very good at bringing others into their situations, choices and behaviors – We need grace and wisdom to rise above******this***

More scriptures to ponder:

*“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*

*John 14:26-27*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”.*

*Galatians 5: 22-25*

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* ***Let*** *all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking* ***be put away*** *from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*

*Ephesians 4:30-32*

Small group Questions:

1. How are we forgiven by God?

2. How will God help us *truly forgive* those who have hurt us?

## ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES AND LIMITS

Setting *spiritual* priorities is a discipline that is ordained by God for our own personal benefit and for His glory. God clearly tells us in Matthew 6:33 that the top priority for our own life should be to seek His kingdom and His righteousness.

*“…..seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,*

*and all these things shall be added to you.”*

Rather than being worried about our physical or material needs, God already knows what they are and this verse says He will provide them.

One priority is that we are not to worry about tomorrow, but to focus on today. Today’s troubles are enough for us to deal with. We do that by setting our minds on Godly things.

*“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* Colossians 3:1-2

* Setting priorities often means re-arranging them.
* Setting priorities is to put them firmly in order and keeping them in that order.

The purpose for us setting spiritual priorities is so that we can be;

*“ … partakers in God’s divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires.”* 2 Peter 1:4

We do this by

* Being like Jesus, which is to be gentle and humble and by demonstrating the characteristics that the Holy Spirit puts into us: Love, joy, peace, goodness, gentleness, patience, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control. Galatians 5:22.
* By being God’s light before the chemically dependent person. Jesus said:

*“You are the light of the world….Let your light so shine before men,*

*that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:16

* By *not* returning evil for evil. The apostle Peter said:

*“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another;*

*love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”* 1 Peter 3:8-9

***God instructs us to care for our spiritual needs and for those of our families***.

*“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” Acts 20:28

**“Take heed”** is a command to continually guard; be mindful of; or attend to….

***“To yourselves”***

* Any guilt, frustration, hopelessness, fear, shame.
* Anything causing danger/temptation/evil in the home.
* Keeping ourselves from falling into prideful behaviors.
* Keeping our household from being dominated or controlled.

***“And to all the flock”***

* So the family’s spiritual needs are maintained
* So other family members are influenced by your leadership
* So the home is a safe, secure place of refuge and peace
* Encouraging & instructing according to God’s Word and His will.

*Always remembering our loved-ones are God’s possessions…not ours!*

Wow! That’s a lot for us to do. How can we ever do it all?

* Through God’s power working in us:

*“For God is working in you, Giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”* Philippians 2:13 NLT

* Through our prayers:

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

* Through His Word:

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

### *God will direct us in setting limits as to what is acceptable or not*

***Setting LIMITS: God loves righteous behavior among His own***

*“… as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Joshua 24:15

* Define what is acceptable and what is not (in relationships or in the home)
* Identify behaviors that are pleasing to God and what behaviors are not
* Inform the person what is required … for yourself and for them as well
* It is an act of love to establish limits and boundaries for a loved one.
* Keeping a journal will help bring to mind circumstances that need change
* Prayer is a spiritual discipline that keeps us grounded in God’s strength

When establishing proper limits & boundaries, we must make sure they:

* Honor God
* Are Biblical
* Are helpful for *all* involved

***All communication must be done in LOVE…as hard as this may be!!!***

*“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”* Colossians 4:6

* Losing ones’ temper usually ends effective communication
* Non-verbal communications can be encouraging or detrimental
* *PREPARE* our heart and mind ahead of time:

- Address issues & concerns in truth and with Agape LOVE.

- Prayer HELPS !!!

* Avoid the “monologue” … stimulate a conversation with gentle questions.

*“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”*

Proverb 15:1-2

***Influence is best accomplished by EXAMPLE.***

*“Encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.”* Titus 2:6-8

* “Do as I say, I’m in charge” -- doesn’t work.
* Addicts have little respect for authority, but respond more favorably to a humble person… so does God !!
* Self control (a spiritual discipline) will have a positive affect eventually.
* Being an example of integrity, reverence / respect, along with sound words will protect one from being “condemned” (being blamed)

Questions based on this material:

1. What has been your experience with setting a priority?

2. What has been your experience with setting a limit?

**Denial is** a defense mechanism in which confrontation with a personal problem or with reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem or reality.

A person can be said to be **in denial under the following conditions:**

* Refusal to admit the truth or reality of something unpleasant.
* Refusal to satisfy a request or desire.
* Refusal to admit the truth or reality (as of a statement or charge); assertion that an allegation is false.

**Various types of Denial:**

***1. Denial of fact***

In this form of denial, someone avoids a fact by lying. This lying can take the form of an outright falsehood (*commission*); leaving out certain details to tailor a story (*omission*); or by falsely agreeing to something (also referred to as "*yessing*" behavior). Someone who is in denial of fact is typically using lies to avoid facts they think may be painful to themselves or others.

***Acts 5: 1-10*, the story of Ananias and Sapphira his wife**:

Although someone is sinning against us, they are primarily sinning against God. Understanding that the sin is against God will actually help us in being able to forgive; this in turn helps us to truly “give it to God”.

***2. Denial of responsibility***

This form of denial involves avoiding personal responsibility by:

* **Blaming**: a direct statement shifting blame that may overlap with denial of fact.
* **Minimizing**: an attempt to make the effects or results of an action appear to be less harmful than they may actually be.
* **Justifying**: when someone makes a choice and attempts to make that choice look okay due to *their* perception of what is "right" in a situation.

Someone using denial of responsibility is usually attempting to avoid potential harm or pain by shifting attention away from themselves.

***Genesis: 3:10-13***

*So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

Such blaming can be a blaming not only of people, but of circumstances as well! Such circumstances may be:

* I had a tough childhood, a emotionless family, a broken home life
* I grew up with no real parental guidance or love, just flat out no love in the family of origin
* Death in the family, loss of a relationship
* Peer pressure
* “You don’t understand me or what I am going through”
* And the biggie – BLAMING GOD!

***3. Denial of impact***

Denial of impact involves a person avoiding thinking about or understanding the harm his or her behavior has caused to himself or to others (i.e., denial of the consequences). Doing this enables that person to avoid feeling a sense of guilt and it can prevent him or her from developing remorse or empathy for others. Denial of impact reduces or eliminates a sense of pain or harm from poor decisions.

***Ephesians 4:21-23***

*“If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”*

In this state of mind we can become fearful, angry and frustrated, driven by feelings of guilt that we are unwilling to face. But being renewed in the spirit of our mind, the Holy Spirit will come along side us as our Helper, Strengthener and Comforter.

***4. Denial of denial***This can be a difficult concept for many people to identify with, but it is a major barrier to changing hurtful behaviors. Denial of denial involves thoughts, actions and behaviors that give one a strong impression that nothing needs to be changed in one's personal behavior. This form of denial typically overlaps with all of the other forms of denial, but involves more self-delusion. Denial at this level can have significant consequences, both at a personal and at a societal level.

In a state of denial things can get confusing mentally, emotionally and spiritually; when we become confused we may begin to doubt our own faith and prayers. We may become confused and frustrated about our judgment or transfer our frustrations to other family members, friends and even people at work.

***1 Corinthians 14:33***

*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.*

**The Addicted Loved One**

As a person becomes more dependent on a substance, he or she begins to hide this fact from those around him (family, friends). Depending on circumstances, he or she may drink or use drugs openly; but usually he or she will conceal the amount by not using or drinking around loved ones or friends.

**The Family Members or Friends**

Some people deny that a loved one uses drugs or alcohol as much as he or she really does, thus ignoring or downplaying the seriousness of the addiction. This kind of denial may lead to enabling.

This kind of denial keeps them from having to feel and/or face the pain of addiction. If we ‘normalize” the addictive behaviors we are falling into denial. We may actually begin to believe what the addict is saying:

* “My drinking is not hurting anyone”
* “I have never been arrested nor had a D.U.I.”
* “I have never lost a job because of my using”
* “Come on – pot is natural”
* “I am taking medication prescribed by a doctor”

***Galatians 6:7, 8***

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

If we remain in a state of denial we may begin to commit intentional/unintentional sin by allowing ourselves **to believe the lies**. But we have the **assurance** of peace in our lives – “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.

Remember we are building precept upon precept, as part of a process. We are gaining godly knowledge and applying this knowledge with godly wisdom while we encourage one another. We are beginning to stand with godly confidence for our loved one(s), ourselves and our families.

***Galatians 6:2 -*** *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Now that we have developed a picture of the sin nature of addiction and alcoholism, we are learning about **forgiveness, enabling, setting healthy/godly priorities and limits,** and **denial.** We are beginning to understand how and when to set boundaries, knowing that setting boundaries is biblicaland that boundaries are not walls.

Bearing one another’s burdens does not mean that we are not to carry our loved one’s burdens; rather, we come along side them to assist them in becoming responsible for their own spiritual burdens (sin). But because we are taking heed to ourselves, we will not be “baited” back into denial and possibly revert back to arguing, blaming, making excuses, lying and becoming stressed out!

***Galatians 6:3, 4***

*For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

We are no longer in a state of denial and we can now see with clear spiritual eyes if the things our loved one is saying and doing are true. Are they really changing (no more “yessing” behaviors, enabling or lying)? **We** are becoming **accountable** and able to hold our addicted loved one **accountable** for their actions and behaviors.

***Galatians 6:6***

*Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*

We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We are beginning to see the Light of the Lord working in all our lives.

Remember, throughout the “Restore” series we are building precept upon precept; we are in a **process** and **God is molding us**. We are learning to understand and connect the dynamics of addiction and how to respond to our loved one in a biblical manner.

***John 16:33***

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

## Establishing Accountability

“Accountability” defined:   
The quality or state of being [accountable](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accountable); an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to [account](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/account) for one's thoughts, attitudes and actions.

*“For each one shall bear his own load” Galatians 6*:5  
  
This, of course, would be the desired result; that our loved will become accountable for, and therefore responsible for his or her own thoughts, attitudes and actions.

According to scripture, we are all accountable to God and to one another.

Becoming accountable requires a willingness to open up and honestly reveal sensitive or personal information, even when it might hurt or get us in trouble. Being in some form of denial, people do not want to disclose all they are really going through. But when a person fully trusts someone, he or she is more prone to being totally honest, opening up and sharing their innermost thoughts, feelings and fears without concern of betrayal.

***Two essential elements to accountability: Trust and Honesty***

In order to establish accountability, there must be trust in the relationship. This may be a slow process and usually takes much time, forgiveness, establishing boundaries and sifting through the manipulations and denial.

In communicating with one another, honesty is an important factor. It is helpful when we share a common bond or have been through similar experiences. People who relate to one another honestly and openly can empathize and share with an understanding heart.

Knowing our loved one may remain in denial for awhile, we may be able to find other areas of life to discuss which would draw us closer … opening up a door to honestly revealing how we think or feel about things we share in common.

As a starting point in re-building trust and honesty, consider the following:

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*  *James 1:19*

* Practicing “Active” listening (without a trace of anger)
  + Avoid the ‘monologue’
  + Become a patient listener – Harder for some than for others
  + We want our addicted loved one to talk honestly
  + Gentle, concise questions work well
  + Avoid “loaded” questions (*especially* while building trust)
* Displaying a non-judgmental attitude
  + When we think someone is judging us we avoid that person
  + When we know someone is in our corner we are prone to trust
* Showing genuine love and concern
  + Our vocal tone and physical gestures show how we feel
  + Most people respond well to those who *demonstrate* love (agape)

*Galatians 6:1 “…you who are spiritual* ***restore*** *such a one…”*

This word ‘restore’ actually describes the continual, repeated action of “mending” or a “fitting back together” of someone who is spiritually broken.

*Galatians 6:2* “*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Another way to say this could be: “Come alongside and support one other, patiently helping each other to overcome life dominating sin and its consequences….with the same love Christ has shown us”

*Galatians 6:3 “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”*

* Apart from God, we are nothing …A truth we all should be aware of.
* Being an example of Godly humility will go a long way in re-building a relationship rooted in trust and honesty.
* Persevering in the prayers of faith and in hope, we look forward to leading our loved one to discover this truth for themselves.
* At some point we should look forward to influencing our loved one as we live out verse 4 …

*Galatians 6:4 “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”*

* Let us examine or compare our own thoughts, attitudes and actions according to God’s will, purpose and direction … taking full responsibility for them
* When we are *IN* God’s will we have nothing to be ashamed of, or to feel guilty about … in this we will rejoice (Having confidence in God and peace of mind)
* *This* peace of mind is not contingent upon the behavior of another
* Eventually, our addicted loved one will be influenced by our humility, prayers, honesty, genuine care and concern and our non-judgmental demeanor. We can be instrumental in leading them to examine their own lives through our example…

Always remembering that the ultimate goal is …

*Galatians 6:5 “Each one should bear his own load”*

Or: Each one should become responsible and/or accountable for themselves)

Leadership 101: “Influence is best accomplished by EXAMPLE”

***Establishing Accountability: What you can do to help the process along.***

* Keeping a Journal -- Regularly documenting good and bad behaviors
  + Lies (suspected or known)
  + Inconsistencies in behavior / attitude (good and bad)
  + Verbal agreements / promises (kept and broken)
  + Missed commitments
  + Incidents of making excuses or blaming others for their actions
  + Incidents of honestly taking responsibility for their actions
  + Incidents of suspected or known substance abuse and periods of sobriety
* Continuing in daily prayer
  + For God to soften and change the heart of your loved one
  + That you would receive wisdom from above
  + For the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Fruit of the Spirit) at work in your life
  + For an opportunity to speak honestly / openly about your own observations and concerns
* Rewarding honesty / good behavior
  + “Atta-Boy” “I’m so proud of you” “Good job” etc.
  + Everyone likes affirmation of the good work they have done
* Confronting dishonesty, poor choices, destructive behavior
  + Bible “thumping” doesn’t work
  + In humility, with “Agape” love, reveal the issue from your own perspective
* Consider using an Accountability Contract (sample attached)
* Having a drug or alcohol test kit available may be useful

The process of restoring may not be easy…but substantial accomplishments rarely come without effort. When your loved one is truly on the path of restoration, they will begin to see and understand what you have been trying to do…Seeking God’s will and loving them.

They will begin to see Jesus in you !! (John 15:11-13)

## Reconciliation

**Matt. 18:11-14**

*"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?*

*And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so* ***it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish****.*

The lost sheep is a picture of our loved one. They have been led astray because they are trying to fill that hole in their heart with everything but God. They are lost. Relationships in such cases become broken, even shattered, and everything seems hopeless.

**“reconciliation” -** Gr. *katallagē.* This word has the idea of an exchange taking place, a change in a relationship from one of estrangement and discord to one of fellowship, peace, and harmony. Bringing two opposed parties together again.

**What God did in reconciling us to himself:**

* He took the initiative. The Bible says we were alienated from God, enemies of God! God was the offended party because of our sin; but he loved us enough to make a way for us to come back to him.
* He overlooked our past sins, didn’t charge them to our account. Forgiveness!
* He provided a mediator in the person of Jesus Christ. Through him we are reconciled to God.
* He restored us to a loving relationship with him. We are now part of his family!

**Reconciling with my loved one:**

* I am accountable to God, and to my loved one, to initiate reconciliation.
* God is also working on me during the reconciliation process.
* Reconciliation is not about having someone conform to my expectations, but is about two opposed parties finding peace.
  + God calls us to be peacemakers. Standing our ground in love but avoiding shouting matches.
* Reconciling with an addicted loved one is a process. Rebuilding trust and honesty are part of the restoration process and this rebuilding takes time.
* If my loved one is a believer in Jesus Christ, we will have that extra bond of saving faith in common. Reconciliation will strengthen the faith of us both and God will be praised.
* If my loved one is not a believer, reconciliation will result in the restoration of a loving and caring relationship and renewed family ties. And more than that, this may be the first step in our loved one’s turning to God in faith.

We need to keep an eternal perspective. God is not only using us to restore our loved one, but to draw him or her to Jesus Christ by our witness if he or she is not a believer.

**Ambassadors for Christ**:

*Now all things [are] of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,*

*that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,* ***not imputing their trespasses to them****, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore [you] on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.* 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

The restoration process really is a ministry of reconciliation. And we are God’s ambassadors, sent by him. God is working through us!

Ambassadors only speak the message they were given to speak. They don’t add to it or take away from it. If they did, they would be misrepresenting the one who sent them.

We represent God to our loved one by sharing his message of hope and reconciliation, not by trying to become their savior!

We use biblical tools and the encouragement and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to minister to our loved one. We don’t use our own wisdom but **the wisdom that is from God**:

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.* James 3:17

**Waiting on God:**

The spiritual process of reconciliation involves much waiting on God –

* **In faith** (asking God the Holy Spirit for help and wisdom)
* **In obedience** (watching my own actions and attitudes – do they match God’s word?)
* **In hope** (with God, all things are possible)

*Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!* Ps. 46:10

I don’t want to get ahead of God, trusting in my own strength or wisdom. The Bible says he makes all things beautiful in his time (Eccl. 3:11). I need to follow and wait on him as he equips me and prepares me for the challenges (and blessings!) ahead.

**Staying the course:**

How can I endure the lies, the false accusations, the manipulation, the resentment, the button-pushing, and persevere in this process of reconciliation and restoration?

* Look forward to the joy of seeing my loved one restored, of them being part of the family again.
* Realize God has called me to go after this lost sheep.
* Know that God is with me every step of the way. He has called me to go after my lost sheep and is providing me with the tools and encouragement in these classes to do just that.
* Put down incidents, feelings, in a journal. Share these journal entries with God in prayer. As the good stuff begins to outweigh the bad stuff, you will see real progress being made.

*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* Jas. 3:18.

Last meeting of Restore –

* Hope you have learned much and will benefit from the scriptural and practical applications.
* Some have already started to utilize what they have learned … with results
* Other may be right in the middle of struggles at this time
* Today we would like to walk thru some the Words Jesus spoke as He talked to *His Disciples* in Matthew 5.

***Matthew 5:3-16*** – Jesus speaking to His disciples:

The overarching theme is all about being “Blessed”:

It is the disciple of Christ who is blessed

The word “blessed” as Jesus used it in Matthew 5 describes the continual state of heart, mind and character of the believer who is **IN** Christ Jesus: Abiding in Him -- Following Him, learning from Him and trusting Him in all things ... that one is BLESSED

Description of those who are “blessed”

* They are the ones who know they have the favor of God
* The ones who believe God will guide, protect and provide for them – no matter what they are going through.
* The ones who become a participant with God through faith in Jesus
* The ones who endure difficulties in the power of God – not self.
* The ones who have a certain underlying contentment even thru the hard things of life

The faithful disciple of Christ is “Blessed” because of their close and personal relationship with Jesus… continually satisfied and content no matter what the circumstance … Jesus (Holy Spirit) teaches, leads, comforts, prays for us and strengthens us. He gives us His love, joy, peace, patience, …

Example: Paul in Phil 4:11-13 “… learned to be content …”

“Blessed” Differs from the word "happy" like the one who has good luck …

or like the one who is in the midst of a favorable circumstance is usually “happy.”

To be blessed is to have full confidence in God, fully trusting Him, knowing that ultimately everything is going to be OK.

In the beatitudes we see this word “Blessed” over and over again.

“Blessed” in each of the beatitudes refers to those who are continually content & satisfied knowing they have God’s favor no matter what the circumstances are.

We could also read it this way – “The blessed ones ***are***…”

**Matthew 5:3**

“The blessed ones” ***are*** the poor in spirit (humble)

* Because they know the kingdom of heaven is theirs and are content with that knowledge

**Matthew 5:4**

“The blessed ones” ***are*** those who mourn (saddened by sin; theirs and others’)

* Because they know they have God’s favor and they will be comforted by His grace, mercy and forgiveness when they acknowledge their sin and repent.

**And so on …**

The word "blessed" in the Greek used in the Beatitudes is ***makarios,*** used in its plural form, ***makarioi,*** in the Beatitudes. Its meaning is to be fully satisfied in heart and mind. Makarios, "blessed," is that person in whose heart God Himself dwells. You are blessed because you have received God’s favor without regard to your circumstances. That's what it means to be a Christian. The only place where we can find blessedness is in the Lord.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes many references to the Old Testament Law, so it makes sense to also understand the Hebrew sense of blessings/blessedness.

Psalm 1:1 and Deuteronomy 28 are 2 passages where the concept of blessing is emphasized. The Hebrew word here for blessed is “esher”, which literally means “happy is the one who walks the straight path”. This can only be done if one is **hearing and obeying God through His expressed word and in communion with the Holy Spirit**.

# Lesson 2. Galatians 5 & Fellowship with God

(Walking in the Spirit Rather than in Bondage)

(This is one of 12 commentary studies on Galatians 5)

**Galatians 5** (1) It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (2) Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. (3) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. (4) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. (7) You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. (9) A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. (10) I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. (11) But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. (12) I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

(13) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (14) For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (15) But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

(16) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

(25) If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (26) Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (NASU)

We know that God created each one of us for fellowship with Himself. We further know that He desires to be the source of the full satisfaction of all of our needs. (See Psalms 81:16; 90:14; 91:16; 145:16; Isaiah 55:2; Jeremiah 31:25; Ephesians 3:19)

If we are created for fellowship with God and satisfy our needs in the context of our relationship with God in Christ Jesus, then every other way that we try to satisfy our needs will result in something less than satisfactory and will lead to bondage – an addictive behavior.

God is infinite. If we try to satisfy our need for the infinite (our relationship with God) with anything from this world (inherently finite), there may be a temporary satisfaction, but it will always lead to a need for more. Usually, more and more is needed to receive less satisfaction for a shorter time – the mark of addiction.

If we walk in the Spirit, which is the living out of our relationship with God in Christ, we shall be satisfied. We see that our highest needs (love, joy, peace, etc.) are satisfied in the person of Jesus Christ and that the fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation of Christ’s character in our lives.

On the other hand, if we walk according to the flesh, we see the bondage of sin becoming manifest in our behaviors. As Christians, we have a choice, but the natural man does not have a choice – he is a slave to sin.

It is illogical for any of us to behave differently from the way we are designed by God (as expressed weakly in conscience and in the Law, but made perfect in the Spirit of Christ). We can easily see that all sin is inherently insane. Yet, we all sin. It is the nature of the flesh, and we will always sin if we walk apart from the Spirit.

This leads us to the important point – how do I know I am walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh? We respond in several ways:

* **Hear the Spirit**. The Spirit never contradicts the Bible; so we can hear the Spirit better if we know the Bible. We need to hone our ability to hear the Spirit because the flesh and the world like to counterfeit His voice.
* **Cherish the Fruit of the Spirit**. We can experience and cherish the fruit of the Spirit, especially love, joy, and peace. If we see the characteristics of these cherished elements of the Fruit diminished, we need to quickly examine the choices and attitudes we have had prior to this awareness to see where we have departed from the Spirit. I personally believe the admonition of the Bible to rejoice always (many places, but Philippians 3 & 4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16 especially) is particularly valuable. Don’t let the enemy take away your joy in any circumstance – the joy only comes in Christ.
* **Heed not the flesh** (even in doing good). We avoid trying to ‘be good’ in ourselves, but merely to do what is good. (The Bible never tells us to be good – in fact, it tells us that there is no good in any of us save the Spirit of Christ. The Bible only tells us to do good.) Trying to be good only gives strength to the flesh, subtly building our pride and separating us from the Spirit. We can envision this by seeing a child walking alongside its parent. It is much better for the child to walk hand in hand with the parent so they cannot be separated. However, children often do not want to take Mom’s hand. If they walk alongside, Mom is happy and the child feels proudly independent. However, get into a crowd or a dangerous situation, and the child must take the parent’s hand in order to be secure. How often have we seen a child try to run across a street and stumble? Yet in Mom’s hand, even a stumble does not result in a fall, and the child is delivered to the other side of the street safely. Pride is opposed to our relationship with God. Since trying to be good results in building a prideful attitude, it diminishes our ability to walk in the Spirit.
* **Heed the Spirit**. We learn to quickly obey. It is always a challenge to be obedient to God in the ungodly world, but it is very desirable to quickly obey rather than delaying in obedience. In this way, we more easily learn to hear the Spirit and more quickly walk in the Spirit.

# Lesson 3: Galatians 5 & Trusting in the Spirit

(Trusting in the Spirit Rather than in Flesh)

(This is one of 12 commentary studies on Galatians 5)

**Galatians 5** (1) It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (2) Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. (3) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. (4) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. (7) You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. (9) A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. (10) I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. (11) But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. (12) I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

(13) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (14) For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (15) But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

(16) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, (21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

(25) If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (26) Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (NASU)

If we walk in the Spirit, which is the living out of our relationship of trust in God through Christ, we shall be satisfied and shall be obedient to the Lord. Continuing to walk in the Lord brings about spiritual growth. However, this is very simple to say and much more challenging to do. If we walk according to the flesh, we see the bondage of sin becoming manifest in our behaviors.

In so many ways, our lives are filled with subtle ways of trusting in the flesh rather than trusting in the Spirit. Consider the following ways that we are tempted to trust in the flesh:

1. Trying to keep all of the laws of God (this also includes all forms of perfectionism).
2. Following a series of steps prescribed as the “must do” things to succeed in a matter.
3. Following a program prescribed by man that is contrary to the principles of God’s Word.
4. Following a program to achieve ungodly goals (such as various get-rich quick schemes).
5. Doing anything that is not established in God’s love or that is founded in selfishness.
6. Doing anything fails to give glory to God or which glorifies man over God or which causes people to seek the institutions of men rather than seeking God.

Number 1 is directly addressed by Paul in Galatians. It is the primary theme of the book.

Number 2 is exemplified by any number of programs that are offered by various ministries. They have a variety of excellent goals, but are merely subtle ways of trusting in the flesh. For instance, “X” steps for spiritual growth (3, 4, 5, 10, etc.), steps for overcoming…, or any of the 12-step programs represent excellent goals. However, there is a subtle principles of “if you do these steps (and follow this program religiously), then you will achieve (your goal).”

Numbers 3 through 6 should be obvious because they are replacing clear principles of God with fleshly (and sinful) goals or actions. However, there is the problem that the temptations are never presented in such an obvious way.

In any case, we need to examine the consequences of failing to walk in the Spirit by falling into these traps. Walking in the Spirit produces the Fruit of the Spirit, which is a manifestation of the character of Christ in our life. The Fruit of the Spirit is in stark contrast to the deeds of the flesh. But we need to recognize that the deeds of the flesh are often merely the symptoms of sinful attitudes that have gained control in our lives, and the list in verses 19 through 21 is obviously a partial list that could be extended almost indefinitely – how many ways can we “miss the mark” (sin)?

Walking in the Spirit requires us to trust in the Lord. Just as children walk with their parent because they trust the parent, we are to trust in the Lord and how the Spirit is leading us. Children often do not know where the parents are taking them. In the same way, we do not know where the Spirit is leading us, except we know the He works all things together for our good because God loves us and we love God. We trust God because we are confident of His love, which is proven in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Part of the benefit of this trust is spiritual growth manifest in the Fruit of the Spirit.

When we trust in the flesh by any of the modes noted above, we are not trusting in the Spirit or the Lord. This has a deadly consequence. Our actions of trusting in the flesh are giving power and influence of the flesh – in contrast to giving the Spirit power and influence over our life. Sin dwells in the flesh, so we are giving power and influence to our sin nature. Sin is a subtle enemy, mimicking the serpent in the Garden, so the consequences are not necessarily immediately obvious.

In the case of a 12-step program, as an example, the goal of deliverance from the behavior is very often achieved – sobriety or victory over a destructive behavior. What is not seen is how a person may be trusting in the steps of the program instead of trusting in God – subtly making the program a form of a god and feeding confidence in the flesh (i.e., pride). We are told explicitly to take no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3-4) (in the example of Saint Paul). We may gain the victory of achieving a (noble) goal, but we end up losing control to sin in some other way. By trusting in the flesh, the sin nature is given a part in forming our mind sets in opposition to trusting in the Lord. The sin nature may seem to be allowing us to win control, but we are actually losing control, leading to sinful behaviors enslaving us in some other area of our life – and perhaps a return to the original behavior that we thought we had conquered, thus dashing our hope. The very activity we pursued to give us hope and freedom has led to our bondage again – because we trusted in something (anything) other than the leading of the Spirit.

The only way we can enjoy true self control is by giving our control to the Spirit – walking in the Spirit and bearing the Fruit. The only true hope fulfilled is in Christ our Lord. He alone can set us free from the bondage of sin.

An important message of Galatians 5 is that Christ alone delivers us from sin and its bondage. The glorious hope of salvation is only realized in everyday life when we are trusting in the Lord and walking by His Spirit. Indeed, it is only by His leading that we are able to glorify Him in both word and deed.

# Lesson 4: Galatians 6 and the Obligations of Spiritual Victory

GAL 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

GAL 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

GAL 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

GAL 6:4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

GAL 6:5 For each one will bear his own load.

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

GAL 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

GAL 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

GAL 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

GAL 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Galatians 6:1 contains a command to “restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.”

We need to take commands seriously because we are obligated to do them in order to fulfill the will of God. It is not an obligation of the Law, but of love. Our first obligation of love is to our Lord and savior, namely to respond to His will motivated by extreme love and gratitude for His great work in redeeming us of our sins. Our second obligation is to love each other because He has commanded us to love one another. (See John 15:9-17, especially verses 12 and 17.) If we love each other in a practical way, we first want to see each of us to come to repentance in order to spend eternity with Christ and secondly to be delivered from the bandage of sin.

Salvation is only the first step in deliverance from sin, and it is a life-long process. None of us are exactly like everybody else in our process of maturing spiritually. We each come from a different place at an appointed time. However, our destination is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Being conformed to the image of Christ is equivalent to walking in the Spirit consistently. How many of us are perfect in our walking in the Spirit? – None! Even Saint Peter and Saint Paul had flaws in their walk. However, they also had a lot of spiritual victory. We should never be self-satisfied with our spiritual maturity, but, like Paul, press on toward the upward calling in Christ Jesus (see Philippians 3).

Galatians 6:1 says if we notice someone caught up in any trespass (a sin which they are committing unknowingly), we should restore them. It does not mean that we are going around seeking to find out people’s sins in order to find a work for us to do in their restoration. It is not a task given to every Christian. It is a task for the “one who is spiritual” – this is a person who is mature enough to recognize and understand the nature of the sin because they have spiritual victory over it. Others may be familiar with the sin, but do not have victory over it, so they do not understand the attitude they need to adopt or change in order to gain that victory.

We must all understand that victory over sin *only* exists in our Lord Jesus. We gain victory when we adjust our attitudes in such a way that we are able to trust Him and His finished work on the Cross in application to the issues that underlie that sinful behavior. The victory is never gained by our own strength. If we trust in our own ability to conquer a sin, we will fail (often with increasingly bad consequences). That is why we must do the restoration corrections with a spirit of gentleness (and compassionate grace). All of us are susceptible failure if we become prideful or desire to exercise control over another person. We must continually put on an attitude of humility (“looking to yourself”) in order to avoid falling into the temptation traps.  
 Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another’s burdens. This is an act of love, which is why we fulfill the law of Christ when we do so. What kinds of burdens are being addressed here? Anything that brings sorrow or which prevents us from experiencing the joy of the Lord is certainly a burden. Whatever cares are so attached to us that we cannot seem to let go and put them in the Lord’s hand (as in 1 Peter 5:7) are a burden. Effectively, an anxiety of fear that we cannot seem to shake is attached to an area of our life where we are not able to realize the love of Christ, because 1 John 4:7-21 shows us that perfect love casts out all fears. We know that while we dwell in the flesh, we lack perfection, but the more we are perfected in the love of Christ, the easier it is to cast off fears and anxieties. We may feel burdened by the obligations of the Law (or commandments). This occurs when we are trying to be Christ-like in the power of the flesh rather than merely walking in the Spirit of Christ and naturally fulfilling the law of Christ (and the will of God).