

Review Questions (Lesson #20)

Answer T for true, F for false

1. Some sins are so awful that we should never forgive the offender.
2. Both preachers and elders may be compensated for their work.
3. We should provide for needy Christians, but not for anyone outside of Christ.
4. Correcting a sinful Christian might hurt their feelings, so we should be quiet.
5. Mature Christians might be overtaken in sin and need gentle correction.

Give short answers:

1. From this lesson give two examples of people being compensated for their work:
2. What is NOT the goal, and what IS the goal, in restoring an erring brother or sister?
3. What good effect of assisting someone who is not a Christian is mentioned in this lesson?
4. What "law of Christ" is fulfilled by restoring an erring brother or sister?
5. Rather than compare ourselves to others, how should we evaluate ourselves?

Fill in the blanks:

1. "He who _____ to the flesh will of the flesh reap _____; but he who sows to the _____ will of the _____ reap _____.
2. Christians are _____ of the _____ of _____; when one yields to the _____ of the _____, it is like _____ a _____.
3. Sharing our _____ and _____ with other people applies the principle of _____.
4. "You who are spiritual" refers to those who are _____ by the _____, as opposed to those whose _____ are dominated by the _____, who are spiritually _____.
5. God will _____ us not only on our _____ for each other's _____ wellbeing, but on the way we meet each other's _____.

Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace
Lesson #20 Ourselves and Others (Galatians 6:1-10)

Each of us is personally responsible to God; yet part of that responsibility consists of our duties toward each other. The tug-of-war within each of us between the flesh and the spirit affects how we treat each other. This lesson deals first with our obligations to care for one another spiritually, then with our duties concerning material wellbeing.

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). This text makes it obvious that it is possible for a Christian to be caught up in sin. Yes, even a Christian may yield to the flesh rather than walking by the Spirit (led by His word). The word overtaken carries the idea that carelessness was involved. Who among us wouldn't say, "Been there, done that!"?

The word restore refers to reducing a dislocated joint. Christians are members of the spiritual body of Christ; when one yields to the lust of the flesh, it is like dislocating a joint. How do you deal with a dislocated member? Paul says you restore them as gently as possible. Remember, one aspect of the fruit of the spirit is gentleness (meekness, 5:23). The goal is not venting your anger or disgust at the erring brother or sister, but healing the damage to themselves and to the body (the church). Such restoration may, indeed, be painful, just as setting a dislocated shoulder may cause profound discomfort. But just as a good doctor will try to minimize the pain, so we ought to be as gentle as possible in turning a fallen brother or sister back to the right way.

Who should restore the sinning member? "You who are spiritual" (6:1) — that is, those who are walking by the Spirit (as opposed to those whose lives are still dominated by the flesh, who are spiritually immature). To illustrate this point, Jesus spoke of a man with a plank in his eye trying to remove a speck of sawdust from his brother's eye (Matthew 7:1-5). Would it be appropriate to send a drunken person to correct someone for jaywalking?

Restoring an fallen Christian is an act of love (Galatians 5:2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"). The law of Christ is to love as He loved (John 13:34). Gently helping others to overcome the shame and distress of being overtaken in a trespass does not mean we endorse sin. It does mean we show compassion and understanding, and that we accept the fallen one who repents, even if he has done something awful (see

1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul commanded the Corinthians to expel a member who was committing incest with his step-mother, but then told them to forgive and accept him when he repented).

Those who seek to restore fallen brethren must be careful about their own spiritual well-being too ("considering yourself lest you also be tempted," Galatians 6:1). As Paul told the Corinthians, "Let the one who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12). This is one reason for being gentle with the erring – you may need gentle treatment yourself one day! Don't try to make yourself look good by comparing yourself to the fallen person. Such did the Pharisee in the temple, who foolishly considered himself better than the tax collector (see Luke 18:11). Evaluate yourself by the standard of God's word – you will find no room for boasting. "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. For each one shall bear his own load" (Galatians 6:3-5). While we may help one another with our burdens, when all is said and done, each individual is responsible for himself. "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

God will judge us not only on our care for each other's spiritual well-being, but on the way we meet each other's material needs. Paul began with this command: "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6). "All good things" would certainly include material things such as food, clothing, and money. This principle is nothing new. Even under the Law of Moses, the priests and Levites who taught and served the Israelites received their living from the tithes, offerings, and sacrifices of the Israelites. Paul used this fact to defend the right of gospel preachers to be compensated for their work: "Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

Similarly, Paul affirmed that elders who "labor in the word and teaching" should "be counted worthy of double honor" (1 Timothy 5:17). That is, they should not only be held in high esteem, but should be materially compensated for their work. "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (v. 18, quoting Deuteronomy 25:5 and Luke 10:7).

From a merely practical standpoint, common sense tells us that one who works has a right to be paid. "Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?" (1 Corinthians 9:7). When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, He told them to stay in the homes of whomever would accept them, and to eat what was set before them (Luke 10:7). Obviously He knew that people who appreciated their work would share with them in all good things.

Paul expanded the principle in Galatians 6:10 to include other cases of material need as well as those who taught God's word. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Our top priority should be to assist fellow-Christians, but we should be alert to opportunities to help those outside of Christ as well. Showing Jesus' love can go a long way toward softening a heart to be receptive to the gospel.

Sharing our material blessings with other people applies the principle of sowing and reaping. "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" (Galatians 6:7-8). Our giving, especially to those less fortunate, is a kind of sowing. "But this I say: He who sows sparingly also reaps sparingly, but he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (1 Corinthians 9:6-7).

Sowing to the Spirit, then, is using your material wealth to glorify God by supporting the preaching of His word and helping those who are in need. Sowing to the flesh is using your material wealth selfishly, like the rich man who neglected the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and the rich, foolish farmer who hoarded his wealth only for his own ease (Luke 12:13-21). These men may have thought they could get away with it, but God is not mocked. Both of them reaped what they sowed: The rich man went to torment, while Lazarus was comforted; and God called the farmer a fool – he died without ever enjoying the wealth he had amassed.

Some become discouraged because they help people, but think God takes no notice. But remember, harvest time comes long after planting. "In due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9). God expects us to look out for each other, both spiritually and materially. Let us sow to the Spirit with confidence that we will reap everlasting life!