

**Relationships in the church reveal our Savior.**

**Galatians 6:1-5** “Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted. 2 Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else. 5 For each person will have to carry his own load.” -- (CSB)

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Among the myriad jobs I have had in my years, I had the pleasure of serving on the communications team of BoysTown USA. In Nebraska it is a historic village for wayward boys, those not wanted, in trouble, and in need of help. Only occasionally didn’t my parents threaten sending me there!

But on the campus there is a statute that carries the slogan of BoysTown. And here is the story of how it came about...

[Back in 1918, a boy named Howard Loomis was abandoned by his mother at Father Flanagan’s Home for Boys, which had opened just a year earlier. Howard had polio and wore heavy leg braces. Walking was difficult for him, especially when he had to go up or down steps.

Soon, several of the Home’s older boys were carrying Howard up and down the stairs.

One day, Father Flanagan asked Reuben Granger, one of those older boys, if carrying Howard was hard.

Reuben replied, “He ain’t heavy, Father... he’s m’ brother.”]

He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.

A wonderful story, a wonderful sentiment. And I think, exactly what the gospel produces in us.

Galatians is coming to a close - the stick of dynamite among epistles. Paul writes with gospel clarity saying 'don't negate the grace of Christ by following false teachers - trusting behavior for salvation.

Where we might expect Paul to close with a call to round up the scoundrels, he goes instead where the gospel goes - to community.

The kingdom advances when relationships in the church reveal our Savior.

I want to argue that this is the point of the church, and maybe stir us onward in greater depth of community as we think through Paul's exhortation here.

Before us we have a description of Christian community, of gospel culture at work, and we want to tap into it and claim it for ourselves. We need one another, and healthy self-awareness in order that we would make much of Jesus.

## **One Another**

The longer I study the Bible the more I am struck by the communal nature of redemption and life in the Spirit. (Now, I don't mean communal in the hippie sense!) The emphasis on others over self - as if our fickle hearts need the reminder over and over!

In this letter, Paul has been clear on gospel doctrine, and on gospel culture. Not only do you receive redemption but that plays out among others - there is rescue by Jesus and then the miraculous forming into a family of very different people. In Galatia, Jew and Gentile; in the kingdom every possible variant of person made new in Christ and given a people to be part of.

Salvation flows into taking care of the family - freedom to love.

“For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if

you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.” -- **Galatians 5:13-15** (CSB)

The gospel came to you on its way to someone else. And you need it that way to experience real life in Christ.

This truth tears down the lie that faith is meant to be personal and private. The kingdom has a specific community and you can't rightly live in response to salvation without others. You were made for gospel culture.

This phrase - one another - is encountered over 100 times in the New Testament. Uncovering a vital reality for those rescued by Jesus.

Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)

Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)

Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)

Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)

Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Be likeminded towards one another (Romans 15:5)

Accept one another (Romans 15:7)

Admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16) Greet one another (Romans 16:16)

Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)

Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)

Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)

Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)

Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)

Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)

Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)

Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)

Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)

Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)

Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)

Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)

Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)

Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Pray for one another (James 5:16)

Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

So it's clear, we are meant for community. And gospel culture in our text does specific work. 'If someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing,' if someone has fallen for the lure of the flesh, the confusion of false teaching, their own itching ears, it is our work as those that are 'spiritual' to restore them.

Bring them back, a renewal that brings them to their original place - settled in Christ. For the Galatians, those drawn away from the faithful gospel preaching and living - and also those tripped up under the weight of the battle against sin.

Where some might be quick to say 'farewell' or cast them out - when a family member has been caught with their hand in the cookie jar, we're to restore, not penalize, them.

And we also carry one another's burdens... share the weight of life. Hold each other up, serve one another in love.

If we take the call to live by the Spirit seriously, we will embrace this.

"We will accept our responsibility, as Spirit-filled brothers and sisters, to help. Paul is speaking to "you who are spiritual"; that is, to those who "live by the Spirit". He is not referring to some super-spiritual group of elite Christians; he is saying to ordinary Christians: if you follow the desires of the Spirit, you will do this. This responsibility belongs to anyone who is trying to live a Christian life at all." TK

Restoring and carrying. It includes caring enough to be a listening ear, a strong shoulder, a helping hand. But there's also more: Spiritual friendship follows the rhythm of the Holy Spirit, moving and speaking with spiritual wisdom, rendering soul care through the gospel. Loneliness, illness, relational pain, sorrow, anxieties, fears, disabilities, and depression will stalk us all at some point. When

they come after your friend, walk with him or her; soon, they'll have to walk with you.

And in order for this gospel culture to exist, we have to be close. Practically this is a call to be near to one another, to be open and honest, the run to Christ together, gently serving one another, lifting each other.

“You cannot help with a burden unless you come very close to the burdened person, standing virtually in their shoes, and putting your own strength under the burden so its weight is distributed on both of you, lightening the load of the other. So in the same way, a Christian must listen and understand, and physically, emotionally, spiritually, take up some of the burden with the other person.” TK

We learn to seek help in our own battle with the flesh and devil. To dispel the lies we are prone to believe, to walk with gospel confidence through the minefields of life.

At times it is supremely difficult to do this. Sometimes we need a friend to draw near, to take our hands, and to place our grip on the cross when we're too tired and too exhausted to even lift our arms and to hold them there, with their hand over ours, until we can hang on ourselves.

True indeed is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statement: *“God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without belying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure. We need the word of grace to come to us, through the lips of a fellow Christian. We can't do it alone.”*

Our souls were made for “one another” type community. Don't settle for less - you need this. I need this.

And when we have it, the gospel is visible among us.

“When the doctrine is clear and the culture is beautiful, that church will be powerful. But there are no shortcuts to getting there. Without the doctrine, the culture will be weak. Without the culture, the doctrine will seem pointless.” -- Ray Ortlund

We need one another. And we also need a healthy self-awareness.

## **Self-Awareness**

Calling the churches back to the richness of the gospel, to the grace of Christ, transforms us into community, and frees us to live with gospel honesty.

We live in a time of easy division and encampment over silly things. It is really a danger to be avoided. And it is always in play when humans are involved!

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” -- **Galatians 5:25-26** (CSB)

In our text the Apostle presents an awareness of self needed for flourishing in community. Aware of our inclinations when restoring brothers and sisters - watching ourselves so we also won't be tempted to believe the same lies or run after the wrong things.

And humble honesty of who we are - not too big for our britches. Knowing who we truly are before God - not deceiving ourselves.

The fruit of the flesh and the false teachers is constant attempts at one-upping each other. Proving your spirituality, your ability to keep the law. Tainting how you relate to others “less capable.” Missing the point...

Instead the gospel delivers a life that is not a comparison game with others but that rallies around what is true. Looking to Jesus.

When you look at Jesus, you'll discover two things: that you don't measure up, and that you are, nevertheless, deeply loved. And knowing your own wretchedness not only keeps you near the cross; it also changes your attitude toward the inadequacy of others. Looking at Jesus frees us from the terrible

burden of comparison: No one measures up, so our only recourse is to stop striving against grace.

The good news of Jesus creates a new self-image... It humbles me before anyone, telling me I am a sinner saved only by grace. But it also emboldens me before anyone, telling me I am loved and honored by the only eyes that really count. So the gospel gives me a boldness and a humility that can co-exist, and that can increase together.

Helping others to fight sin not so we can feel better about ourselves, but because we recognize our own need and the restoring work we have received by Christ, in community. Quick to remind each other of who we are in Christ because we have an experienced awareness of our need for more of Jesus.

With eyes to see who we are and what Christ has done for us. Securing eternity for us.

Brings us to verse 5... "each person will have to carry his own load." Wait, aren't we carrying one another's burdens? Different words here; burdens (shipping container), load (backpack).

"...enough of a difference to suggest that there are times when an accumulation of burdens crush us to the ground and we need help, and at the same time that the inevitable pressures of life are a burden and we had better learn to bear them."  
Eugene Peterson

Really, that as believers we carry each other in this life, but we will stand before Jesus one day.

Let the gospel humble you and at the same time make you bold, so that you will live in community as called, serving one another, restoring, carrying burdens.

To have gospel culture we need one another. We need healthy self-awareness.

And this reveals our Savior... In Galatia, how they lived among one another would reveal their trust either in Christ, or self (circumcision, division). Now, how we live in community will reveal our Savior, either Christ... or is it politics, narrow theology, building walls instead of bridges...

Where this one another community exists, gospel culture advances the kingdom.

## **Gospel Advance**

From a doctrine standpoint, this is all we've got. The gospel is the power of God for salvation and we have nothing else. But the culture is meant to reveal it...

**Jen Wilken** "Keeping Christ at the center of our teaching means more than just pointing his followers to look back to what he has done. It also means exhorting them to walk as he walked. He is both our Savior and our Example. We need both indicatives and imperatives."

There is something more than interpersonal help and self ownership... both are following Christ. "In this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." 2

We don't have to go far in this epistle to recognize the law of Christ - love - love your neighbor as self - love even your enemy.

It is Christ's life and death that becomes the supreme embodiment of what this love should be.

This is life in community that looks like Jesus - that is sacrificial, gentle. It reveals how he has welcomed us. A reflection of the perfect Son, with all advantage, setting it aside to serve and give himself so those that could never earn a seat at the table would be welcomed in as co-heirs with the king. That his life, death, resurrection, and ascension for us are really worth changing our lives for, giving ourselves away, serving the least, setting aside our rights that others may see him.

This is what our kids will see. This is what our neighbors will see. They will see Jesus.

Rescued by Jesus, formed into a family that shares burdens, living for the renewal of others and all things, to see the kingdom come, to reveal our Savior and his Spirit's work in us by how we love one another.

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Will you have these Christ-revealing relationships? It is what we ache for, and it is good.

Get close, stay honest, and run to Jesus together. It is life in the Spirit. It is the regular order of the kingdom. It is the way of Christ. May it be our way Reservoir!

The Hollies, (1969)

“The road is long  
With many a winding turn  
That leads us to who knows where  
Who knows where  
But I'm strong  
Strong enough to carry him  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go  
His welfare is of my concern  
No burden is he to bear  
We'll get there

For I know  
He would not encumber me  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

If I'm laden at all  
I'm laden with sadness  
That everyone's heart  
Isn't filled with the gladness  
Of love for one another

It's a long, long road  
From which there is no return  
While we're on the way to there  
Why not share

And the load

Doesn't weigh me down at all  
He ain't heavy he's my brother

He's my brother  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother, he ain't heavy”

Shall we see ourselves? Shall we carry one another? Shall we show them Christ?

Let's go.