

Message Discussion Guide FREE TO LOVE

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

January 18, 2009

Galatians 6:1-10

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Direct learners to think of words or phrases that would describe a person focused on "self." If possible, write them so that all learners can see them. Then direct learners to think of words that describe "love." If possible, also write these words so that everyone can see. Ask learners the following question: How is a focus on self the complete opposite of love? Allow discussion for a few minutes. Explain that today we'll take a look at spiritual community and the role that love plays in it.

Option 2

Explain that Francis Schaeffer was a Christian apologist (defender of the faith) who had this to say about the community of faith:

"Our relationship with each other is the criterion the world uses to judge whether our message is truthful - Christian community is the final apologetic."

Invite learners to respond to that quote. Ask the following questions:

- What do you think he meant?
- Do you agree or disagree?
- What are the implications for the Church if this statement is true?

Explain that today we will look at the body of Christ as a true Christian community.

Review the Message . . .

The Importance of Spiritual Community

- **The greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life is love for one another.**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 5:13-15.

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- According to these verses, what does Paul indicate is a great purpose of freedom?
- What should freedom drive believers to do?
- In Galatians 5:22, what is the first fruit of the Spirit that Paul names?
- Based on these passages, freedom and the work of the Spirit are greatly evidenced by believers' relationship with one another. What should be the defining word of these relationships?

Application . . .

- What do we typically think of as evidence of a Spirit-filled life?
- Do those evidences align with Galatians 5?
- How can these thoughts interfere or support the practicality of living by the Spirit?
- Do you think the typical Christian considers how much our love for other believers is a witness to the world? Why or why not?
- What is the greatest obstacle to loving others everyday?

Four Enemies of Spiritual Community . . .

- **Self-centeredness**
 - Competition breeds conceit.
- **Self-righteousness**
- **Self-sufficiency**
- **Self-esteem**

Discussion Questions

- Invite a volunteer to read Galatians 5:26, 6:4.
- Focusing on Galatians 5:26, what is the root cause of comparison? What kinds of comparisons are bred from pride?
- What does boasting illustrate in the lives of believers? (*self-centeredness*)
- Read Galatians 6:1. How does Paul indicate that accountability can become self-righteousness?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 6:2. Explain that Paul stated a command to bear the burdens of others. What, then, is a second underlying command in this verse? (*to share our burdens with others*)
- How does self-sufficiency in carrying burdens illustrate a lack of love in the Church?
- Read Galatians 6:3. How are believers to think of themselves?
- How does this idea differ from the surrounding culture of legalism?

Application . . .

- David read the following quote from C. S. Lewis: *"Each person's pride is in competition with every one else's pride . . . What you want to get clear is that Pride is essentially competitive – is competitive by its very nature. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the*

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element of competition has gone, pride has gone.” Why is the sin of competition so easily prevalent in the Church?

- How can we challenge one another seeking to show superiority in the Church? How can we envy one another through inferiority in the Church?
- How is pride and competition dangerous to the body of Christ?
- Can our attempts to provide accountability often be a mask for self-righteousness? How is self-righteousness also linked to pride?
- What are reasons that we do not like to share our burdens with others? Can our reluctance not to share struggles with others indicate a sense of self-sufficiency or self-righteousness within ourselves?
- How can the Church sometimes create barriers to sharing burdens? What can we do to make other believers more comfortable with sharing their struggles?
- How does Paul’s command to us to think of ourselves as nothing go against popular messages from the world?
- What is the difference in self-esteem based on our attained self-worth and our personal value based the intrinsic value given to us by our Creator?
- What is the danger in considering ourselves as completely value-less?
- What does it mean to consider ourselves as nothing except for the good of Christ in us and our desire to reflect His good?

One Essential for Spiritual Community . . .

- **Self-examination**
 - We combat vain competition with one another through humble confession before God.

Discussion Questions

- Read Galatians 6:1, 4-5. Why does Paul indicate that self-examination is critical within the body of Christ?
- What does Paul state is the result of examining one’s life?
- What was examining expected to reveal?
- After sin is revealed, what is the next step to maintaining the relationship between God and man? (*confession*) How is confession essential to a right relationship with God and with other believers?

Application . . .

- If self-examination reveals our true identity before God, how does it also allow us to see the true identity of God?
- How does knowing our true nature and God’s true nature affect how we view others?

Five Commands for Spiritual Community

- **Confront one another in your sin.**

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- **Comfort one another in your struggles.**
- **Share your resources generally**
- **Sow your resources eternally.**
- **Spend your resources selflessly.**

Discussion Questions

- Concentrating on Galatians 6:1 again, what does Paul indicate is a non-negotiable in showing love to another believer? How is this an illustration of love for another person?
- What is the relationship between the commands of Christ and the work of the Spirit in a believer?
- With what kind of an attitude does Paul state this kind confrontations should be done?
- What is the purpose of such a confrontation?
- Looking at Galatians 6:2, Paul indicates an obligation of believers to share their struggles. How does this idea build up the idea that the Church is a community?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Galatians 6:6-10. What does Paul instruct believers to do with their resources in these verses?
- What are the purposes for using resources in these ways?
- What are his warnings about continually doing what is right?
- How do all of the commands in this passage witness to the nature of God? How do they witness to the working of the Spirit within a believer?
- Paul instructs believers to do good especially to other believers. How would this impact the lost world around the Church?

Application . . .

- Why do we often try to avoid confrontation as much as possible in the Church?
- How do we ignore not only a biblical mandate by avoiding accountability but also spiritual growth?
- How do we encourage the body of Christ when we share our struggles with one another and help others to carry their burdens? How is this practice a witness to the independent nature of North-American culture?
- Why is our sharing of struggles so difficult for us?
- Paul again mentions the best use of our resources. Why is the use of our resources such a telling illustration of what is going on internally within us and within the Church?
- Why is it easy for us to become weary in doing “good?” How do we combat this weariness?
- What is the difference between weariness from working in our own power and the lack of weariness in working through the power of the Holy Spirit?
- What standards should be used to determine if we are using our resources eternally and selflessly?