

## LOVE YOUR CHURCH

### WEEK 3 – CARING: DISPLAYING THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

When you think about the work of Spirit in the church what comes to mind?

Tony Merida makes the following comment about the early church.

*“One of the most remarked-upon aspects of the early church was how they cared for one another. If someone spied on your church today, would they remark about the same thing? Or would they say something like, ‘Behold, how they criticize one another!’ ‘Behold, how they gossip about one another!’ ‘Behold, how polite they are toward one another, but not authentically caring toward one another.’ There’s far too much ‘brother-bashing’ and ‘sister-smashing’ going on today—in person and online—and there’s not enough biblical ‘one anothering’” - Merida*

Merida highlights the fact that the Bible is replete with commands calling Christians to care for one another.

- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34)
- “We, though many, are ... individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)
- “Love one another with brotherly affection.” (Romans 12:10)
- “Outdo one another in showing honor.” (Romans 12:10)
- “Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
- “Have the same care for one another.” (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- “Through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13) u “Bear one another’s burdens.” (Galatians 6:2)
- “Bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
- “Be kind to one another.” (Ephesians 4:32)
- “Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)
- “In humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)
- “Do not lie to one another.” (Colossians 3:9)
- “Encourage one another.” (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- “Always seek to do good to one another.” (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” (Hebrews 10:24)
- “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.” (James 4:11)
- “Do not grumble against one another.” (James 5:9)
- “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)
- “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (1 Peter 4:9)

- “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.” (1 Peter 5:5)
- “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” (1 John 4:7)
- “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us.” (1 John 4:12)

How have you experienced one-anothering in the church?

**REFLECTION:** *How are you doing in one-anothering? Consider reading through and reflecting on the one-another passages. Where could you grow?*

### **GENTLE RESTORATION**

**Galatians 6:1 (ESV)** *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”*

In the book Merida writes that,

*“Tim Keller points out that the term translated as ‘restore’ was used for setting a dislocated bone into place. He then says:*

*A dislocated bone is extremely painful, because it is not in its designed, natural relationship to the other parts of the body. To put a bone back in place will inevitably inflict pain, but it’s a healing pain. It means we are to confront, even when that will be painful, but our confronting must be aiming to prompt a change of life and heart. (Galatians For You, p 167)”*

### **Biblical Guidelines in the Restoration Process.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **is the point (Matthew 18:15-17)**
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **is required (Matthew 7:1-5)**
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **is required**
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **is required**

Merida ends this section with these words,

*“Spirit-filled Christianity looks like seeking the wayward brother or sister so that you may gently restore them. In a privatized, individualistic culture (like that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century West), some may find this bothersome—but it’s biblical Christianity. I am my brother’s keeper; and I need a brother to be my keeper too!*

*Be ready to do the work of restoration. Don’t assume others will reach out to a wayward and troubled brother or sister. Don’t just hope that they will be ok. Don’t leave the pastors and leaders to do this work. Care enough to take the initiative to rebuke where necessary and to pray and work for restoration whenever it’s needed.”*

### **HUMBLE BURDEN BEARING**

In Galatians 6:2 Paul calls us to *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Merida begins with this encouragement,

“Here’s a daily mission for all of us: be alert to the burdens of others and be committed to making them lighter. This ministry may not get a lot of public recognition, but it matters to Jesus.”

In verse 3 Paul tells us what hinders this kind of burden bearing ministry, Pride.

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

Another necessary element comes in verse 4.

***Galatians 6:4 (ESV)*** *“But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.”*

Merida writes this regarding verse 4.

“What Paul is basically saying is this: don’t compare yourself to your neighbor. Instead, examine your own life in view of God’s evaluation, and when you do, you will not be so prideful. Don’t get puffed up because someone is sinning in a way you don’t or is burdened in a way that you aren’t.” – Merida

Merida reconciles them in this way.

“Some things are too heavy to carry on their own, but other things are matters we need to take care of personally. There are legitimate and illegitimate needs. Some people treat everything as a burden, when some things are really a light load. Others treat everything like a light load, refusing to ask for help and staggering on.”

*What thoughts or experiences come to mind as you think about this burden bearing in the church?*

**REFLECTION:** Are you prone to asking people to bear things that you ought to bear yourself? Or are you prone to never asking for help and bearing things that are too much for you?

### **GENEROUS SHARING**

Next we read verse 6, **Galatians 6:6 (ESV)** *"Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."*

Merida quotes Tim Keller on this point,

*"We should not be consumers, who come to a church to plunder the benefits of it, without doing significant giving to that church"* (Galatians For You, p174)

Merida then writes,

*"Paul's ultimate concern is not money, it is the furtherance of the gospel, and he knows that the God-ordained means for accomplishing this is the steady proclamation of the word of God by faithful teachers. These teachers would be limited if they themselves had to take care of their daily necessities, and so by caring for the needs of the teacher, a church says, 'We want the word of God taught faithfully and effectively, so we will support you.' Caring well means that we care for those who teach, and that we do so not because it's merely a 'tradition' but because we love the word of God and want to see it spread to the ends of the earth." – Merida*

**REFLECTION:** Do you value the ministry of the Gospel at and through Neighborhood? Are you investing in that proclamation through your giving?

### **PERSONAL HOLINESS**

In verse 7-8 we read the following,

**Galatians 6:7–8** *"7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he 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."*

Merida writes,

*"Our personal lives directly impact our relational lives, and therefore one of the most important ways we contribute to the health of a local church is by practicing Spirit-filled godliness."*

Merida says this.

*"Regardless of who you are, you reap what you sow. So, choose your field wisely. Sow thoughts and deeds in the Spirit. The books you read, the people you are with, the things you do for entertainment, and the things you think are acts of sowing. Are they of the flesh or the Spirit? When you are sowing to the Spirit you will reap the reward of the Spirit-controlled life and you will joyfully fulfill the "one anothers" of Scripture." – Merida*

*What are some practical ways we can sow to the Spirit?*

**REFLECTION:** What are you sowing too?

### **PRACTICAL GOODNESS**

Merida writes,

*"Caring is tiring. It is a privilege and a blessing, but it's not easy. That is why Paul encourages us to 'not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up' (v 9). Every Christian can become discouraged in doing good deeds. Paul says keep sowing. Keep loving one another. Keep resisting bickering with others. Keep rejecting false teachers. Keep bearing one another's burdens. Keep preaching the gospel, because Jesus is worth it. 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith' (v 10). Believers should be marked by practical goodness." - Merida*

Merida writes this about practical goodness,

"Love acts. Christian love is not some abstract idea: it involves real displays of goodness, empowered by the Spirit" – Merida

**1 John 3:16 (ESV)** *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."*

**1 John 3:17–18 (ESV)** *"17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*

*What are some practical ways you've been loved in the church?*

**REFLECTION:** *How could you love your church family better?*

## **ACTION STEPS**

- *Do the important work of restoring, bearing burdens, sharing and doing good. If someone comes to mind as you consider Galatians 6, then resolve to act on their behalf.*
- *Recognize that caring for sinners and sufferers is ministry work that all believers should take part in.*
- *Remember that your personal life will always have an impact on your community, so be serious about sowing to the Spirit.*
- *Look for opportunities everyweek to do good to others.*
- *Pray for your church family.*