

Caring For One Another

"...that the members should have the same care one for another." 1 Corinthians 12:25

God has ordained the church. One of the things a church should do, among many things, is to care for one another. We need to always be a caring church, and while I believe we generally are, I also see that there is room for improvement.

We can demonstrate our care for each other by **greeting one another**. *"Salute one another with an holy kiss"* (Romans 16:16). This command is given five times in the New Testament. This kiss was never sensuous or unseemly, but a warm demonstration of love and care for the brethren. In our culture a kiss on the cheek is replaced with a warm handshake or friendly hug (men with men, women with women).

It is important that you not just greet the people you know. Seek to welcome and greet everyone possible, making a special point of greeting **visitors** before and after the service. Make sure visitors are comfortable. Be diligent to avoid forming cliques and go out of your way to include the quiet person and the individual who "doesn't quite fit in." Children, be sure to greet your friends but also be sure to talk with new children and the adults you know. It is a great blessing to adults when you show concern and when you enter into pleasant conversation with them. Let us all build the sincere reputation of being a friendly church!

Secondly, we can demonstrate our care for each other by **fellowshipping** one with another. Often when we think about fellowship we think about food. A few years ago my young son heard during the announcements that we were going to have a fellowship on Sunday evening. His eyes lit up, a big smile eclipsed his face, and turning to his brother he said, "We're going to have a fellowship!" I'm sure he was thinking only about food. Fellowship is much more than food; as a matter of fact, it does not have to involve food at all. Fellowship means *to have something in common*; to share; to be a partner. I heard a preacher describe fellowship this way: "it is two fellows in the same ship". Fellowship and communion come from the same word in the Greek language.

What we have in common is **like precious faith** in Jesus Christ. *"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:1). What we share are the **bountiful blessings** God has given to us, ministering one to another. *"Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints"* (2 Corinthians 8:4).

As we fellowship we will **talk** to one another. But what should we talk about? Certainly we should talk of more than the weather, sports, or the work place. God says we are to **exhort** and **encourage** one another and provoke to love and good works. *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:24-25). You can share what God is doing in your life, some new truth you have learned, or ask a question about something you don't understand about the Bible or the Christian life. You could discuss the message or lesson you just heard.

Fellowship should not occur only in the church foyer. Invite someone over for a meal or dessert. Meet for coffee. I was encouraged to hear one of our members say that they are resolving to have one family per month into their home for a meal this year. May God bless you as you are *"building up yourselves on your most holy faith"* (Jude verse 20).

Ministering is also an important aspect of caring. Paul called this *"the ministering to the saints"* (II Corinthians 8:4; 9:1). We minister to one another by **sharing our resources** with those who are in need, as the Macedonians did for the poor saints in Judea. *"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea"* (Acts 11:29; see also 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9). Giving to a brother in need is a genuine demonstration of Christian love. *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3:17-18).

We also minister by **entering in to another's emotions**. *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* (Romans 12:15). And if *“one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:26). Comfort those who are afflicted, especially the fatherless and widow. *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27; also 2 Corinthians 1:4).

Further, we minister by **assisting one another** in their ministry or in their time of need. Paul mentions a wonderful woman named **Phebe** who did exactly that. *“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also”* (Romans 16:1-2). Don't forget to **pray** for the specific needs of each other also – *“Ye also helping together by prayer for us...”* (2 Corinthians 1:11).

If **you** know of someone who has a need, please communicate that need with the church. If there is a problem, or if someone has been overlooked, speak to me or to someone who has the authority to remedy the problem. Be careful not to fall into the trap of murmuring as some did in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1). Every problem can be resolved if it is handled Biblically with love (Acts 6:2-7).

See if you can be like **the family of Stephanas** who *“have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints”* (1 Corinthians 6:15).

“The church is like a bank: the more you put into it, the more interest you have in it.” Author Unknown

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