



**Built
to
serve**

INTRODUCTION

In our previous study we focused on God's Plan for His Church, and we realized that it is to build us up to be a Spiritual House in which He dwells. An important part of this Plan is unity. As a part of His Church, we are there for one another. (Galatians 6:10: *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*)

God has personally called, gifted, equipped, and empowered each believer to serve one another in building up the body of Christ to the glory of God.

We are called to be Church in this world – to share our lives with one another as well as with the people that are still outside of the Church. The Bible is filled with verses teaching us how to serve one another and we are going to focus on the practical aspects of being built up for service.

May this study help you to understand your calling to be part of the fellowship of believers, to love one another unconditionally, and to serve one another better.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Week 1

Living sacrifice

Memory Verse:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Romans 12:1-8

OPENING REMARKS:

Romans chapter 12 is a turning point in the book of Romans. In the previous chapters the main emphasis in the book was why we need a Savior and how we can accept Him. However, this chapter begins to deal with how a Christian ought to live out his salvation. There are many practical points to daily Christian living which begin in Romans 12 and continue to the end of the book.

Romans 12 teaches Christians how to live with a renewed and transformed spirit. It appeals to them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is their spiritual worship. It also instructs them to not conform to this world, but to discern God's will by the renewal of their mind. It shows them how to use their God-given gifts for His glory and how to relate to one another in the church.

First century people, both Jews and pagans, knew first-hand what sacrifice was all about. To beg that they make themselves a living sacrifice was a striking image. The

sacrifice is living because it is brought alive to the altar, and it stays alive at the altar; it is ongoing.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Romans 12:1 and Romans 6:13,16 & 19. Paul urges his brothers and sisters to be living sacrifices. What is the difference between a living sacrifice and a dead sacrifice?

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How does Paul define “spiritual worship” in verse 1?

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Read Romans 12:2 and 1 John 2:15. What are we not to pattern our lives after? How do we transform our lives?

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What is the result of transforming our minds?

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Read Romans 12:3. How are we **NOT** to think of our ourselves? How should we think of ourselves?

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Read Romans 12: 4-5. In verses 4-5 we find an analogy (illustration) of the church. Explain this analogy in your own words. Also refer to 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

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How does verses 4 and 5 related to the way we think of ourselves?

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Read Romans 12:6-8. List the gifts mentioned in verses 6-8. Describe each gift and the way we are to use them.

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How are these different gifts spread out among the members of the church (Also refer to 1 Corinthians 12:4,8-11)?

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Closing remarks:

We are called to transformed living. When Paul calls us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, it means that God wants you, not just your physical body, but your whole self. He also does not just want your work. You may do all kinds of work for God, but never give Him yourself. He wants you.

When we offer our body, God intends it to be a holy and acceptable sacrifice. The standard for sacrifices made to God under the New Covenant are not any less than the standard under the Old Covenant. The holiness we bring to the altar is a decision for holiness and yielding to the work of holiness in our life. As we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, God makes our life holy by burning away impurities.

Paul further warns us that the battlefield between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the mind of the believer. Christians must think differently. We must live differently.

The problem with many Christians is they live life based on feelings, or they are only concerned about doing. This life by feeling or doing will never know the transforming power of God, because it ignores the renewing of the mind. However, as we are transformed on the inside, the proof is evident on the outside, as others can see what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is through our life.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Romans 12:1-8

Discussion questions

Read verse 1. Discuss what it means to present our bodies as living sacrifices?

How is this worshiping God? Are you doing it? Discuss in the group.

Read verse 2. How can we be transformed? Discuss.

Read verse 3-5. What should our view of ourselves be? Where does our faith come from?

What is the difference in the way Paul talks about our view toward ourselves and the way the world or friends understand “self-esteem”?

What application should we make from the fact that although there are many believers, we are one? Discuss in the group.

Close in prayer



Week **2**

Being church in the world

Memory Verse:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

Acts 4:32 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Acts 2:1-47

OPENING REMARKS:

Ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven, on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, He poured out His Holy Spirit as promised. Devout Jews visiting from other countries were attracted and amazed as they heard wonderful works of God proclaimed in their own languages. The Day of Pentecost was an important date in the Jewish tradition. It was the 50th day after Passover and was also called the Festival of the Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10) and the Festival of Harvest (Exodus 23:16). It was marked by pilgrims coming to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate this event. Thousands of people were gathered in Jerusalem and the coming of the Holy Spirit marked the inauguration of the New Covenant.

Peter, surrounded and supported by the rest of the apostles, explains that what has happened is a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32), who foretold that God would pour out His Spirit in the last days (14-21). Peter then preaches Jesus of Nazareth to the crowd, reminding

them of His miracles, their involvement in His death, and proclaiming that God raised Him from the dead. In conclusion, Peter pronounces that God has made Jesus, whom they crucified, both Lord and Christ (22-36).

Touched by his message, the people ask the apostles what they should do. When Peter commands them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and exhorts them to be saved, about 3000 souls gladly received his word and were baptized. Thus begins the church in Jerusalem.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Acts 2:1-4. In these verses we read and hear about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What did they see, and what happened?

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Acts 2:5-13. What drew the multitude of people to come and see what happened?

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Why do you think the Holy Spirit have come on the Day of Pentecost?

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Read Acts 2:14 Why did Peter stand up? Why did the other apostles stand up with him?

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Read Acts 2:14-36. Peter stood and preached to the crowd as a representative of the whole group of apostles. We should notice that the speaking in tongues stopped when Peter began to preach. The Holy Spirit now worked through Peter's preaching and would not work against Himself through tongues at the same time.

Peter quoted scriptures from the Old Testament. What does these Old Testament verses teach us about Jesus?

Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21)	
Psalms 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28)	

Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35)	
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Read Acts 2:36-37. Why did the people ask, “What shall we do?” Does this refer to repentance or just remorse for what they did or both??

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Read Acts 2:38-41. What did Peter call them to do?

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What promise did Peter give them?

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Read Acts 2:42. Peter mentioned four essentials for being Church in verse 42? List these essentials and in your own words, describe what it means to you.

What caused the “awe” amongst the people?

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Read Acts 2:44-45. How did the first Christians deal with their possessions? Is this how Christians are to live today? How much of our possessions should be retained for our rainy days in the future?

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Read Acts 2:46-47. What does the words “Every day” imply? How can we be devoted “every day” to God and each other?

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What resulted in the increase of the number of people being saved in the first church? Does this still apply today?

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Closing remarks:

The church is meant to worship God and learn to know His Word together. Yet it is meant to do more; God wants us to share our lives with one another.

In Acts 2:42-47 the first church’s Christian experience was daily, joyful and simple — good examples for us to follow. It teaches us that the key to being church in the world and for church growth is that the believers followed or obeyed the apostle’s teachings, they frequently broke bread together, and they had all things in common, even their possessions they deemed as not their own. The result was that “the Lord added to their number day by day” of “those who were being saved.”

On the site: “What Christians wants to know,” Jack Wellman wrote the following about Church Growth:

The second chapter of the Book of Acts is better than any of the “church growth” material you find on the Internet

today, because it is biblically centred, it is Spirit-driven, and it is God-commanded. Note that it was God who added to the church. Never does it say that the apostles or disciples ever added to the church; not even one time does it say this. The Bible is clear that God gives the increase (1st Cor 3:7). We might plant the seed of the Word or water what someone else has planted, but only God gives the increase, therefore He receives all the glory; just as it should be.

If we take care to follow the example of Acts 2:42-47a, God will take care of growing the church Himself.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

Acts 4:32 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Acts 2:42-47

Discussion questions

Read verse 42-43. What are the four essentials for being Church that Peter mentioned in verse 42? List them and discuss in the group.

What does it mean to be “devoted...to the apostle’s doctrine or teaching?”

Why does the author, Luke, mention the importance of fellowship?

What do you think he meant by “breaking bread?”

Read verse 44-45. How did the first Christians deal with their possessions? Is this how Christians are to live today? How much of our possessions should be retained for our rainy days in the future? Discuss in the group.

Read Acts 2:46-47. How can we be devoted “every day” to God and each other? Be practical.

What resulted in the increase of the number of people being saved in the first church? Does this still apply today?

Close in prayer



Week **3**

We need each other

Memory Verse:

*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is
a part of it.*

1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

OPENING REMARKS:

We often hear people saying that they want to know God's will for their church or for their own lives. In Acts 2:42-47 we clearly saw the plan that God has for the church in this world. An important part of that plan is fellowship.

The website, <https://www.gotquestions.org>, says the following about fellowship: *The Greek words translated "fellowship" in the New Testament mean essentially a partnership to the mutual benefit of those involved. Christian fellowship, then, is the mutually beneficial relationship between Christians, who cannot have the identical relationship with those outside the faith.*

We can have friendships and relationships with unbelievers, but true Christian fellowship can only occur within the body of Christ. We are united to one another by common beliefs, purposes, and goals. Our hearts and minds are "other-worldly" because we follow Jesus Christ, who said that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it reinforces these things in our mind and helps us to focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us. As iron sharpens iron, in true Christian fellowship Christians sharpen one another's faith and stir one another to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory.

The New Testament is full of verses that teach us why and how we need each other. Jesus gave us a new command, to love each other. In John 13:34 we read: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”* In John 15:17 we read: *This is my command: Love each other.* When we love one another, we have fellowship with each other.

In the next studies, we are going to learn what true Christian fellowship and inter-dependence looks like.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20. Paul uses the metaphor of a body to explain the unity and diversity in the church. Explain the word “body.”

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Who is a member of the body?

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What is the role of the members?

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Who decides who goes where and who does what?

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Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-27. Is every member equal?

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Does every member have the same responsibilities??

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Do you think verse 17 is a good analogy? Why?

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Explain the main points that Paul wants to convey. Why has God designed the church like this?

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Describe what the result would be if every person in the church tried to do the same thing.

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Closing remarks:

The human body, with its many parts, provides a telling illustration that it is necessary to preserve the Church's unity despite its diversity. As the human body is one entity with many members, so the church (the body of Christ) is one entity with many members.

In the same way a body cannot be just a foot, or an arm, or an eye, the church cannot be just a pastor, or elders or a specific member. Members should bear with one

another because we are one body. We need each other to fulfill our calling.

We cannot be happy and fulfilled on our own. We cannot have a purpose in life on our own. We need to cherish each other and our relationships with each other. Of course it is going to take time and going to ask something of you: a little bit of sacrifice, a little bit less of putting your own interests first, a little bit more giving, a little bit quicker to forgive, a little bit more warmth and kindness, a little bit more hospitality. The Bible helps us with guidelines on how to treat each other.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. *1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)*

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Discussion questions

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Paul uses the metaphor of a body to explain the unity and diversity in the church. Do you think this is a good analogy? Why?

Why has God designed the church like this? Discuss.

Is your church functioning as a body? Do you think things should change? Discuss

What difference can you make, to ensure that the unity in your congregation will be visible? Discuss.

Close in prayer



Week **4**

Serve one another

Memory Verse:

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Galatians 5:13-15, Romans 12:10, Matthew 25:35-40 and 1 Peter 4:10

OPENING REMARKS:

Serving God is one of the most important principles of the Christian faith, as believers are expected to help the church with a joyful spirit. "Love one another." "Care for one another." "Pray for one another." "Encourage one another." "Help one another." "Counsel one another." "Support one another." Scripture repeatedly tells us of our relationship to God and others through service.

God want's His people to serve each other and Jesus showed us the perfect image of humility and serving, which we must follow. The new law of His Kingdom overturned worldviews.

In Matthew 20:28 we read: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave." Jesus's own life was self-giving and not self-serving. He washed his disciples'

feet and laid down his life at the cross as a ransom for sinners. Jesus exemplified the life of serving others.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Galatians 5:13. If an unbeliever asks you, “What does it mean that you have freedom after salvation,” how would you answer?

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How might some professing believers abuse this freedom?

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How does Paul teach us we should use our freedom?

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How can you practically serve one another in the church? Give examples from your experience.

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Read Galatians 5:14. How is the law (Ten commandments) fulfilled by this one command to love one another?

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Read Romans 12:10. What does this verse teach us about serving one another? Also see Philippians 2: 3-7. On what example should we base our service?

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Read Matthew 25:35-40. Jesus is telling his disciples the parable of the sheep and the goats, as a way to help them understand the detail of what will happen at the final judgement. What examples of serving each other do we see in these verses?

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How can we practically live this out in our congregation and in our community?

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Closing remarks:

We may have desires to be used by God through big works and to offer many fruits to Him. This desire makes it easy for us to lose the heart of serving.

True serving brings joy, and it is beautiful. Serving is an active deed of love. The act of serving moves the hearts of others and offers comfort. The Bible tells us that God remembers our serving toward others and will reward us. Thus, the relationship between God and us becomes deeper through serving others.

May the word of God widen your hearts and inspire you to serve others, resembling Jesus.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Galatians 5:13-15, Romans 12:10, Matthews 25:35-40 and 1 Peter 4:10

Discussion questions

Read 1 Peter 4:10. How is it possible to serve one another? Who helps us?

Read Galatians 5:13-14. How is the law (Ten commandments) fulfilled by this one command to love one another? Discuss.

Read Romans 12:10 and Philippians 2: 3-7. On what example should we base our service? Discuss what service should cost us?

How can you practically serve one another in the church and the community?

i) Give examples from your experience.

ii) Give examples from Matthew 25:35-40.

Close in prayer



Week **5**

Carry each other's burdens!

Memory Verse:

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will
fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Galatians 6:1-10 and Exodus 17: 8-13

OPENING REMARKS:

One of the beautiful things about being a Christian is that you are not alone. God intentionally connects you with other believers and one of the reasons is so we can strengthen and encourage each other. One of the ways we do this is by bearing each other's burdens or taking up the cause for someone else. We are instructed to do this, but what does it really mean to bear one another's burdens?

The word to bear in the Greek can mean to take up or to carry away. The word burden can also mean weight. When you consider Galatians 6:2 in context, it means we should be taking up or carrying away the weights that others are carrying. In other words, no one should ever go through situations alone. This is one of the responsibilities of the body of Christ.

For every person there will come a point where you are overwhelmed by the weight of life. In those moments you

will be grateful that there is someone there to help you carry that weight.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Galatians 6:1. What does Paul mean when he says: “you who live by the Spirit”?

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What attitude should they have when they are correcting others? What is the goal of confronting brothers and sisters in their sin?

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What must we be careful of when we correct others? Why?

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Read Galatians 6:2. How can we carry other’ burdens? What law is this fulfilling?

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Read Galatians 6:3. What does verse 3 mean? Explain your answer. Are we better than others?

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Read Galatians 6:4-5. What does it mean to test your own work? (Also refer to John 4:38) And to bear your own load?

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Read Galatians 6:7-10. What do we learn about the following:

God (verse 7)	
Individual believers (verse 8)	
Fellowship of believers (verse 9-10)	

What kinds of things may cause us to become weary when doing good?

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It is not always easy to know in what manner you could help to carry another person's burden. In the Old Testament we find what is probably one of the best examples of what it means to bear one another's burdens. Read Exodus 17:8-13. In your own words, explain what happened here.

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From this passage, we can identify 3 important principals to follow in order to ensure that you carry another person's burden. Firstly, Aaron and Hur saw that Moses was struggling and needed help. What other principles do you see in verse 12?

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Read Galatians 6:6. What principle can we learn from verse 6? (Also refer to Luke 10:7 and 1 Corinthians 9:11,14)

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Closing remarks:

Bearing one another's burdens is where the rubber meets the road. It is where you do not just talk about your faith and the love you have for God's people. It is where you show it. How can we do that in today's fast-paced life? Clarence L. Haynes Jr. a speaker, Bible teacher, and co-founder of The Bible Study Club, says the following:

- *You have to listen to others. Many times, we miss the opportunities to see the needs others are carrying because we don't take the time to listen. The truth about listening is that it takes focus, and it requires you to pay attention to what someone else is saying. In the fast-paced world we live in, this can easily be overlooked.*
- *Bearing the burden of another does not always mean you have to do the lifting yourself. Sometimes the weight is too great for you to bear, or honestly you might not be in a position to help, so what do you do? You become a connector. Maybe you can't carry the weight, but you know someone who can. If this is the case, then simply make the connection and you have done your part to help bear that person's burden.*

- *bearing burdens takes time, work, and effort. Sometimes the situation may be dealt with quickly and others may take longer. The key is to be available so that no one gets lost in the shuffle.*

Bearing other people's burdens is not easy, but it is necessary, because that is what God asks from us.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Galatians 6:1-10 and Exodus 17: 8-13

Discussion questions

Read Galatians 6:1-4. How can we carry other people's burdens? Discuss and be practical.

What attitude should we have when correcting others? What is the goal of confronting brothers and sisters in their sin? Discuss.

Read Galatians 6:5-10. What kinds of things may cause us to lose heart in serving others?

In what way can you do better?

Read Exodus 17:8-13. From this passage, we can identify 3 important principals to follow in order to ensure that you

carry another person's burden. Firstly, Aaron and Hur saw that Moses was struggling and needed help. What other principles do you see in verse 12?

Close in prayer



Week **6**

Encourage one another!

Memory Verse:

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up,...

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

**1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Hebrews 3:12-13,
Hebrews 10:24-25 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-7**

OPENING REMARKS:

The New Testament verb translated encourage, can also mean “to comfort, cheer up, console, speak in a friendly manner.” Encouragement is about the life-giving power of our shared beliefs and our shared life in the Lord.

Encouraging one another means to give courage where it is needed. It can be done through prayer, speaking the truth in love and blessing others with words and deeds. Encouragement is about imparting courage to someone so they can be sustained in a tricky situation. It involves cheering someone on, building them up and boosting their morale. Encouragement takes genuine love and the grace to see more in someone than they can see themselves.

Real encouragement is one way we experience the Holy Spirit together. It is how we experience real community together. And this kind of community is not life-depleting but life-enriching, not guarded and aloof but all-in and

involved, not scrutinizing and criticizing but affirming and strengthening.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Hebrews 3:12-13. Throughout the Bible we see instructions to encourage one another and verses that are meant to encourage us. Why should we encourage each other?

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How can you do this? What will you do to encourage and build up brother/sisters in Christ?

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In what ways might an unbelieving heart manifest itself?

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Read 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. What can we do to help others not fall away?

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In what ways would you like other people to encourage you?

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Read Romans 10:24-25. What is the danger in NOT meeting with other believers? What are the benefits of meeting with other believers? How often should we meet? How/Where should we meet?

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What does this verse say we should be doing when we meet? Does this mean we cannot have “fun” parties?

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Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. What character quality of God does Paul emphasize here? Why might he have emphasized this?

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In what specific ways does he comfort people in affliction?
How has God comforted you during trials?

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How exactly do believers “share abundantly in comfort”?

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Closing remarks:

Even in places where Christians do not experience overt persecution or hatred, we all know that life can be difficult. Discouragement is not an uncommon human experience. At times, recognizing that there is meaning in the seemingly inconsequential things we do seems next to impossible. We may want to give up.

The website, Gotquestions.org., says the following about encouragement: *Encouragement makes it easier to live in a fallen world in a holy way. Encouragement makes it easier to love as Jesus loved (see John 13:34-35). Encouragement gives hope (Romans 15:4). Encouragement helps us through times of discipline and testing (Hebrews 12:5). Encouragement nurtures patience*

and kindness (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Galatians 5:22-26). Encouragement makes it easier to sacrifice our own desires for the advancement of God's kingdom. In short, encouragement makes it easier to live the Christian life.

Without encouragement, life would soon feel pointless and burdensome. Without encouragement, we can be overwhelmed by the very real pains of our lives. Without encouragement, we begin to think that God is a liar or is unconcerned with our welfare. So, the Bible tells us to encourage one another, to remind each other of the truth that God loves us, that God equips us, that we are treasured, that our struggles are worth it.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up,...

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Hebrews 3:12-13, Hebrews 10:24-25 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Discussion questions

Read Hebrews 3:12-13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11. Throughout the Bible we see instructions to encourage one another and verses that are meant to encourage us.

Why and how should we encourage one another? Discuss and be practical.

In what ways might an unbelieving heart manifest itself?

What can we do to help others not fall away? Discuss.

Read Romans 10:24-25. What is the danger in NOT meeting with other believers? What are the benefits of meeting with other believers? How often should we meet? How/Where should we meet? Discuss.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. What specific ways does God comfort people in affliction? Discuss.

Share with the group how God has comforted you during trials.

How exactly do believers “share abundantly in comfort?”

Close in prayer



Week **7**

Offer hospitality to one another!

Memory Verse:

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:9 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

1 Peter 4:7-9, Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2

OPENING REMARKS:

The word hospitality may bring to mind a hospital, or the hospitality industry (hotels). Both would be appropriate associations. In both hospitals and hotels, a guest or patient is offered a place to sleep and food to eat.

This is what we typically think of when we hear the word hospitality: room and board, offered for free. But biblical hospitality is more than room and board. According to gotquestions.org, hospitality can be defined as *“the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.”* In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.”

Hospitality is the glad reception of the stranger. Hospitality engages the stranger with both our hands and our hearts. But Peter takes it even further and explains that hospitality is not only for people we have recently met, but also for people we regularly see – our fellow believers!

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. What warning does Peter give in verse 7(a)?

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How could the end have been “near” almost 2000 years ago? How near is it now? What developments in the world might point to the time being near?

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What applications does Peter give them based on the fact that the end is near (refer to verse 7(b) - 9)?

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How can you (in your current situation) show hospitality to others?

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Why would someone complain after doing these things?
What would that show about their heart?

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Read Romans 12:13. What are the two commands that are given in this verse? How do they differ or in what way are they the same? (Refer to Acts 4:32 (b) and 1 Peter 4:9.)

Acts 4:32 (b)

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1 Peter 4:9

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Read Hebrews 13:1-2. In this last chapter of the epistle, the author concludes with final reminders of true love, one of which is hospitality.

What are the practical implications of practicing hospitality? Are you willing to do that?

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What does verse 2(b) mean? What can we learn from this verse about angels? And what does this teach us about how God is working in the world?

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Do you see true hospitality in your church? Is this a reflection of God's love?

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Closing remarks:

As we have seen in this study, God commands hospitality from us in Scripture. For Christians, the strongest motivation to show hospitality is not God's commands (the Law) but His love for us in Christ (the gospel). This is not unique to hospitality—the gospel ought to be the driving motivation for all our good works.

You are called to show love to the new people at work, your foreign neighbour, your atheist cousin, an unlawful non-citizen, a political refugee, or someone with a criminal

history, etc. But you are also called to love and receive the widow that sits beside you at church, or the young couple with children that live far from their families, or the members that are complaining about everything, etc.

Serve these people. Feed them, clothe them, and invite them into your home. But most importantly, invite them into your hearts by loving them with the love of Christ Jesus. Biblical hospitality is not merely a work of our hands but involves a work in our hearts.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:9 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

1 Peter 4:7-9, Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2

Discussion questions

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. What warning does Peter give in verse 7(a)? How could the end have been “near” almost 2000 years ago? How near is it now? What developments in the world might point to the time being near?

How can you (in your current situation) show hospitality to others? Discuss in the group.

Read Romans 12:13. What are the two commands that are given in this verse? How do they differ or in what way are they the same? Discuss.

Read Hebrews 13:1-2. Do you see true hospitality in your church? Is this a reflection of God’s love? Is there anything that should change? Discuss.

What are the practical implications of practicing hospitality? Are you willing to do that? Discuss.

Close in prayer



Week 8

Forgive one another!

Memory Verse:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

**Colossians 3:12-15, Matthew 5:23-24 and
Matthew 18:21-35**

OPENING REMARKS:

Matthew West begins his song, Forgiveness, with the following words:

*It's the hardest thing to give away
And the last thing on your mind today
It always goes to those that don't deserve
It's the opposite of how you feel
When the pain they caused is just too real
It takes everything you have just to say the word...
Forgiveness...*

And with these words he sums up one of the hardest things to do. Forgiveness is based on one's gracious attitude towards an individual and is best illustrated by God's forgiveness of sin.

The Bible has many verses about forgiveness. One of the most well-known is Ephesians 4:32 which says: "*Be kind*

and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Forgiveness is a choice we make. It is a decision of our will, motivated by obedience to God and His command to forgive. We cannot force another to have a spirit of forgiveness, but we can demonstrate it by how we react.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Colossians 3:12-15. Do you ever find it difficult to forgive others? Why?

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What are the reasons given here for why we are commanded to forgive each other here? (Refer to verses 12,13)

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Why is love referred to as the perfect bond of unity?

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Read Matthew 5:23-24. What principle do we learn from verses 23-24? What does this passage tell us about the importance of relationships and unity?

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How does disunity/broken relationships/anger hurt our relationship with and worship of God? How can you apply this principle?

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Read Matthew 18:21-22. Would a Jew at the time of Peter thought 7 times was a lot or few times to forgive someone? Does Jesus' answer mean you should count seventy sevens (or 490) times? What does His answer mean?

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Read Matthew 18:23-35. Spend a few minutes and write out the main point of the parable in your own words.

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In this parable:

Who is the king?	
Who are the servants?	
What does this debt represent?	

What character does the king show when he forgives the debt? What character does the servant show when he does not forgive?

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What conclusion can we make from this parable's ending? How important is forgiveness?

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How might a lack of forgiveness manifest itself in our lives? How might we act toward someone if we do not forgive them?

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Does forgiving mean forgetting?

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Does forgiving mean you will not bring it up again?

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Does forgiving mean the wound is completely healed? Is there anyone you need to forgive?

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Closing remarks:

Jesus was treated very unfairly. No one could have suffered more unfairly than Jesus. And some of the last words He said were: *“Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”* Is it easy to forgive? No. Is it impossible? No. Jesus said: *“All things are possible to him who believes,”* (Mark 9:23.) All things – therefore also forgiveness. The Bible tells us very clearly that we need to forgive. And there are no exceptions. As in all things, we need to look to our Master, Jesus, as our example.

The fact that you forgive someone does not take away what they have done, and it does not make it right. However, it is important to know that forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a choice. You choose to give up the blame towards the offender.

Choosing to forgive will mean that you have to pray to God for the strength to forgive. It is choosing not to let thoughts of hatred rule in your heart. It is choosing to go to God to find help and comfort instead of thinking of the wrong things people did to you, even when your feelings would want to do that. The power we need for this we get from the Holy Spirit.

Lewis B. Smedes wrote in his book, *Forgive and Forget*: *"When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumour out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself."*

We will know the work of forgiveness is complete when we experience the freedom that comes as a result. We are the ones who suffer most when we choose not to forgive. When we do forgive, the Lord sets our hearts free from the anger, bitterness, resentment, and hurt that previously imprisoned us.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Colossians 3:13-15, Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:21-35

Discussion questions

Read Colossians 3:12-15. What are the reasons given here for why we are commanded to forgive each other here?

Do you ever find it difficult to forgive others? Why? Discuss.

Why is love referred to as the perfect bond of unity? Discuss.

Read Matthew 5:23-24. What principle do we learn from verses 23-24? What does this passage tell us about the importance of relationships, forgiveness and unity?

Read Matthew 18: 25-35. What conclusion can we make from this parable's ending? How important is forgiveness?

How might a lack of forgiveness manifest itself in our lives? How might we act toward someone if we do not forgive them? Discuss

Close in prayer



Week 9

Pray for each other!

Memory Verse:

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James 5:16 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Romans 1:8-10, Ephesians 1:15-16, Ephesians 6:18-19, and James 5:16

OPENING REMARKS:

Prayer is not a mysterious practice reserved only for pastors and the religiously devout. Prayer is simply communicating with God—listening and talking to him. Believers can pray from the heart, freely, spontaneously, and in their own words. Everyone can and should pray.

In his study guide on James, Tom Wright writes the follow about prayer: *“Prayer is the place where heaven and earth overlaps, where our present time and God’s future time overlap. Prayer isn’t just me calling out in the dark to a distant or unknown God.... Because God is very near to those who draw near to Him. Heaven and earth meet when, in the Spirit, someone calls on the name of the Lord.”*

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, Paul encourages the believers: *“pray continually,”*. This encouragement to pray without ceasing does not only refer to praying for yourself

– but to pray about everything, all the time. Therefore, also for your fellow believers. When we pray for others, we are essentially asking God to bless them and help them. We can pray for anyone we know - our friends, family members, co-workers, or even strangers.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Romans 1:8-10. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward the Roman believers? How is his love for them shown?

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Read Ephesians 1:15-16. Notice the attitude of gratitude that Paul shows in verses 15-16. To whom is he grateful? Why was Paul thankful to God for their good deeds??

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Read Ephesians 6:18. When should we pray? What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

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What do we learn from the command to be on the alert?

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For whom should we pray?

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Read Ephesians 6: 18. What was Paul's prayer request? Was this a physical need?

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Do your prayers mostly focus on the physical side or the spiritual side? Why?

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Read James 5:16. Why confess our sins to one another? Isn't God the one that forgives? Isn't it enough to confess directly to God?

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How should we understand verse 16, do our prayers change things? What is the danger to our prayer life if we believe our prayers do not actually accomplish anything?

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What are some reasons to pray even if God does not change His plan based on your prayer?

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Closing remarks:

James points to the effective nature of prayer – when it is fervent and offered by a righteous man. Effective prayer must be fervent, not because we must emotionally

persuade a reluctant God, but because we must gain God's heart by being fervent for the things He is fervent for. Additionally, a righteous man offers effective prayer. This is someone who recognizes that the grounds of his righteousness reside in Jesus, and whose personal walk is generally consistent with the righteousness that he has in Jesus.

When we pray for others, we are asking God to intervene on their behalf. We are bringing their needs before the throne of grace and asking for His help.

Praying for others is not only a selfless act, but it is also one that can have a profound impact on our own lives. As we pray for the needs of others, we open our hearts to God's love and compassion.

We become more aware of the needs of those around us, and we are better able to connect with them on a deeper level.

When we pray for others, it also allows us to experience the joy that comes from seeing someone else receiving God's blessings. We are putting our trust in God to work in their lives. We are also opening ourselves up to receive blessings from Him.

Praying for others helps us to grow in our faith, to develop a closer relationship with God, and to become more compassionate servants.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James 5:16 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Ephesians 6:18-19, and James 5:16

Discussion questions

Read Ephesians 6:18. When should we pray? What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? Why are we commanded to be on alert?

For whom should we pray? How often do you pray for others? Discuss.

Read James 5:16. Why confess our sins to one another? Isn't God the one that forgives? Isn't it enough to confess directly to God? Discuss.

How should we understand verse 16, do our prayers change things? What is the danger to our prayer life if we believe our prayers do not actually accomplish anything?

What are some reasons to pray even if God does not change His plan based on your prayer?

Spend time to pray for the fellow believers in the congregation.

Close in prayer

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