
RESTORING AND BEARING

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS - (GALATIANS 6:1-5)

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, November 15, 2009, by Pastor Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

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Context:

Sin is a reality in every Christian's life. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us," John warns believers. In fact, he goes on to say, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make [God] a liar, and His world is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10). James also reminds us that "We all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2).

Every kind of sin, from disorderly conduct to immorality to false teaching, is to be disciplined. And all Christians, from the newest believer to the most experienced leader, are subject to that discipline. To be spiritually healthy and effective in its ministry, the church must deal with sin within its own ranks. To trifle with sin, to ignore it under the guise of love, or to fail for any reason to cleanse the church of it is disastrous. To preach against sin but not enforce that preaching by confronting sin in the lives of individuals in the fellowship is to disconnect preaching from life and to turn it into an unproductive exercise of lip service.

Now, as often the case, there is also an opposite danger. Just as the flesh makes it easy to ignore sin within the church, it also makes it easy to discipline in the *wrong way* and with the *wrong spirit*. There is always temptation to deal with sinning members out of a self-righteous, judgmental attitude rather than from a genuinely humble and righteous concern for the purity of the Body of Christ.

How is the church going to respond in the way that is right in the eyes of God?

I. GOD'S CHURCH RESTORES THE FALLEN—PICK HIM/HER UP!

The FIRST responsibility of a spiritual believer or the church who seeks to restore a fallen brother or sister is to help pick that person up. When a person stumbles, his first need is to get up, and often, he needs assistance in doing it. An integral part of church discipline, therefore, is helping a fallen brother get back on his feet spiritually and morally. Church discipline is restorative rather than punitive.

Restoration involves two aspects:

- **Restoration Picture** – "*katartizo*" literally means to mend or repair and it was used to describe the setting of a broken bone or putting a dislocated limb back in place.
- **Restoration Attitude** – restoration of fallen brothers and sisters is always to be done in a spirit of gentleness, which is characteristic of those who walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). This "gentleness" does not imply weakness, rather, it means meekness; a power that is under control.

The attitude of every Christian should always be the attitude of Jesus. And when a believer needs to help discipline a fallen brother, he should ask for a special portion of Christ's love and gentleness.

II. GOD'S CHURCH BEARS ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS—HOLD HIM/HER UP!

The SECOND responsibility of the spiritual believer/church who seeks to restore a fallen brother is to help hold that person once he is back on his feet. It is not enough simply to help turn him from sin and then to abandon him. It is immediately after a spiritual victory that Satan often makes his severest attacks on God's children.

Christians are continually (present tense) to bear one another's burdens. 'Bearing' comes from the Greek "*baros*," which refers to heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry. It represents any difficulty or problem a person has trouble coping with.

III. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

- a) If you have fallen into sin, let someone help you – the Christian knows that, although "all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). God disciplines for the same reason that a loving parent disciplines: for the good of the children.
- b) If you know of someone who has fallen, go and help that person – (i) Pick Him Up and (ii) Hold Him Up!

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

Question: What could be the reason why many Christians do not bother to help fellow Christians?

One of the chief reasons many Christians do not help one another is that they feel superior to those who have fallen and wrongly consider themselves to be spiritually something when in reality, they are really nothing. Like the Pharisees, their concern is not for the true righteousness that God gives but for their own self-righteousness, which has no part in God's kingdom or its work. Their desire is not to help a stumbling brother but to judge and condemn him. At best, they leave the fallen brother licking his wounds, thinking, if not saying, "He got himself into this mess, let him get out himself."

1. As a Care Group, are we open to one another, providing care and accountability? Why or why not? Name some useful actions.

2. As a Church, how open are we to reach out and embrace those who have fallen into sin? Why or why not? Share how we can be a church that restores and builds.

~ End of Study ~