

JANUARY 14, 2024 SUNDAY - DAY 7

# PRAY THAT WE WOULD CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

1 CORINTHIANS 12:25

## WHAT IS A CARING CHURCH?

Imagine this kind of church. Members sue each other before civil courts. Other members habitually attend social banquets honoring strange gods, mere idols. One member lives open immorality, tolerated by the church.

Some think Christian couples ought to separate so they can be more "holy." Worship services are shocking, with some members arriving drunk to partake of the Lord's Supper. Some doubt the validity of Jesus' Resurrection. Many have ceased to give financially

Who would want to be Pastor of this kind of church? Not only was Paul the Pastor, but he was the founding Pastor, remaining there for eighteen months.

To this church in Corinth, Paul wrote,

"Care for one another." The Corinthians were far from caring. This entire chapter is written to comfort those who feel unwanted in church. Have you ever sensed one of these attitudes in your church?

- "If you don't have certain gifts, you're not vital to our church
- " Our gifts are better than your gifts"
- "Unless you have the gifts we have, you're not yet mature in Christ"

The Greek word for "care" is the same word for "worry" or "anxiety." In this context it means to take concern for; to look after each other's needs; To love or to like; to wish for or to want; to take charge of; to look after; to provide for, One way we care for each other is through attentive listening. To feel cared for is to feel listened to.

## CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Here is what a government official by the name of Aristides wrote to the Roman Emperor Hadrian near AD 120 about the Christians of his day:

**They love one another. They never fail to help widows; They save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something they give freely to the man who has nothing; If they see a stranger they take him home, and are happy, As though he were a real brother. The don't consider themselves Brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through The Spirit, in God.**

Does this sound like your congregation? Do we make it our business to look after the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of each member? Just beneath the surface of our superficial handshakes and plastered smiles are broken hearts or wounded spirits, people and families in crisis.

Anne Ortlund, in her book, *Up with Worship*, describes the church not as a bag of marbles, clicking and clacking against each other, but rather as a bag of grapes, oozing and leaking over one another.

**Face it: Ministry is messy. God blesses churches where members care for one another.**

Scott Peck wrote in his book *The Road Less Traveled*, "When we love another we give him or her our attention; we attend to that person's growth... By far the most common and important way in which we can exercise our attention is by listening.

In a Peanuts cartoon, Charles Schultz had Charlie Brown say, "I wish I could be happy." In the second frame, Charlie says, "I think I could be happy if my life had more purpose to it." In the third frame, Charlie continues, "I also think that if I were happy, I could help others to be happy. Does that make sense to you?" In the fourth frame, Lucy replies,

**"We've had spaghetti at our house three times this month." To which Charlie Brown replies,**

"Good grief!" John McDonald, former head of U.S. State Department, said, "Americans are known around the world by the inability to listen." Several members of Wedgwood Baptist Church discovered in the days following the shooting that while fellow church members listened with great sensitivity, others grew weary of our wordage.

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A few even lost their jobs because they could not or would not stop talking about the shooting. We didn't need advice as much as we just needed to talk.

Counselors advised us to talk and to listen to others as they talked. It was good therapy, but only by those who cared, and listened with love and patience. Care does not equal curing, How often have you shared a burden with a friend who only made suggestions as how to cure your problems?

They didn't listen. They only made suggestions. Care equals doing practical things lawn mowing, Care repair, praying. Mother Teresa was asked, "What are the sources of your strength?"

She replied, "A ninety eight year old woman in Philadelphia who prays for me." If we really care for one another, we will faithfully pray for one another. Pray that we would care for one another.

**... that there should be no schism, In the body, but that The members should have The same care one for another 1 CORINTHIANS 12:25**

## PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. Pray that God would foster a spirit of genuine care and concern for one another in your church.
2. Suggest that your Sunday school class or small study group pass around a prayer request sheet listing the needs and concerns of each member. Make copies for members to pray over throughout the week.
3. Perhaps the church as a whole might make available a list of members' prayer requests.
4. Pray that God will place upon your heart of your family's hearts, several shutins or widows that you might personally "adopt" and take care of.

**You cannot accept Jesus as Savior and reject him as Lord.**

**God blesses churches where We either serve one another, or Fall into hopeless decay and ruin.**