

Study 6

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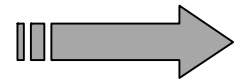
CARING

JESUS COMMANDED

In the past month I have had a couple of single young adults tell me that our church is “*not very friendly*”. Whenever someone says this to a pastor they usually become very defensive about their church. These criticisms were based on what happened after the Sunday services. They said that although they had gone out of their way to try to get to know others it had felt like it was *all one-way traffic*. While they reached out to other church attendees, it *felt* like none had reached out to them. To them, our church was “*uncaring*”.

Another criticism was levelled at me about our church being “*uncaring*” when I had disciplined one of our worship team members by taking them off the music roster. “*If you do that, they’ll stop attending church!*” This critic wanted me to overlook this musician’s declining morals (and the pain it was causing their marriage and children) and “*show some compassion*” toward this muso.

1. According to 1Corinthians 12:25, what obligation do we have toward each other?
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2. How should pastors and elders care for the church? (Acts 20:28)
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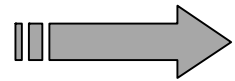
There is a story told of a doctor, whom we'll call Dr Bob, who was sent to a huge disaster where many people had been injured and taken ill. He was given ample medical supplies and equipment and flown into the disaster zone. Upon arriving there he was immediately overwhelmed with the scale of the calamity. No sooner had he unloaded the equipment and supplies that he was straightway confronted with a poor soul a few metres away screaming in agony for his attention. After two weeks of working around the clock, the relief agency had to pull Dr Bob out of the disaster zone and fly him home for rest and recuperation. The tragedy had, however, grown worse during Dr Bob's time there. The agency decided to send "Dr Jim". Dr Jim arrived with the same equipment and supplies. When his helicopter arrived he saw the same scene of tragedy that Dr Bob saw. As he walked past agonising scenes of human misery, people screamed out to him for help. He seemingly ignored their cries and went to the temporary clinic. He then called together the other agency workers who had been working in the midst of the tragedy, to give him their assessments. What he wanted to know from them was where the tragedy had hit hardest- who were the neediest people? And, how many of the locals had been directly unaffected by the tragedy? He then asked for these healthy people to be brought to the clinic to be trained to administer preliminary medical care to the suffering. He spent two weeks assessing and training without seeing to one patient. But within another 4 weeks the tragedy had been brought under control. Diseases had stopped spreading. Conditions had now become hygienic. The clinic had been sectioned off into a temporary hospital, a quarantined section, and an emergency room. Dr Jim returned home 8 weeks later, mission accomplished.

DISCUSSION POINT: Which doctor (Dr Bob or Dr Jim) cared the most?

3. What kind of care did Paul the apostle show the Thessalonians according to 1Thessalonians 2:7? What might this have looked like?
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Care requires more than compassion. It also requires a certain amount of toughness. Church leaders must be caring! They must care about people. They must care about the whole congregation. They must have particular care for those they are immediately responsible for.

4. In fact, if someone is going to be a caring leader within the church, what is the minimum requirement according to 1Timothy 3:5?
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This is really important. Leaders need to ensure that their care-priorities are well ordered. Too many pastors, elders and deacons have neglected their families while showing care for non-family members within the church. It is good for church leaders to care for church members – but not at the expense of their families! (Note 1Tim. 5:16)

5. What is necessary for Christians to care for one another according to 1Timothy 5:8?

The home is the starting place for care. When families are functioning well, family members are cared for. They have someone to share with, talk to, listen to, hug, and laugh with. Those who do not have this home environment are particularly vulnerable to emotional insecurity. That is, they are more likely to feel uncared for and abnormally crave care. Even though non-family members may genuinely care for them, they still feel that this level of care is not enough. Ironically, this almost insatiable hunger for care can actually drive away those who do care because they can never measure up to these expectations of needed care.

*A man who has friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Prov. 18:24 NKJV

6. Based on Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV), what are two things the emotionally insecure person would benefit from?

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7. Based on 1Corinthians 13, what are some ways we should care for one another?

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8. Someone has said that we show care by either: a *word*, a *touch*, or a *look*. Can you recall someone showing care for you using either of these? Why do you think you remember this?
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9. Care requires dogged persistence. How did Paul say that his care for the Corinthians was self-evident based on 2Corinthians 6:4-6?
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While caring involves a *word*, a *touch*, a *look*, it also involves *listening*, *giving*, *comforting*. The measure of Christian maturity is found in our ability to care for others when we are under stress and in difficult circumstances. Scripture says that there is a blessing for the person *who shows care* and kindness to others (Prov. 11:17).

10. Christian care should encourage a brother or sister to look to God for comfort (Psalm 94:19). Why would this have been such a comfort to the Psalmist considering Psalm 142:4?
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11. How can we obey Galatians 6:2? What needs to happen for this instruction to be carried out?
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12. How does Hebrews 13:16 tell us to care for one another?
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13. If someone corrects you, do they care about you? Discuss.
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Caring for people needs to at least involve comforting them, but it must involve doing things that we might not have necessarily considering “caring”. This is what we will look at in our next study.

Amen.