

Love Your Church by Caring

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. Paul's letter to the Galatians chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5, and if we read again at verse 22, Galatians 5 at verse 22, where Paul writes, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another, and so on.

As many of you know, the Lord began to work in my life when I was about 18 years old. Up until that point in January 2006, I was living the lifestyle of what you could maybe call a typical teenager. I was out at the weekends, drinking with my friends, doing what teenagers do. But when the Lord began to work in my life, where I saw the foolishness and the futility of what I was doing, I started attending church. And I started listening in church. I even started singing in church. I started enjoying coming to church. At first, I attended the morning service, but that wasn't enough. I wanted to come to the evening service as well, and to listen, and to learn more. So I went along to the evening service. But of course, my friends began to notice my absence, because on a Sunday afternoon, the usual pattern for all of us as friends was to go for a spin to Ness or to Harris. But within a matter of weeks, I was attending church both ends on the Lord's Day. And it was this change in my life that caused one of my closest friends to ask me the very personal and probing question, a question I've never forgotten. Are you getting the quorum? Are you getting the quorum? And you know, it was at that point where I knew that I believed in my heart, but I had to confess with my mouth and say, yes, I think I am getting what he called the quorum. Now, as many of you know, the phrase getting the quorum, it's a slang term often used by islanders when someone becomes a Christian.

They say, so-and-so has got the quorum. So-and-so has got the quorum now. Sadly, saying that someone has got the quorum is often viewed very negatively, almost depicting and describing Christianity as this contagious disease that you need to avoid at all costs. You're getting the quorum.

But as you know, boys and girls, as you know, the word quorum, it's a Gaelic word which means care or caring. Quorum is care. I'm probably not even pronouncing it right, but quorum is caring.

[3 : 21] And even though having the quorum is often spoken of something as, well, out with Christianity, out with Christian circles, it's often spoken of something as derogatory or even distasteful.

You know, it seems to me that the reason this word is associated and attributed to Christians in the first place is because they were caring. They were people who cared. Christians had the quorum. They were caring. They cared for one another, and they cared for the souls of those who were careless. They had the quorum. Their Christian character, conduct, and conversation was caring. They cared for one another, and they cared for the careless, those who were careless about their soul. They had the quorum.

And, you know, that's the theme of our study this evening, love your church by caring. Love your church by caring. As you know, we're continuing our study called Love Your Church. It's based on the helpful and yet hard-hitting book by Tony Merida. It's called Love Your Church. If you haven't got the book, get the book. If you haven't read the book, read the book. It's a brilliant book because in the chapter, Caring, we're exhorted and encouraged to love our church because Jesus loves our church, and we're to love your church by caring. Love your church by caring because we're to be a caring community and a caring congregation. There are our two headings this evening, a caring community and a caring congregation.

So, first of all, a caring community. A caring community. Look again at verse 22 of chapter 5. Paul says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law, and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires. Now, in our study so far, we've been reminded that our church is our focus. Our church is our fellowship, and our church is our family. Barber's Free Church is our church family. And as we saw even last Lord's Day, we are to be a warm and a welcoming church family. We're to welcome one another as Jesus Christ has welcomed you. We're to welcome one another. But more than that, as a church family, we're to love our church family by caring. We're to love our church family by caring. We're to be a caring community. Because we're not only a community living within the parish of Barvis, we're also a community of worshipers. We are, as the Bible describes us, we are a covenant community of God's people. We're a covenant community of God's people. Therefore, we're to be a caring community. We're to be a caring community. And we're to be a caring community because one of the most noted and most noticeable aspects of the early church in the first century was how they cared for one another. They cared for one another. They cared for the careless who were careless about their soul. And we see that throughout the book of Acts. When you read through the book of Acts, it records for us and it reiterates to us how the church in the first century began to sow the seed of God's Word and that it spread throughout the surrounding regions. But more than that, how the gospel had this impact and it had this influence upon countries and communities. And it was all because of the way in which the church cared for them. The church had a care for its community. They cared for one another and they cared for the careless. Because we read in the book of Acts that the church cared in such a way that they sought to provide for the poor. They sought to look out for the widow and the widow and the widow. They sought to visit the sick and the suffering and the sorrowing.

[7 : 42] My friend, the church in the first century was a caring community. It was a caring community. And, you know, well, you apply it straight away to us. If the church in the first century was a caring community, then the church in the first century ought to be a caring community. Because that was certainly true of the free church in the 19th century. Following the disruption in 1843, so the 19th century, that's when the free church of Scotland was established. It was established due to the influence and the interference of the state in the life of the national church of Scotland. But in 1844, one of the founding fathers of the free church, Thomas Chalmers, so boys and girls, remember that name, Thomas Chalmers, one of the founding fathers of the free church. It wasn't one of your questions, by the way. But Thomas Chalmers, he put together this model of church planting, a model that sought to provide social and spiritual care for some of the poorest communities in Scotland. And Chalmers, he tested out his model of church planting in one of the poorest areas in Edinburgh, an area called the Westport. Remarkably, the Westport area, which Chalmers sought to provide spiritual and social care for, it was the area, you've probably been around that area, the area surrounding Edinburgh Castle in the Old Town. It's known as Edinburgh Old Town, which was the poor area, in comparison to Edinburgh New

Town, which is where Princess Street is, and all the streets behind it. So the Westport parish where Chalmers founded this church, it covered the area of the mound and the Royal Mile, the Pleasence, the grass market, and also the Westport itself. So next time you're in Edinburgh, go and find all these places and see where Chalmers planted this church. And the reason he planted the church was that at the time that area was the most destitute and disadvantaged area in Edinburgh, right at the foot of Edinburgh Castle. And so in 1844, the Westport Free Church was established as part of a scheme to offer to disadvantaged and deprived families. And what they offered was not only day school, but also evening school, Sabbath school, church services, a savings bank, and a library. It was a wholesome model that sought to provide social and spiritual care for the community. Of course, Chalmers' model for church planting, it wasn't without its challenges and its criticisms, but it was a model that was later repeated and replicated in and throughout Edinburgh and also in Glasgow. But just to give you an insight into the social and spiritual care that the Free Church sought to provide in the 19th century, when the first missionary went to the Westport church, the first missionary was called William Tasker, Reverend William Tasker.

And when he gave a report on the first year of ministry at the Westport church, the report on the work of the congregation, he said, we remember having the seventh successive door slammed in our face before we had time to tell our message. And then going to another tenement and entering

house by house, only to find men and women rolling on the floor of a desolate dwelling in indiscriminate drunkenness. Whilst mingling their curses and their blasphemies, the heart-piercing looks and cries of their infant children assailed us with irresistible appeals for bread to allay the cutting pangs of hunger.

It was a desperate and distressing situation. And yet the history of the Free Church in the 19th century was that they loved their church. They loved their community and they sought to provide social and spiritual care for their community because they were a community, a caring community of God's people.

And the same ought to be true of the Free Church, not only in the 19th century, but also the 21st century. We should exert and endeavor to provide social and spiritual care for our community. We're to be a caring community of God's people. How do we do that? We can supply or even serve our local food bank.

[12 : 35] A great way to care for our community. We can also visit people. I know we were restricted for a time from visiting, but we can visit homes, homes of people who are struggling, struggling with sin, struggling with sickness, struggling with stress, struggling with suffering, struggling with sorrow.

We can visit people. We can spend time with people because we're to be, as Scripture teaches us and tells us, we're to be a caring community of God's people. We're to be a caring community of God's people.

In fact, we need biblical one-anothering. We need biblical one-anothering. Boys and girls, I hope you're listening. If you've ever noticed, there are many verses throughout the New Testament that emphasize and explain to us the importance of biblical one-anothering. So the phrase that's repeated throughout the Bible is one another. So you got that, boys and girls, one another. We're to demonstrate care and compassion and concern for our community by our biblical one-anothering. Our biblical one-anothering. In fact, Jesus was the first. He was the first to exhort and encourage us in biblical one-anothering. Jesus says in John 13, a new commandment, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Why? By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. But more than that, you read through the letters of Paul.

Paul emphasizes and he exhorts and he encourages us to demonstrate biblical one-anothering. We see that in the passage, even the passage that we read here. He says in verse 13, he says, for you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed by one another. But Paul also said at the end of this chapter, chapter 5, that because the fruit of the Holy Spirit being at work in our lives is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, then he says, verse 26, he says, let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Instead, chapter 6, verse 2, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Time and time again, Paul exhorts us and he encourages us as a church to demonstrate biblical one-anothering. We're to be a caring community that demonstrates biblical one another. Paul says, as we saw last week, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.

He says throughout the New Testament, throughout his letters, he says, wait for one another. Live in harmony with one another. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Don't pass judgment on one another. He says, discuss with one another. Instruct one another. Greet one another.

[16 : 13] Forgive one another. See one another. Speak to one another. Submit to one another. Agree with one another. Address one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to God.

Pray for one another, he says. Encourage one another. Embrace one another. Do good to one another. Build one another up. Bear with one another. Be kind to one another. Be at peace with one another. Kiss one another. Comfort one another. Care for one another. Care for one another. Time and time again, Paul exhorts and he encourages us to demonstrate biblical one-anothering as a church family. We're to be a caring community. We're to be a caring community. We're to be a caring community. My friend, love your church. Love your church because Jesus loves your church. And love your church like Jesus loves your church. Love your church. Love your church by caring.

So first of all, we see a caring community. Then secondly, a caring congregation. A caring congregation. Look at verse 1 of chapter 6.

Paul writes, Now, when Paul wrote to the Galatians, his concern was that they would lose sight of the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul's concern was that they would turn away from this glorious gospel message.

That's why Paul emphasizes and explains to the Galatians throughout this letter. He says that sinners are saved. Sinners are saved not by their strict adherence to the law of God. No, he says they're saved by the Spirit of God. It's the work of the Spirit in the life of a sinner that causes a sinner to be redeemed and reconciled and restored and made righteous before a holy God. It's not by works of the flesh. It's by faith in Jesus Christ. And throughout this letter, Paul is reminded and reaffirmed to the Galatians that they not only need to learn about the gospel, but they also need to live out the gospel. Because our Christianity, it must not only be personal, it must be practical. And as Paul comes to the end of his letter here in chapter 6, he's saying that our faith in Jesus Christ must not only be evidenced and exercised by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He says our faith in Jesus Christ must also be evidenced and exercised in the way in which we care for our congregation.

[19 : 33] As we said earlier, we are to possess and practice the kuram. So, as Christians, we are to have the kuram. Our Christian character, conduct, and conversation is to be caring. Caring for one another and caring for the careless, those who don't have a care for their own soul. We're to have the kuram, and we're to care, as Paul says here, when someone is caught in sin. We're to care when someone is caught in sin. That's what he says in verse 1. If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

We're to be caring, so caring that we care when someone is caught in sin. We're not to conceal it. We're not to cover it up. We're not to pass over it and pay no attention to it. We're not to discount it or discredit it or disregard it. We're not to turn a blind eye to it. You know, as Paul says, he says, bear one another's burdens. Bear one another's burdens. We're to care, and care so much. We're to care when someone is caught in sin. Because as those who possess the Holy Spirit—that's what he's described in the previous chapter—as those who possess the Holy Spirit and seek to produce and practice the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We are, says Paul, we are spiritual. That's what he says.

He says, you who are spiritual. You who are spiritual should restore your brother or sister in a spirit of gentleness. And you know what Paul is saying here? This is the test of genuine spirituality. This is the test of genuine spirituality. This is the test of whether we are really a caring Christian or not. It's a test of genuine care, compassion, and concern for someone in our church family, that we care when someone is caught in sin. We care when someone is caught in sin.

[22 : 08] You know, is that not what Jesus taught us? Jesus taught us about caring for someone who's caught in sin when he explained the process and the purpose of church discipline. Jesus says in Matthew chapter 18, important words. He says, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. And like Paul does here in Galatians 6, Jesus explained there that church discipline has a process and a purpose. Church discipline has a process and a purpose. The process is to care. The process is to care for the person caught in sin by speaking to them, as Paul says, in all gentleness. All gentleness. And the purpose is to bring that person caught in sin to an experience of repentance and reconciliation and then restoration. Because the thing is, the desired outcome of church discipline is not exile.

It's not exclusion. It's not excommunication. No, the desired outcome of church discipline is always, always repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.

That's the desired outcome. The desired outcome of church discipline is always repentance, reconciliation, and restoration. Sadly, in the 21st century and in 21st century Christianity, we don't like the word discipline. I suppose nobody likes the word discipline, but we don't like it, especially when it comes to church discipline. But church discipline, it's not about criticism or condemnation.

No, church discipline is about counsel, gentle counsel, and gentle correction. It's about repentance and restoration and reconciliation. In fact, the word discipline, the word discipline is very related to the word, very closely related to the word disciple. Discipline disciple. Discipline disciple. And as you know, a disciple is a learner. Whereas Christians, we all have our L plates on. When you confess Jesus as Lord, you're putting your L plate on, and you're a learner. You're a learner for life. Therefore, discipline is part of our discipleship.

[25 : 00] Because as the Bible reminds us, the Lord disciplines those whom He loves. The Lord disciplines those whom He loves. Therefore, church discipline has to be done seriously, but it also has to be done sensitively, and it has to be done sympathetically. Church discipline has to be done cautiously, with care and compassion and concern. Church discipline has to be done lovingly, with a desire to look after the individual and others who may be involved. You know, we often view church discipline negatively, but church discipline has always been part of the church.

It was one of the marks of the church. Right from the Reformation, in 1560, when the Scottish reformer, John Knox, and the other Johns, when they wrote the Scots Confession, they explained and they emphasized in the Scots Confession that the foundation and the fundamentals of the church in Scotland were the preaching of the Word, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and church discipline.

Church discipline. And the reformers regarded church discipline as a mark of the church, not because they wanted to be harsh with everyone, not because they wanted to be heavy-handed with everyone in church, not because they wanted to showcase people. It was the opposite, in fact. The reformers wanted to ensure that there was prayerful and practical and pastoral care for all the congregations in Scotland. And my friend, that's why we're to be a caring community and a caring congregation. We're to care when someone is struggling. We're to care when someone is struggling socially and care when someone is struggling spiritually. We're to care for the careless. We're to care for those who don't have a care for their own soul. And we know so many of them.

But we're to care for them. And we're to bring all our cares about them to the one who cares for us. That's what Peter reminds us. Cast all your cares upon the Lord. Why? Because He cares for us.

[27 : 30] My friend, we're to care. We're to care when someone is struggling in sin. We're to care when someone is struggling with sickness or suffering or stress or sorrow. We're to care.

And we're to care because we love our church. We love our church. Therefore, love your church. Love your church because Jesus loves your church. And love your church like Jesus loves your church. And love your church by caring. Love your church by caring. Because as Paul says, we're to bear one another's burdens. We're to bear one another's burdens. That doesn't mean that the burden just falls to the minister or to the elder. No, as a church family, this is why it's a family.

As a church family, we're to bear one another's burdens. We're to love. We're to listen. We're to lean upon. And we're to look out for one another. We're to bear one another's burdens.

And you know, I love what Tony Merida writes in his book about this. He says, he says, be ready to do the work of restoration. Be ready to do the work of restoration.

[28 : 51] Don't just hope that everything will be okay. Don't assume that others will reach out. Don't leave it to the pastor and leaders to do it. Care enough to take the initiative.

Care enough to take the initiative. You know, and with this I'll conclude. And boys and girls, you have to listen. When Jesus told one of the most well-known parables in the Bible, he did so in order to emphasize and to explain the importance of loving your church by being a caring community and a caring congregation. Because when Jesus told, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now, I'm sure you all know the parable of the Good Samaritan.

It's a parable that everyone knows. Whether they go to church regularly or don't go to church at all, everyone's heard of the parable of the Good Samaritan. About the man who came, who was attacked by robbers, and he was passed by by a Levite and a priest, but yet the Good Samaritan came. And what distinguished and differentiated the Good Samaritan from the priest and the Levite, who had passed by this man, what distinguished and differentiated the Good Samaritan was that when the Good Samaritan saw the man who had been hurt, we're told that the Good Samaritan, first of all, had compassion on him. And then we're told that he took care of him. He had compassion on him, and he took care of him. In fact, if you read Jesus' well-known parable of the Good Samaritan, you can read it for yourself when you go home.

It's in Luke chapter 10. When you read that parable, you'll notice that the word care, the word care, is repeated throughout the parable. It's repeated throughout the parable, and that's because the

character and the conduct and the conversation of the Good Samaritan was that he cared. He was caring. He had the curum. The Good Samaritan was known for his care.

He was known for his curum. And as Jesus said to the congregation at the conclusion of the parable, so when you read the parable when you go home tonight, you'll see what Jesus said to the congregation. He applied it all. He applied the parable of the Good Samaritan to everyone who was listening when he said the words, Go and do likewise.

[31 : 27] Likewise. Go and do likewise. Go and love your church. Go and have a care for your community.

Go and be a caring community and a caring congregation. Go and do likewise. My friend, love your church because Jesus loves your church. And we're to love our church like Jesus loves our church. We're to love our church by caring, being a caring congregation and a caring community. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the care that has been shown towards us, a sinner such as we are, the care in providing a new and living way through Jesus Christ, but Lord, help us to imitate and emulate that Savior. Help us, Lord, to be caring like him, to move with compassion and show care to the careless and show care towards those who need care.

O Lord, that thou wouldst help us. Help us to be more like Jesus, because Lord, we confess that we are so often unlike him. O Lord, help us, we pray, to follow in his footsteps, be near to us, then we pray. Bless us as a congregation, that everything we do, that it would be to thy glory and the furtherance of thy kingdom. Cleanse us, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion. We're going to sing the words of Psalm 103. Psalm 103, it's in the Sing Psalms version.

[33 : 25] Page 135. Psalm 103. Page 135. Before we sing, I'll ask the questions, so I don't forget.

So you ready? Ready, Anna? Ready. Okay, question one. What Gaelic word is used to describe a caring Christian? Question. Kurim.

Yep. I don't know if you've heard that before, but that's what I was told when I was first converted. You've got the Kurim. Question two. What phrase is repeated throughout the Bible to emphasize that we care?

What is it? One another. So we're to love one another and look out for one another and care for one another. Okay, what parable is all about caring?

The Good Samaritan. Yeah, well done. So the Good Samaritan is all about caring. So you have to read that. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan and learn the message that Jesus has for us in it.

[34 : 34] So well done. So we're going to sing, in conclusion, we're going to sing Psalm 103, page 135, in the Sing Psalms version. This psalm is a psalm that reminds us that the God we worship is a God of all grace.

He's gracious and merciful. He's a God who cares. And this is the wonder of who He is. He's a God who cares. And that's why the psalmist says, Praise God, my soul, with all my heart.

Let me exalt His holy name. Forget not all His benefits. His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. The Lord forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress.

Your life He rescues from the grave and crowns you in His tenderness. We'll sing down to the verse marked 11 of Psalm 103. And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt His holy name.

[35 : 42] Forget not all His benefits. His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. The Lord forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress.

Your life He rescues from the grave and crowns you in His tenderness.

He satisfies your deep desires from His unending stores of good.

So that just like the eagle's strength, your youthful vigor is renewed.

The Lord is known for righteous acts, and justice to death, rotten ones.

[36 : 58] To Moses He made known His ways. His mighty deeds to Israel's sons.

His mighty deeds to Israel's sons. The Lord is merciful and kind.

To anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reproof.

For in His anger hide His face. He does not punish our best deeds.

For give our sins their just reward. The greatest love as high as heaven.

[37 : 56] Towards all those who fear the Lord. Towards all those who fear the Lord.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.