

The **Bible** Unpacked

Comprehensive Study Series

The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

Paul Mallison

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The Bible's teaching compiled
for established believers

26. Being One Body

Paul Mallison

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A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who lead the Israelites and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: www.thebibleunpacked.net.

Users are asked to pray regularly for persecuted Christians and, if possible, support them financially. These things can be done through organizations that provide aid to them and/or prayer notices, such as those listed under [Persecuted Christians](#).

Suggestions for Study Groups

Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
 - (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
 - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

I. General

The New Testament deals extensively with how we should relate to other Christians and with issues vital for the life of the church. Amongst the most prominent themes are the need for unity and love. Fellowship is another important concept that we need to grasp, with it being involved in a number of aspects of church life.

a) The Church as One Body

See also:

- c) *God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ*, Ch. 16

God's people form local groups, called churches

GAL 1:2B, 22 [PAUL:] To *the churches in Galatia*. ... ²²*The churches of Christ in Judea didn't know me personally.* GW

The term "church" refers to a community of believers. As such it can be used of small house groups as well as local church congregations. Additionally it can be used more generally of God's people as a whole – the worldwide church.

As per the first two uses, believers meet and function together in local community groups (as parts of God's people as a whole). It is this localized context that is generally spoken of in this and the following chapters in Part F. Church Life.

The many church members form one body – the body of Christ

1COR 12:12, 27 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH:] *A person's body is only one thing, but it has many parts. Though there are many parts to a body, all those parts make only one body. Christ is like that also. ...* ²⁷*Together you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of that body.* NCV™

The phrase "the body of Christ" figuratively depicts the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with his people. Moreover, it points to the unity Christ's people have together in their relationship with him. While the worldwide church is the whole "body of Christ", each local church is a form of "the body of Christ". And in each case the many members together make one body.

As one body, church members meet together

ROM 16:5A [PAUL:] Also, greet for me *the church that meets at their house.* NCV™

HEB 10:25A [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing.* GNT

Church members function together as one church body

ACTS 15:3–4 So *they* [Paul and others] *were sent on their way by the church*, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they were relating at length the conversion of the Gentiles and bringing great joy to all the brothers. ⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, *they were received by the church* and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all the things God had done with them. NET

This passage includes segments which illustrate churches functioning as one body – i.e. as a unit or cohesive community.

The concept represented by the term “church” – often used to translate the Greek word “ekklesia” – involves believers meeting together and functioning as a community or one spiritual body. As such, they worship God together and cohesively further the cause of their head, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they live in relationship with each other, in which they minister to each other.

The church body grows – spiritually and numerically

EPH 4:15–16 [PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH:] But practicing the truth in love, *we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.* ¹⁶*From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love.* NET

ACTS 16:5 So *the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number every day.* NET

In what sense is a church a “body”?

As the body of Christ, what features should distinguish churches from other bodies/groups of people?

Why is it important to meet together with other Christians?

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Be in Unison

Be united as one

ACTS 4:32 *The group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but everything was held in common.* NET

1COR 1:10 [PAUL, TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH:] *I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose.*

NET

In the last clause, Paul urges his readers to be united by having the same Christ-centered thinking and objective/s.

Live in peace with each other

1THES 5:13B [PAUL, TO THE CHURCH IN THESSALONICA:] *Be at peace among yourselves.* NET

ROM 14:19 [PAUL, TO THE CHURCH IN ROME:] *Therefore, let's keep on pursuing those things that bring peace and that lead to building one another up.* ISV

Submit to one another

EPH 5:21 [PAUL, TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:] *Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.* GNT

Avoid foolish arguments and quarreling

2TIM 2:23–24 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *Stay away from foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they grow into quarrels. ²⁴And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and patient.* NCV™

Sometimes disputes and differences may be necessary

1COR 11:18–19 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH:] *For in the first place, when you come together as a church I hear there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹For there must in fact be divisions among you, so that those of you who are approved may be evident.* NET

Where there is sin or false beliefs in the church, differences will be needed so that those who act and believe in accordance with God's will may distinguish themselves from those who do not (v. 19). It is in fact necessary for believers to take a stand against sin and false beliefs in the church.

Note: Have any internal legal disputes judged by people of God

1COR 6:1–2, 6–7 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH:] *When any of you has a legal dispute with another, does he dare go to court before the unrighteous rather than before the saints? ²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to settle trivial suits? ... ⁶Instead, does a Christian sue a Christian, and do this before unbelievers? ⁷The fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves demonstrates that you have already been defeated. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?* NET

With his first statement in v. 7, Paul appears to refer to spiritual failure, either: in seeking retribution, as opposed to being meek and forgiving; or in being at odds with a fellow believer/s, as opposed to being unified as parts of the body of Christ.

When differences arise in a church, what things can one do to promote unity and peace?

Do you find it hard to submit to other people in your church? What attitudes help us to submit to others?

When should we oppose others in church? What things should we bear in mind if the need arises?

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Be in Fellowship

The concept of “fellowship” involves sharing and participating in a partnership concerning a mutual interest or purpose, which for believers is their common faith and life in Christ. This is shown in the Greek word translated as “fellowship” (“koinonia”) which emphasizes participation. Believers participate in Christ and church activities, and in each other’s lives.

Note that a number of the verses in this section show that fellowship occurs amongst believers across the worldwide church, in addition to the local church context.

Have fellowship together . . .

ACTS 2:42 *They [the believers] were devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

NET

. . . Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ

1JN 1:3 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so *that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ).* NET

The fellowship believers have together is not only based on their mutual relationship in Jesus Christ, but is also a fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Participate together in church activities

ACTS 1:14 *They [the disciples] gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.* GNT

1COR 16:15B–16 [PAUL, TO THE CHURCH IN CORINTH:] I urge you ¹⁶also to submit to people like this, and to *everyone who cooperates in the work and labors hard.* NET

Church members should participate together in God’s work, cooperating with each other.

Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ

2TIM 1:8 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord or be ashamed of me, his prisoner. Instead, by God's power, join me in suffering for the sake of the Good News.* GW

Share together in the joy that comes in being of the church

JOHN 4:36 The one who reaps receives pay and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that *the one who sows and the one who reaps can rejoice together.* NET

Those who work together in bringing people to faith, share together in much joy over the fruits of their labor.

Share in each other's troubles and joy

ROM 12:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.* NET

Fellow believers may well be primarily in view here.

Keep in touch about each other's welfare – and keep the others informed of your own

PHIL 2:19 [PAUL, TO THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH:] Now I hope in the Lord Jesus *to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be encouraged by hearing news about you.* NET

EPH 6:21–22 [PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN CHURCH:] Tychicus, my dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, *will make everything known to you, so that you too may know about my circumstances, how I am doing.* ²²*I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.* NET

Although Paul was not actually a member of the Philippian and Ephesian churches, he was effectively a leader of them and very much a part of them. As such these verses illustrate how church members should be aware of each other's welfare – and keep the others informed of their own.

Note: Believers share together in spiritual blessings

1COR 9:23 [PAUL:] I do it all for the sake of *the gospel*, that I may share with them [other believers] in its blessings. ESV

JUDE 1:3 [JUDE, TO BELIEVERS:] My dear friends, I was doing my best to write to you about *the salvation we share in common*, when I felt the need of writing at once to encourage you to fight on for the faith which once and for all God has given to his people. GNT

What is involved in having fellowship with other believers?

Can you think of a time when you shared in something significant with another believer/s? What effect did it have on your relationship with them?

What do you value most about having fellowship with other believers? Why?

d) Love Each Other (I): General

See also:

- 31. Love

Love one another

1JN 3:11, 23 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that *we should love one another*. ... ²³And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and *love one another, just as he has commanded us*. ESV

Love one another more and more

PHIL 1:9 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more*, with knowledge and all discernment, ... ESV

Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .

JOHN 13:34–35 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] “I give you a new commandment – to love one another. *Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*. ³⁵*Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples – if you have love for one another.*” NET

1JN 4:7, 12, 16B [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] Beloved, *let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God*. ... ¹²No one has ever seen God; *if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us*. ... ¹⁶*God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*. ESV

Love is the essence of God’s nature – “God is love” (v. 16; cf. v. 8). Everyone who loves exhibits God’s nature, demonstrating that they have been “born of God” (v. 7b). In addition, loving one another shows that we know God (v. 7), and that we live in God and he lives in us (vv. 12, 16b).

. . . Not loving other Christians has negative implications

1JN 3:10, 14 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *This is how God’s children and the devil’s children are distinguished. No person who fails to practice righteousness and to love his brother is from God*. ... ¹⁴We know that

we have passed from death to life, because we love one another. *The person who does not love remains in death.* ISV

Love is vital for Christian service and living

2PET 1:7–8 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] ... to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection *add love*. ⁸*These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance, they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

GNT

1THES 5:8 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation.* NET

This figuratively illustrates that love – along with faith and hope – provides significant spiritual protection for the believer, helping them to live godly lives.

Further blessings of loving each other

COL 2:2 [PAUL, REFERRING TO PEOPLE HE SOUGHT TO HELP IN THEIR FAITH:] *I want them to be strengthened and joined together with love so that they may be rich in their understanding. This leads to their knowing fully God’s secret, that is, Christ himself.* NCV™

As Christians exist together united in love, they increasingly experience and comprehend spiritual blessings and truths.

1JN 4:17–18 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *By this love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as Jesus is, so also are we in this world.* ¹⁸*There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been perfected in love.* NET

This is speaking of having the love that comes from God, expressed in loving others. Such love, an expression and extension of God’s love, makes judgment from him inconceivable and so annuls any fear of judgment. Conversely, whoever fears has “not really learned to love” (CEV, v. 18b); they do not have perfect love (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Why does loving other Christians indicate that we are people of God?

Do you agree with the assertion that love is vital for Christian service and living? If so, why do you think it is vital?

What blessings or benefits are there of loving other believers? (Do not limit your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Love Each Other (II): How

See also:

- *II. Caring for the Body*, p. 17
- *What love is*, Ch. 31

Love is expressed with actions

1JN 3:17–18 [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God’s love is not living in that person.* ¹⁸*My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring.* NCV™

Love each other as Jesus Christ loved us, even laying down his life

JOHN 15:12–13 [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *My commandment is this – to love one another just as I have loved you.* ¹³*No one has greater love than this – that one lays down his life for his friends.* NET

Jesus disciples were to love each other as he had loved them, a love which he would show to be unsurpassed by laying down his life for them.

Love each other sincerely and earnestly

1PET 1:22 [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Now that by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves and have come to have a sincere love for your fellow-believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart.* GNT

Love each other as brothers and sisters

HEB 13:1 *Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters.* NCV™

Keep each other in your hearts . . .

PHIL 1:7 [PAUL, TO THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH:] *For it is right for me to think this about all of you, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel all of you became partners in God’s grace together with me.* NET

When Paul talks of having others in his heart, he implies that they are an integral part of himself and his consciousness.

... Long for each other

PHIL 4:1 [PAUL, TO THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH:] So then, *my brothers and sisters, dear friends whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand in the Lord in this way, my dear friends!* NET

Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love

1JN 5:2 *This is how we know that we love God's children: we love God and keep his commandments.* ISV

1TIM 1:5 [PAUL:] *But the aim of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.* NET

How can we love each other as Jesus Christ loved us? What attitudes are needed and what kinds of actions may be involved?

What is the connection between loving/obeying God and loving other believers (cf. 1Jn 5:2)?

How do you show love to people in your church? What else can you do?

Pray for persecuted Christians

II. Caring for the Body

See also:

- [Leaders:] *Caring for Church Members*, Ch. 30

The care that church members ought to show each other should be one of the defining characteristics of every church, evidencing Christian love. This care should include both spiritual and practical care, with the former largely involving prayer and encouragement.

a) Pray for Each Other (I): General

Pray earnestly for other Christians

ACTS 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but *those in the church were earnestly praying to God for him.* NET

Pray constantly for other Christians

EPH 6:18 *Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people.* CEV

ROM 1:9–10 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For God, whom I serve in my spirit by preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how *constantly I mention you* ¹⁰*in my prayers at all times, asking that somehow by God's will I may at last succeed in coming to you.* ISV

Pray for those facing persecution

2THES 3:2 [PAUL:] *Pray also that God will rescue us from wicked and evil people; for not everyone believes the message.* GNT

PHIL 1:18B–19 [PAUL:] Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹*for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* NET

Paul speaks of the Philippians' prayers for him while he was imprisoned because of his work for God's kingdom (cf. v. 17).

Pray for those spreading the gospel

2THES 3:1 [PAUL:] Finally, our brothers and sisters, *pray for us, that the Lord's message may continue to spread rapidly and be received with honor, just as it was among you.* GNT

Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love

EPH 1:15–16 [PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS:] For this reason, *because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,* ¹⁶*I do not cease to give thanks for you when I remember you in my prayers.* NET

Thank God because of the service of other Christians

PHIL 1:3–5 [PAUL, TO THE PHILIPPIAN BELIEVERS:] *I thank my God for you every time I think of you; ⁴and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy ⁵because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now.* GNT

What steps could you take in order to pray more consistently for members of your church?

Which believers do you know of who are facing serious persecution because of their faith? Determine to pray for them. Additionally, you could look up websites of groups who provide information and prayer points regarding persecuted Christians (e.g. Open Doors and Voice of the Martyrs) – and choose to receive their updates.

State at least three reasons to thank God for other Christians who you know, preferably ones in your church.

b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

Ask that other believers will live as God wants

2COR 13:7 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Now we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong, not so that we may appear to have passed the test, but so that you may do what is right even if we may appear to have failed the test.* NET

Ask God to forgive them when they do sin

NUM 14:19–20 [MOSES, TO GOD:] *Please forgive the iniquity of this people according to your great loyal love, just as you have forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.* ²⁰Then the LORD said, “I have forgiven them as you asked. NET

Pray for their spiritual growth

PHIL 1:9–11 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *And I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight ¹⁰so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.* NET

The phrase “the fruit of righteousness” (v. 11a) could refer to either good deeds (cf. CEV, NCV) or to righteous qualities (cf. GNT). The concept of being “filled with the fruit” seems to favour the second interpretation.

Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work

ROM 15:30A [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Brothers and sisters, I beg you to help me in my work by praying to God for me.* NCV™

2THES 1:11 [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *God chose you, and we keep praying that God will make you worthy of being his people. We pray for God’s power to help you do all the good things that you hope to do and that your faith makes you want to do.* CEV

Ask God to help and take care of them

1Ki 8:52 [SOLOMON, TO GOD:] *May you be attentive to your servant's and your people Israel's requests for help and may you respond to all their prayers to you.* NET

Ps 5:11b [DAVID, TO GOD:] *Protect those who love you; because of you they are truly happy.* GNT

What Christian work and workers do you or could you pray for? How do or how could you find out specific prayer requests from them?

This week identify at least one person in your church who particularly needs prayer for God's help and care? Commit yourself to pray for them for a period of time (e.g. one month).

Compose a prayer for another Christian you know – perhaps one in view in one of your previous answers. Use your own ideas and ideas from at least one of the verses in this section. (This prayer does not need to be shared.)

c) Encourage Each Other

The Hebrew and Greek words translated “encourage” often imply meanings such as “strengthen”, “exhort” and “comfort”. Believers are to strengthen each other, particularly in regard to faith and work for the kingdom; they are to exhort each other to press on and to live as God wants; and they are to comfort each other in difficult circumstances.

Encourage each other

HEB 10:25 Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, *let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.* GNT

Strengthen each other

1SAM 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul’s son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and *strengthened his hand in God.* ESV

Jonathan helped David find strength in God.

Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say

2CHR 32:6–8 He [Hezekiah] appointed military officers over the army and assembled them in the square at the city gate. *He encouraged them, saying, “Be strong and brave! Don’t be afraid and don’t panic because of the king of Assyria and this huge army that is with him! We have with us one who is stronger than those who are with him. He has with him mere human strength, but the LORD our God is with us to help us and fight our battles!”* The army was encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah. NET

EPH 4:29 *When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you.* NCV™

Encourage others to continue in God’s grace

ACTS 13:43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,

who, as they spoke with them, *urged them to continue in the grace of God.* ^{ESV}

Continuing in God's grace primarily involves remaining true to God and holding to the faith. As such one remains under God's grace, staying right with him (just as one received God's grace in originally being made right with him). It also encompasses relying on God's grace for God to meet one's needs, notably spiritual needs.

Encourage each other by what you do . . .

COL 2:1–2 [PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS IN COLOSSE:] *I want you to know what a struggle I am going through for you, for God's people at Laodicea, and for all of those followers who have never met me. ²I do it to encourage them.* Then as their hearts are joined together in love, they will be wonderfully blessed with complete understanding. And they will truly know Christ. ^{CEV}

. . . Do not do anything that will cause another to "stumble"

ROM 14:13B [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Instead, you should decide never to do anything that would make another stumble or fall into sin.* ^{GNT}

Comfort each other

2COR 1:4 He comforts us when we are in trouble, so that we can *share that same comfort with others in trouble.* ^{CEV}

Comfort those in need by visiting them

JOHN 11:18–19 Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and *many people had come from the city to comfort Martha and Mary because their brother had died.* ^{CEV}

Explain what encouragement is and how it helps people.

What have other Christians done that has encouraged you?

What could you do this week to encourage a particular Christian you know?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Help Each Other

Be concerned for each other

1COR 12:24B–25 [PAUL, SPEAKING OF THE CHURCH BODY:] Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may *have mutual concern for one another*. NET

Consequently, help each other

GAL 6:2 *Carry one another's burdens*, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. NET

HEB 6:10 God is always fair. He will remember *how you helped his people in the past and how you are still helping them*. You belong to God, and he won't forget the love you have shown his people. CEV

Meet each other's needs . . .

2COR 9:12 [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] For *this service you perform* not only *meets the needs of God's people*, but also produces an outpouring of gratitude to God. GNT

. . . Share what you have with those in need

ROM 12:13 *Share what you have with God's people who are in need*. Be hospitable. GW

ACTS 2:44–45 All who believed were together and *held everything in common*, ⁴⁵*and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need*. NET

Help others who are doing God's work

ROM 16:2 [PAUL, SPEAKING TO THE ROMAN CHURCH ABOUT PHOEBE:] I ask you to accept her in the Lord in the way God's people should. *Help her with anything she needs, because she has helped me and many other people also*. NCV™

2TIM 1:16–18 [PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] May the Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, because *he often refreshed me* and was not ashamed of my imprisonment. ¹⁷But when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me. ¹⁸May the Lord grant him to

find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well *all the ways he served me* in Ephesus. NET

Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ

MATT 25:35–40 [JESUS CHRIST, TO RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE ON JUDGMENT DAY:] For *I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.* ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.’ NET

How does compassion motivate us to help others? How can we be more compassionate?

Are you aware of anyone in your church that needs practical support? What could you share with them? How else could you assist them?

Why is doing something for another Christian correlated with doing it for Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 25:35–40)?

Pray for persecuted Christians

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Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

It provides material and spiritual support based on locally identified needs.

Christian Solidarity International – csi-usa.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

Open Doors – www.opendoors.org; www.opendoors.org.au

It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also www.idop.org.

Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin – rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com

This site provides weekly prayer bulletins.

The Bible League – bl.org.au/get-involved/bibles-for-the-persecuted

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and provides training.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com

VOM helps persecuted Christians spread the gospel. It also gives material aid.

World Watch Monitor – www.worldwatchmonitor.org

It reports the story of Christians under pressure for their faith.

Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.' Matthew 25:40 NCV

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