

'CARRYING EACH OTHER IN A BURNOUT WORLD' # 4

We finished last week's notes with considering being 'trapped by efforts.' This week we look at one of the consequences of taking on too much, and how we can support one another by sharing the load, by encouragements, and by wise counsel. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). This verse reminds us that sharing our struggles aligns us with Christ's teachings. We grow closer as a community by helping each other. We exemplify the love of Christ and reflect His grace in our lives when we lift each other's burdens. Let's look at this through the lenses of empathy, kindness and love, first towards everyone, then to our church fellowship.

Read Galatians 6:1-10 and James 2:14-19

As you read these two passages, where do you find (a) empathy (b) kindness (c) love?

Empathy

On our journey faith, I am confident that we have all encountered family and friends, who at one time or another have struggled with, or have even been overwhelmed by problems. Helping them surely starts with empathy which produces compassion. We offer the gift of our time, a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on (see Colossians 3:12). We need to first understand how they see the problem.

Each such occasion is a mini test of faith. In what ways have you responded when your time has been limited? What have we all to learn from such encounters? (perhaps see last week's notes – trapped by efforts)

How important are such encounters for future relationships, with the family member or friend.

What differences would there be, if any, if the encounter was with a fellow church member?

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." (1Peter 3:8)

Kindness

Acts of kindness and charity are integral to the Christian life, being a testament to the transformative power of the Gospel and a reflection of God's heart for humanity. For example, Jesus concludes the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan with "Go and do likewise" and perhaps less familiar is the kindness and generosity of King David (read 2 Samuel 9).

Do you have any examples you can share when small acts of kindness made a huge difference to the recipient?

'It is better to give than receive.' Discuss

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4)

Love

This of course springs from the second great commandment “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love goes beyond empathy and kindness, coming from the changes within us which the Holy Spirit has made (read 1 Corinthians 13). It cannot be faked. The love we show to others is rooted in love we have experienced from God. Love in action benefits both the recipient and the giver, and has a ripple effect that can inspire others to do good as well.

Loving people we like is easier than those we don't like. How do you respond to this dilemma?

Love has some astounding properties. For example, it can be divided and yet remain as strong for each divided part – like the love of parents for each of their many children. Discuss?

“We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 3:19)

There is a strong sense of church fellowship within the passage from James. Having engaged with this theme focused on the community at large, here are Bible verses which emphasise the command to build, strengthen, encourage one another within our church fellowship

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Building each other up helps us feel lighter and strengthens our faith community.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another”. (Hebrews 10: 24-25) This teaches us that mutual encouragement is vital for our spiritual health. By regularly gathering, we create opportunities to uplift each other, ensuring that we don't retreat into isolation during challenging times.

“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” (Psalm 55:22) God offers us protection and assurance, promising that He will sustain us through our trials and tribulations.

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11: 28) All who feel overwhelmed are to seek refuge in Christ. He offers us rest when weary, a reminder that He desires for us to find peace in Him during our struggles.

Prayer: *Father God, we thank you for the great goodness in ordinary people, the people whose presence has made a congregation at St James, whose voices have swelled the singing, whose ‘Amen’ has resounded to prayers, and whose love has created a fellowship. May your Holy spirit flow richly into us as a people now, so that we may continue in a devotion and a fellowship from which none may feel excluded or exclude themselves – all one in Christ Jesus. Amen* (Jamie Wallace)