

Bearing and Carrying Burdens

Exploring what to do with the burdens we see others carrying and the ones we bear on our own.

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"I have a burden for the lost."

"I have a burden for those affected by abuse or addiction."

The origin of phrases like these probably comes from scripture. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *massa*, or burden, is used to describe the weighty responsibility felt by the prophets from the calling God laid upon them.

The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amos did see. - Isaiah 13:1

The burden of the word of the Lord, saith the Lord... - Zechariah 12:1

That feeling of compassion, empathy or responsibility is likely in the background of Paul's thinking as he wrote to the Galatians:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. - Galatians 6:1-5

Paul instructs the church members in Galatia to be proactive in helping each other. It appears he expects believers to be actively involved in assisting Christian brothers and sisters as they struggle. Instead of thinking people's personal life is their own business, we are called to actively help as they battle sin. Admittedly, that can be a difficult subject to approach, even to those who are close to us. In fact, at times those closest to us can be the most difficult to confront. The best approach is to exhibit a loving and nonjudgmental spirit so that people seek you out for help. Be mindful of Paul's admonition to restore them gently (v.1) with the use of compassion.



Some other examples of bearing burdens would be: walking with those in mourning and grief, assisting people in sickness, and giving guidance to those seeking it. The image of an artist restoring a car, a painting, or a piece of furniture comes to mind. This is not fast, assembly line work. This requires the attitude of a craftsman.

What are some things to keep in mind as we bear each other's burdens?

Keep in mind this restoration work is:

- **Personal** - It involves dealing with people as unique individuals.
- **A Process** - It likely involves caring over time; don't expect a quick fix or magical technique to do the trick.
- Going to require **Perseverance and Presence** - Being there may be more important than what you say or do.
- Going to require **Patience** - Carrying the burden for someone requires the spiritual gift of patience (Gal. 5:22) to not become resentful. Remember the Holy Spirit does the inner work, not you!



David Brooks, *The New York Times* columnist, notes the widespread success of 12-step programs has prompted investigation into their methods of success. In discussing Alcoholics Anonymous, the oldest and most widespread of the 12-step programs, Brooks observes how counter-cultural Alcoholics Anonymous is in its basic methodology.

“In a culture that thinks of itself as individualistic, A.A. relies on fellowship. The general idea is that people aren’t captains of their own ship. Successful members become deeply intertwined with one another –learning, sharing, suffering and mentoring one another. Individual repair is a social effort.” (Bill Wilson’s Gospel, *N.Y. Times*, June 29, 2010).

Is this not a picture of the church as it is represented in the New Testament, long before Wilson developed the 12 steps? Is this not what Paul is describing in the sixth chapter of Galatians? Is this not the type of community mirrored in Acts 2:42-47, Col.3:13, James 5:16, and Hebrews 10:24-25?

Ask yourself:

Am I helping my church to be this type of community? Where can I help someone carry their burden?

Take note, when we ask someone to help us carry our burden or accept their help, we give up some control. We must want to grow healthy spiritually or be sober more than we want to have our way!

Carry Your Own Burden - Your Sin

Bill Tuck notes in *Getting Past the Pain*, “There are some things in life you must bear isolated and alone. You are responsible for your own sin.” (p.35). Other responsibilities Tuck notes we must bear on our own are guilt, grief and our attitude.

Where is the personal responsibility only you can bear in the problems you are facing?

Cast Your Burdens on the Lord

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you... - Psalm 55:22.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. - 1 Peter 5:6

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Come to me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest! - Matthew 11:28

There are burdens we have to draw upon God’s power to “... sustain you beyond your strength or the effort of others” (Tuck, p38). This is often the case when walking with parents whose children are struggling. There comes a time when one has to lift them up to the Lord because he is the only one that can help.

Are you willing to help carry other’s burdens?

Are you taking responsibility for the load only you can bear in your life?

What are you carrying today that is too much for you?