

# Applying Scripture to Life

## Topic 6 – Body Life in Addressing Difficult Life Issues

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### Review / Introduction

So far, we have looked at the believer's mandate to make disciples, sin and its consequences, the definition of true saving faith and the amazing work of God in the believer's life at salvation, Holy Spirit filling, the powerful Word of God and its work in the believer, the work of the Spirit and the Word to progressively sanctify believers, and the excellencies of God which should take us to our knees in worship.

Today, we will look at God's plan for the body of Christ in helping individual believers address sin and difficult life issues.

### The Church

“Church” translates the Greek *ekklesia* meaning “a called-out group”. There are two primary uses in the NT.

First and most frequently, the word is used in reference to a local group of professing believers. This is also called the “visible” church because it is what other believers and the world can see. A unique aspect of the local or visible church is that it is comprised of the redeemed and unredeemed .

Second, the word takes on a more technical and fuller meaning referring to the universal church, which is the total group of believers, and only believers, during this present age. This is not people who simply profess to know Jesus nor those who identify themselves with a particular Christian group (Matt 7:21-23). It is comprised of all individuals who repent and place their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The universal church is also called the “invisible” church. The invisible church is only comprised of the redeemed and it is a group that only God can see and know the size and members.

When born again, believers are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body (1 Cor 12:12-27) whose head is Jesus (Col 1:18).

<sup>12</sup>For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:12-13)

<sup>18</sup>He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col 1:18)

The church then is the total group of individuals who exercise true saving faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is a united spiritual organism consisting of all believers worldwide (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Col 1:18; Eph 2:11, 3:6; 3:10).

❖ **Do you view all your brothers/sisters as a special relationship given by God?**

The church is an organized organism described by several metaphors in Scripture: a bride (Eph 5:25-32), a building (1 Pet 2:4-5), branches (John 15:1-11), and a body (Rom 12:5).

The body figure illustrates the diverse-unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27).

<sup>27</sup>Now **you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.** (1 Cor 12:27)

<sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so **we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** (Rom 12:4-5)

### **Believer to Believer Ministry**

Members of the universal church are to gather together in local assemblies or bodies (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:11 Cor 11:18-20; Heb10:25). The local church is organized for the purpose of ministry.

<sup>5</sup>For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would **set in order what remains** and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, (Titus 1:5)

<sup>7</sup>**But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. . . .**

<sup>11</sup>And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>**for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;**<sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:7-16)

<sup>24</sup>and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10:24-25)

Being a member of Christ's body comes with responsibilities toward Him and the other members. Our motivation for striving to excel at relationships in our life (particularly within the body of Christ) is the incredible mercy and grace we have been shown. We once walked in those things for which the wrath of God will come. We have been beloved and chose by God and separated from sin. Therefore, we should put on those qualities that build unity in the body (Col 3:5-15).

<sup>12</sup>So, as those who have been **chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup>Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Col 3:12-15)

Scripture gives us many commands that have been termed the "one-another's" because they are commands directed at the relationship between believers. They describe how believers are to interact with and treat other believers. Here is a partial list:

- Love one another (John 15:12; 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; Matt 18:21-22)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
- Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25)
- Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
- Edify one another (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:29)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
- Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
- Confess sins to and pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
- Live harmoniously with one another (Rom 15:15; 1 Thess 5:13)
- Show tolerance for one another (Eph 4:2)
- Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)

❖ **Are you involved in the brethren’s lives to be able to live out the “one-another’s”?**

❖ **What are you trying to accomplish by not living out a particular “one-another”?**

A subset of the members of the body to which God has called us to additional responsibilities are elders. Elders are men (1 Tim 2:12-14) who aspire to the office of overseer (1 Tim 3:1) and are set apart and qualified by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) for prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). They must meet specific character and ministry qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9).

They are the caretakers of the church (1 Tim 3:5). They rule and exercise oversight (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:2). They shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28): to feed (1 Tim 3:2), to lead (Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:2), to protect and watch over (Heb 13:17), to care for (1 Thess 2:7), and to equip (Eph 4:11-12). They preach and teach the Word (1 Tim 5:17).

What is my responsibility to them?

- Appreciate and very highly esteem

<sup>12</sup>But we request of you, brethren, that you **appreciate** those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup>and that you **esteem them very highly in love because of their work**. Live in peace with one another. (1 Thess 5:12-13)

- Obey and submit

<sup>17</sup>**Obey your leaders and submit to them**, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Heb 13:17)

- Be subject to them

<sup>5</sup>You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (1 Pet 5:5)

### ❖ How do you think of, speak about, and treat your elders?

#### Caring for Sinning and Hurting Brethren

All of the “one-another’s” involve edification, service, and love of others. Love is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another’s needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another’s highest good, even if it costs a great deal, even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

A significant demonstration of love between believers is to be concerned about each other’s walk with Christ and therefore enter into difficult conversations and actions that are best for each other. Look at what the Spirit said through Paul.

<sup>28</sup>We **proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom**, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. <sup>29</sup>For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Col 1:28-29)

<sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one** looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>**Bear one another’s burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:1-2)

### ❖ Do you love to the point of extending yourself into those difficult conversations?

Let’s look at three ways from 1 Thessalonians 5 about how to care for other believers in their relationship with Jesus as they deal with sin and difficult life issues.

<sup>14</sup>We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone**. (1 Thess 5:14)

#### Heart Attitude

The heart attitude of those who desire to obey the Word of God and bring Biblical care to hurting or sinning believers is vitally important. Here in 1 Thessalonians 5, the one who is seeking to minister to a hurting or sinning believer is commanded to be “patient with everyone”. Here are just a few other passages that address this.

The one who is seeking to minister to a hurting or sinning believer is to be “spiritual” or filled with the Spirit. They are to be gentle and careful to not fall into sin themselves.

<sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, **restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted**. (Gal 6:1)

The one who is seeking to minister to a hurting or sinning believer is to ensure they are not hypocritical and hold onto sin as they tell others to deal with their own sin. They must first be putting off all known sin themselves.

<sup>1</sup>“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup>For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup>**Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?** <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. (Matt 7:1-5)

The one who is seeking to minister to a hurting or sinning believer is to not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, themselves teachable, patient, and gentle. They display this character because they know that the work of bringing people to repentance is God’s and not theirs.

<sup>24</sup>The Lord’s bond-servant must **not be quarrelsome**, but be **kind to all, able to teach, patient** when wronged, <sup>25</sup>with **gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition, if **perhaps God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:24-26)

❖ **When you extend yourself to care for people, do you first ensure that you are filled with the Spirit?**

#### Admonish the Unruly

<sup>14</sup>We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly**, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1 Thess 5:14)

The first group mentioned is the “unruly”. “Unruly” literally means “out of step” or “out of order”. This person has stepped out of line in their obedience to God’s Word and is going their own way. It describes people who are defiant and in rebellion against God. These people are living in unrepentant sin. They know they are sinning and they have made a conscious choice to continue in sin. They are stiff-necked and refuse to agree with God that they are sinning and that He requires repentance.

❖ **Are you unrepentant in any area of your life?**

The body is called to “admonish” this group. “Admonish” [noutheteo] describes alerting someone of the serious consequences of their actions; to warn them. It conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It speaks of encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem; an obstacle that must be removed or changed.

To those who are God’s children; those who have exercised true saving faith yet walk in willful, unrepentant sin; there should be the fearful expectation of discipline (Heb 12:4-13). God will not allow His true children to continue in rebellion; discipline is imminent.

This discipline can take on many forms like: God’s heavy hand of conviction (Psa 32:1-5; Psa 38:1-5, 18), sickness and death (1 Cor 11:27-32), church discipline (Matt 18:15-17).

“It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike dead those who so brazenly defy Him.” (A. W. Pink in *The Attributes of God*)

While admonish means “warn”, there is a stronger word used to describe how we are to address sinning believers – “rebuke”.

<sup>3</sup>Be on your guard! **If your brother sins, rebuke him**; and if he repents, forgive him. (Luke 17:3)

“Rebuke” means to censure severely, to express strong disapproval of, or to denounce; to charge someone as being blamable; to strongly admonish. It is a reprimand.

When an individual knows the truth of God’s Word and yet chooses to act in disobedience to it, there is no other recourse than to rebuke. This is the responsibility of every believer.

This first time we rebuke is the beginning stage of the ministry of restoration called “church discipline”. This loving act towards sinning brethren is taught by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. The goal of church discipline is the restoration of the true believer to God as he/she repents from sin.

The context in which Jesus teaches about church discipline includes:

- Dealing decisively and extremely with sin.

<sup>8</sup>“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup>If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. (Matt 18:8-9)

#### ❖ **Do I hate my sin?**

- Being concerned and caring for other believers.

<sup>10</sup>“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>[For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.] (Matt 18:10-11)

#### ❖ **Am I concerned about the spiritual condition of other people?**

- Value pursuing wayward believers.

<sup>12</sup>“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? <sup>13</sup>If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. <sup>14</sup>So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. (Matt 18:12-14)

#### ❖ **Do I love enough to pursue the brethren that choose to walk in sin?**

The process of church discipline for the purpose of restoring a sinning believer's relationship with Christ is detailed here in Matthew (this information is from the VBC Position Paper on Church Discipline).

<sup>15</sup>“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. <sup>17</sup>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. (Matt 18:15-17)

Step 1 – Personal Contact (Matt 18:15) – The first step is an individual conversation that takes place when we are convinced that a fellow believer has performed an unrepentant, willful act of sin. This confrontation should be from the Word of God (Heb 4:12) and done in private. If they do not listen, then we are to go to step two.

Step 2 – Group Contact (Matt 18:16) – The second step is to confront with two or three individuals who are witnesses. These individuals are there to confirm every fact. If they do not listen, then we are to go to step three.

Step 3 – Church Contact (Matt 18:17) – The third step is to tell it to the church. The goal is to have every relationship in the church used by God to persuade a person toward repentance. If they do not listen to the church, then we are to go to step four.

Step 4 – Non-Contact (Matt 18:17) – The fourth and final step is to treat the sinning believer as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. This is commonly referred to as disfellowshipping. The church at this point would have no further social contact with the individual. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 5:11 where we are instructed “not even to eat with such a one.”

This does not mean that if we see them that we cannot acknowledge them. We should not be rude, but every interaction should be brought back to their sin and unrepentance. It simply means that we are to keep our distance from them socially until they repent. We should never give the impression that the sin issue is not important. This action on the part of the church, which severs the ties with the sinning brother and thrusts them into the world which is Satan's domain, hopefully would lead them to a point of repentance.

#### ❖ **Do you view this ministry as loving or hating?**

If a person continues in unrepentant sin, this calls into question their profession of faith. Potentially, they never really exercised true saving faith. A denial of Christ is evidence that salvation never took place.

<sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. (1 John 2:19)

<sup>33</sup>“But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. (Matt 10:33)

#### ❖ **Do you love Christ enough to follow the difficult commands?**

*All Scripture are from the NASB '95 Update unless noted.*

*Most word studies are from [preceptaustin.org](http://preceptaustin.org), [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org), and [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com)*

## Encourage the Fainthearted

The second group is the “fainthearted”. “Fainthearted” literally means “little-spirited” or “small-souled”. It conveys the idea of despondent, weary, timid, discouraged, or worried. It describes people who feel their resources are too small for a given situation and therefore are despondent or discouraged. These people have been worn down by the circumstances of life.

The issue here is not rebellion, but a feeling of defeat. These dear brethren have not yet matured in their walk with Christ so as to see everything through the lens of Scripture. They fail to accept at the heart-level God’s precious and magnificent promises (2 Pet 1:4) and then step out in faith being a doer of God’s Word (James 1:22-25).

### ❖ **Are you fainthearted? What of God’s magnificent promises are you not believing?**

The body is called to “encourage” this group. It is significant that we are not called to “admonish” these precious saints, but instead to “encourage”. “Encourage” means to relate near, console (to serve as a source of comfort in disappointment, loss, sadness, trouble). The idea is to speak kindly, soothingly, to comfort. This is communication of God’s Word in love in ways that strengthen brethren to be doers of God’s Word.

Previously in 1 Thessalonians, Paul talked about his love, care, and concern for the Thessalonian believers. This is the heart of encouragement.

**<sup>7</sup>But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. <sup>8</sup>Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. <sup>9</sup>For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; <sup>11</sup>just as you know how *we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, <sup>12</sup>so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* (1 Thess 2:7-12)**

How do we encourage these people? (just a few)

- Prayer (Col 4:3-4; Eph 6:19; 2 Thess 3:1; Heb 13:18; Phil 1:18-19; 2 Cor 1:8-11; Rom 15:30; Philemon 1:22)

<sup>30</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, (Rom 15:30)

### ❖ **Do you view praying for the brethren as a vital way to encourage?**

- Speaking the truth in love

<sup>14</sup>as a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,** (Eph 4:14-15)

### ❖ **Do you speak the Word of truth to the brethren?**



- Providing for physical needs

<sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? (James 2:15-16)

### ❖ Do you love in word and deed?

#### Help the Weak

The third group is the “weak”. “Weak” describes one’s state of limited capacity to do or be something. It is also translated sick. These people are somehow deficient. It also describes believers who do not understand reality as presented by God in His Word and therefore have a “weak” conscience.

<sup>6</sup>For while we were still **helpless**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Rom 5:6)

<sup>40</sup>And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? <sup>41</sup>Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, **but the flesh is weak.**” (Matt 26:40-41)

<sup>7</sup>However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat *food* as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their **conscience being weak** is defiled. (1 Cor 8:7)

We are called to “help” this group. “Help” describes strongly laying hold of someone with the idea of supporting them; keeping oneself directly opposite another, so as to sustain them; or being devoted to something or someone. These brothers and sisters need more than encouragement; they need someone to come alongside and support them to do what they need to do. Bringing help to the weak includes extending ourselves in love; helping them bear their particular burden.

<sup>2</sup>Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:2)

### ❖ Am I willing to hold up my weak brothers and sisters?

#### Conclusion

We are commanded to extend ourselves in love to care for the brethren. Yet, the Spirit through Paul tells us to not treat everyone the same.

“Picture your arm pointing to the unruly saying, “No more.” Picture it touching the shoulder of the fainthearted to let them know you care and are beside them for encouragement. And picture your arm actually holding and lifting the weak since they need extraordinary help.” (John Piper at [desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org))

Will you become a doer of the body of Christ one-another’s?

## Additional Study

Look up the passages for each one-another and answer these questions for each:

- Am I a doer of the Word in this area?
- What keeps me from doing this one-another?
- What am I trying to accomplish when I do not or do this one-another?
- Who am I seeking to honor by doing this one-another?

After answering the questions, pray that God would work in you to increase your desire to do each one-another and honor Him.

- Love one another (John 15:12; 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; Matt 18:21-22)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
- Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25)
- Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
- Edify one another (1 Thess 5:11; Eph 4:29)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
- Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
- Confess sins to and pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
- Live harmoniously with one another (Rom 15:15; 1 Thess 5:13)
- Show tolerance for one another (Eph 4:2)
- Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)