

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 1, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

DANGEROUS FELLOWSHIP “Concern and Restoration”

Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20, 1 John 3:16-18

When you are in a crowd, what is it that you look for? What kinds of things do you see? People-watching can be a fascinating pastime. It seldom is dull, costs nothing to do and takes little more energy than maintaining an upright stance on a bench or curb. The church has lots of people-watchers, each observing the other. Some are humored, while other are threatened. Some are distracted by external traits, while others are sensing the inner workings of struggles of those in their line of vision. I wonder if that curious urge to observe results in seeing what’s really there? Do we look for the right things? Perhaps the looking we do should be governed by our understanding of “koinonia”... genuine fellowship, being on the lookout for those hurting, those with needs... those who are falling or have fallen, who need help to get up.

I. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

1. **We need to put ourselves in other peoples’ shoes** – (Matthew 7:12, Jesus) *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt. 7:12)*
 - a. **There is a command** – “do so”
 - b. **There is a comparison** – as “to you,” so “to others”
 - c. **There is a concise summary of the entire New Testament** – “... for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”
2. **We need to see other peoples shoes as our own** – (Romans 12:10, 13, Paul) *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves (v.10)... Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality (v.13).”* In a practical sense, Jesus declared, “Put yourself in others’ shoes.” Paul added, “In doing this, look upon another’s need as though it were your very own.”

II. EXPLANATORY STUDIES CONCERNING THREE TYPES OF NEEDS

1. **CASE: The Blundering Believer (Galatians 6:1-2)** – *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6:1-2)* Willful disobedience is not implied!

a. **The Concern** – “*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin...*” (v.1)

- “**Caught**” is from the term meaning “to take beforehand, before one is aware of danger.” The idea is caught unaware or trapped. **The idea is someone gets caught up in something (some sin) before he or she really even realizes what has happened to him or her... like an animal lured in a caught in a trap. It is still sin, but a sort of innocence is implied. Not that they are not guilty of sin, but not willful sin.*
- The word translated here as “**sin**” or “**trespass**” literally means “a blunder, a false step, a slip or lapse.”

How can we get “caught” in sin? (doesn’t imply a lack of responsibility or guilt)

1. **Getting caught up in the wrong crowd** – Sometimes Christians can get caught up in the wrong crowd that leads them astray, and sometimes the one leading them astray may be a Christian living in a backslidden or compromising situation themselves. A weaker Christian, not yet very grounded in his or her faith, can be easily led to fall into sin and compromise when someone they thought was a more mature Christian is setting a poor example for them. *Reminder for Christians: It is important how you live your life, someone is always watching you. We must never allow other to stumble because of what we allow in our lives.*
2. **Getting caught up in the wrong circumstance** – Sometimes life can cave in on us and if we are not very grounded those bad circumstances can cause us to retreat to old ways that perhaps helped us to cope before becoming a Christian. Bad circumstances, difficulties, and hardships may lower our defenses to sin and we may find our selves “caught.” *Reminder for Christians: We need each other. This is a part of why church, the body of Christ, and genuine fellowship are so important in the life of a believer. We can support, encourage and hold each other up when bad things happen.*

b. **The Restoration** – “*...restore him gently.*” (v1)

- “**Restore**” has the thought of “mending a tear.” The next verse describes practically how restoration works... by carrying each other’s burdens (v.2).
- The major idea... “burden-bearing” involves providing what is needed and adding that which is missing... always in a spirit of gentleness.

c. **The Principle** – God has established a mutual ministry for His family whereby the healthy assist the weak... the strong bear the infirmities of the struggling (v.2). See Romans 15:1

Some Things worth remembering:

- (1) **Sometimes we are the weak and sometimes we are the strong** – Remember that the shoes we wear today can be changed and sometimes overnight. Just because you are the strong and healthy today, does not mean you will be the strong and healthy tomorrow. Remember there may come a day when you are

the one who is hurting, lonely, straying, struggling and in need of compassion, concern and restoration.

- (2) **The weak and struggling are not of lesser importance or significance because they are not the strong** – The church is not to take on a “survival of the fittest” mentality, whereby only the strong survive and the struggling and weakest are pushed away. This often happens in a church, where those who may be struggling and drifting away are just said to be “going their own way” or “never faithful anyway,” and we are content to let them go so that we can be stronger. Remember the church is not a social club for the spiritually elite (strong) but a hospital for the sick and hurting. This is supposed to be a place where “needs” (and we all have them) are met.
- (3) **Remember 1 Corinthians 1:27-31** – *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.’”*

2. CASE: The Carnal Christian (James 5:19-20) – *“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”* Willfully disobedient!

- a. **The Concern** – *“... if one of you should wander from the truth...” (v.19)*
 - **“Wander”** or **“stray”** implies a deliberate waywardness. Our word “planet” comes from this Greek word, and literally means “wandering body in the sky.”
 - **“Truth”** represents specifically all that Jesus Christ lived, taught, instituted – the standard of life he presented and prompted.
- b. **The Restoration** – *“... someone should bring him back...” (v.19)* Here is grass-roots Christianity. How is it performed?

How To Bring Him Who Wanders Back:

- (1) **Through incessant** (*nonstop, ceaseless, relentless, persistent*) prayer
 - (2) **Show personal concern**
 - (3) **Use Spirit- directed words**
 - (4) **Exhibit loving actions**
- c. **The Principle** – The one who turns the sinning one back to his original condition will achieve two results (v.20)...

2 Results of Bringing A Wandering One Back:

- (1) **Preservation** – *“... Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death...” (v.20).* When a Christian drifts and wanders away from the faith he or she is in grave danger, literally. For one thing, the enemy, Satan,

stands ready to pounce on the believer who strays, like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. He will take you down and destroy you. He wants to destroy your witness and keep the many others who may have been drawn to Christ though you from coming to Christ. In that way he destroys not only you, but a host of others as well. But also for a believer to live away from a God who has saved and redeemed you, and desires to use you to draw others to Himself, that believer would be better off in heaven with Jesus and therefore may be hastening his or her own demise. Remember John spoke of a “sin unto death” that a believer can commit in 1 John 5:16 by saying, “... There is a sin leading to death.” Much debate surrounds such passages, but the generally accepted understanding of “the sin unto death” is that this is not the “unpardonable sin” of an unbeliever, but rather the unconfessed and perhaps premeditated sin of a believer that finally prompts his own death and departure from this earth. Again, a Christian who sins, and sins, and sins, and strays and wanders so far as to do more earthly harm is better off in heaven where such struggles are ended and others are not destroyed and kept from finding God through a bad example and witness.

- (2) **Protection** - *Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will... cover over a multitude of sins.” (v.20).* Remember sin cost God his Son... it cost Jesus His life. He paid a high price for sins that we so casually and sometimes willfully trek in. A wandering, drifting believer does so because of “sin” and as they wander farther and farther from God and the church, and drift further and further away, they most surely will trek deeper and deeper into sin. The sooner a drifting, wandering Christian is brought back and restored the sooner the drift into deeper and more prolific sin is shut off. Sin that might have been, is thwarted when a wandering Christian is restored.

3. **CASE: The Suffering Saint (1 John 3:16-18)** – *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers (and sisters). If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, now can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”* No sin involved... simply overcome by need!

- a. **The Concern** – *“If anyone... sees his brother in need...” (v.17).* Needs vary – unemployment, loss of a child, a mate or a friend, marital or family failure, financial reversal, overwork or work related problems, etc. The one thing we all have in common is needs... we are all “needy!” However, as is often the case, if it my need it is great, if it someone else’s need it is not my concern, but it is! As Christians in this bond of “koinonia”... genuine fellowship, the concerns of the others in our midst are our concerns. To “see” the need as spoken of in our passage is to “know” of the need.” In other words, we know of the needs we are aware of the need. We see it, we know what it is... now what shall we do about it? I personally wish that within the church today we would get much more open, creative and willing about meeting these needs that are even with in our own fellowship.

- b. The Restoration** – *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need... (v.17)* Partly stated, partly implied!
- **Stated** – The process begins with “seeing” a brother in need, perhaps without solicitation (without asking or digging into, just being sensitive and noticing a problem)
 - **Implied** – “Koinonia” will prompt opening the heart to assist the one in need. Real, genuine, dangerous fellowship will cause your heart to be much more sensitive to the needs around you and the smallest indication of such.
- c. The Principle** – *“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” (v.18)* Love must be expressed in deed and in truth. This is personal, active love.

III. FOUR STEPS FOR REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

1. **See the need... selection** – We must become much, much more sensitive to the needs around us and within our family of faith... A person in need must be recognized as being in needs... essentially singled out and chosen specifically. Go ahead, look around you, see a need, then make an effort to pursue God’s desire to use you in meeting that need practically.
2. **Willingness to get involved... association** – A personal contact must be made and maintained. This demands availability. You have to be willing to get involved. Some may see the need and actually know the need is great and something needs to be done, yet leave it to someone else to do. Many are unwilling to get involved and therefore they thwart genuine fellowship in this way.
3. **Investment of yourself... impartation** – There must be the giving of resources, time and self, to the point of sacrifice if necessary... even without thanks or public knowledge.
4. **Commitment to see it through... devotion** – True “koinonia” refuses to give up on someone else. This is the spiritual glue that binds.

This is a part of “dangerous fellowship” because it means getting involved!

NOW ITS YOUR TURN...

Acts Upon It – Do you know a “blundering believer”? Or a “carnal Christian”? Or a “suffering saint”? Have you considered the possibility that you may be the very one God wishes to use in that person’s life? Begin implementing the four actions steps in the process of reaching out to others (selection, association, impartation, devotion).

Talk About It – It’s possible you are in one of the three categories of people in need of concern and restoration. Don’t wait for someone to seek you out. God to a mature Christian brother or sister and talk it through with them. You need not go through this alone. Don’t be shy... speak with someone today.