



**grow. pray. study.**

**August 3, 2025** *Where Two or Three are Gathered*

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-20 (CEB)

### **Mutual Support Creates Real Community**

#### **MONDAY 8.4.25 Acts 2:42-47**

The earliest Christians were a largely unknown group, living out their faith in a city that had crucified their Lord. But they trusted that the risen Christ was with them, and were bound together by the apostles' teaching, prayer, fellowship, and a spirit of radically helping one another. They shared their faith in appealing ways that made people's lives better (cf. [Acts 2:36-41](#)). In the end, that small, obscure movement they belonged to would shape the world more effectively than the Roman Empire's armies.

- The Holy Spirit's power moved the first Christians to live in ways that connected them to one another. It wasn't just a few things—it was meals, it was prayers, it was worshiping and learning together. Verse 44 said they "were united and shared everything." The Spirit empowered them to set aside a focus on their gain to bless others. In what ways has the Spirit broadened your horizons, guiding you to share your life to lift other people up?
- What challenges do you face when it comes to contributing to the well-being of others? What holds you back? The foundations of the early Christians' powerful impact were the five practices we call "the walk" at Resurrection: [worship, study, serve, give and share](#). In which of these areas do you sense God inviting you to grow in the weeks and months ahead? (Resurrection doesn't want you to just "attend," but to **belong**. [Click here](#) to find good starting points.)

**Prayer:** Living Lord Jesus, you gave yourself fully for my sake. Grow in me a heart that more fully mirrors your generous spirit as I relate to others in my world. Amen.

## **We Hold Fast to Hope Together**

### **TUESDAY 8.5.25 Hebrews 10:23-25**

The believers who received this letter were struggling, their faith wavering under social (and likely family) pressure. (We don't know who wrote the letter—the writer didn't give a name). The writer strongly urged them to “hold on” to their hope “without wavering (Greek *aklinē* from *klinō*, ‘to lean, to slope, or to be off balance’).” \* It was important for them, as it often is for us, not to make the journey of faith and hope alone. We need to encourage and support one another in holding on to hope.

- At times, our world feels just as hostile to our hope as the Roman Empire did to the Hebrews. “There is reason to hold firm even though the circumstances of life appear to be laughing at us, even though things have become difficult.... The One who made the promise is faithful and will not let us down. He does not count time in the short segments by which we count; therefore, we should not let momentary discouragement cause us to turn away.” \*\* When has ridicule or opposition made your hope flicker? What helps you hold on without wavering?
- Hebrews urged Christians to meet together for a specific reason. “Encourage each other,” said verse 25. When have you found strength and courage for life through the encouragement you received from other Christians? In what ways have you worked to develop the holy habit of consistently having an encouraging, hopeful impact on others?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for the people with whom I share this spiritual journey, those who encourage me when life seems to be laughing at me and I need help to hold on to my hope. Amen.

\* Louis H. Evans, Jr., *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 33: Hebrews*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, p. 183.

\*\* *Ibid.*

## **Lift Those Who Fall, and Never Give Up**

### **WEDNESDAY 8.6.25 Galatians 6:1-10**

The apostle Paul never saw the Christian life as a solitary personal struggle. We always need each other on the journey, especially when it gets hard. Scholar William Barclay wrote, “The word he uses for “restore” is used for executing a repair and also for the work of a surgeon in removing some growth from a person's body or in setting a broken limb. The whole atmosphere of the word lays the stress not on punishment but on cure.” \*

- After some heavy theological lifting in the first part of Galatians, in today's reading, Paul talked about relationships. He focused on ways the Galatian Christians could help or hurt one another. In other words, he talked about choices we make in living in community. When have you seen your choices, or those of someone close to you, “sow” one or more negative effects? Why is it a mistake to assume “God's will” caused the negative effects of your choices?
- Your choices can and should, of course, cause good effects, too. Verse 9 said doing good takes regular focus and renewal. “The first verb [get tired] puts emphasis on losing interest (for example, ‘spiritless’) and the second [give up] on becoming discouraged or relaxing one's efforts” \*\*. Paul deliberately used a broad term—there are lots of ways of “doing good.” Have you ever gotten tired of “doing good”? If so, what helped renew your energy to bless others?

**Prayer:** King Jesus, I want to sow love, caring and light through my choices each day. Keep me growing into a person who is mainly a cause of good effects in the lives of others. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Revised Edition). Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 53.

\*\* Daniel C. Arichea, Jr. and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1976, p. 152.

## The Good Shepherd Promises Life to the Fullest

### THURSDAY 8.7.25 John 10:7-10, 14-16

Jesus chose a bold metaphor when he called himself “the good shepherd.” Shepherds occupied one of the lowest Israelite social rungs in Jesus' day. But his words drew deeply from the prophet Ezekiel (cf. [Ezekiel 34:1-16](#)) in which God promised Israel that he would shepherd them himself. Jesus came as “the good shepherd” who would safely guide and protect all who trusted him. He called all “sheep” to join his “flock,” so that **together** they might find “life to the fullest.”

- Sheep can't care for themselves—an isolated sheep is among earth's most vulnerable animals. A shepherd must be wise and dependable, working for the interests and safety of each sheep in the flock. Humans aren't sheep—we must choose to trust. When has Jesus felt like a protecting, guiding shepherd in your life? When have other Christians provided that same kind of shepherding care for you? In what ways do you most need “shepherding” today?
- Scholar William Barclay noted, “The Greek phrase used for having [life] more abundantly means to have a superabundance of a thing. To be a follower of Jesus, to know who he is and what he means, is to have a superabundance of life.” \* When has following Jesus led you to times that left you feeling deeply, fully alive? How can you continue to live out the joyous “superabundance” of life Jesus offers, encouraging others in that life and encouraged by them?

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, I choose to trust you to be my shepherd. Shelter me, care for me, and guide me to the truly good life—a life shared with your people and enfolded in your love. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *The Gospel of John—Volume 2, Chapters 8–21* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 60.

## Welcome Each Other as Christ Welcomed You

### FRIDAY 8.8.25 Romans 14:13-19, 15:1-7

As you worship and serve at Resurrection, you may inevitably think of a big building when you hear or read the word “church.” But Paul's letters (including this masterful letter to Roman Christians) went to a set of smaller “house churches” (cf. [Romans 16:3-5](#)—more like the gatherings we call “small groups”). They didn't always agree on how best to live their faith. It's okay to differ on the details, Paul said, but when you differ, the non-negotiable principle is to “build each other up” in love.

- “Welcome each other, **in the same way that Christ also welcomed you.**” In what ways does that set a high, serious standard? On the other hand, could you think of Christ's model as setting a “low” norm for acceptance, one even a woman caught in adultery or a thief on a cross could pass? Which do you find more challenging: the “height” or the “lowness” of Paul's standard of relating to each other “in the same way that Christ also welcomed you”?
- Scholar N. T. Wright summed up Romans 14:13 this way: “Don't pass judgment on each other—but **do** use your judgment in not tripping each other up!” \* How do you see the difference between having your tastes or opinions, even strongly held ones, and hurtfully passing judgment on someone who does things differently than you would? How did Paul call on believers, as members of the family of faith, to act toward each other?

**Prayer:** Dear God, when I behave in ways that fall short of your dreams for my life, you offer me your grace and accepting love. You call me to treat others the same way you've treated me. Help me to keep living into that calling. Amen.

\* Wright, N. T., *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part Two: Chapters 9-16* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 105). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

## **Gentleness, Patience and Love: Perfect Bonds**

### **SATURDAY 8.9.25 Colossians 3:12-14**

The Apostle Paul described for the Colossian Christians how they should treat each other when living and gathering in community. The virtues he listed were not qualities a hermit would need for living in isolation—they were about loving and living well with others. Paul knew that being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, and forgiving produced a strongly bonded community. But even more, as Christians followed Jesus' perfect example, they would draw people who didn't know him to Jesus. Paul's teaching in today's passage shaped John Wesley, Methodism's founder. He asked in a sermon, "Even though a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without doubt, we may." \*

- Treating one another with love is essential for any unified and bonded community, and certainly for small groups. When we love one another by showing compassion, kindness, forgiveness, and more, we show others that we care about them, which builds trust. Can you recall a time when someone treated you with any of the qualities in this passage? How did that affect the way you saw or related to that person? Did it shift the way(s) you treated other people? Paul set this as the standard for how all followers of Jesus should treat each other. "There is an expected way to live that bears witness to the truth of the gospel within a person." \*\* Paul also said in [Romans 3:23](#) that all of us fall short. What relationships in your life could use a little (or a lot) more compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love? What good results would living this way be likely to have in those relationships?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for being the perfect example of this loving life for us. Please forgive me when I don't treat others with love as often as I should. Help me to be more like you each day. Amen.

\* To read Wesley's sermon "A Catholic Spirit", edited into more modern English, [click here](#).

\*\* Andrew Purves, study note on Colossians 3:1-17 in *The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible*. HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, p. 2143.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Mike Hastings** following the death of **Frank Martin** (Stepson), who died 7/12/2025.

To **Janet Holloway** following the death of **Harvey Holloway** (Husband), who died 7/18/2025.

To **Margee Castle** following the death of **Wayne Castle** (Husband), who died 7/25/2025.

To **Kathy Jones** following the death of **Jeff Jones** (Husband), who died 7/28/2025.