

Stronger Together 3

Carry One Another

Romans 15:1-7

Memory Verses: Romans 15:1

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Every Tuesday I have to move this communion table over to the side over here for youth group. We need the space, we don't want it to get damaged, and we don't want a student to hit their head on it or something like that. We get crazy in here... is what I'm trying to say! Regardless, this communion table is heavy. I can't pick it up by myself... it's big, awkward, and weighs a lot. (Tries to pick up by self) But if I get just one other person to help me (gets someone to help), then it's actually easy to move. What happened? The weight didn't change, the table didn't change, but the experience changed. That's the church! **The weight of life is hard to carry at times... but it becomes bearable when you don't have to carry it alone!**

So far we've looked at Romans 14 and noticed that as a church body we have a lot of differences. We have different opinions, and different convictions. Some of us identify with the weaker brother and some of us identify with the stronger brother. But through it all we recognize that the mission is bigger than our opinions and our love for one another is more important than our spiritual liberty or personal preferences. We don't judge one another unfairly nor do we cause one another to stumble. Instead, as we will see in Romans 15, we hold one another up and carry one another through our weaknesses.

Today is Friends and Family Sunday. Today is a day when we invite our friends and family to worship with us at Stone Creek. And I don't think it is any coincidence that this passage happened to fall on this day. You'll see what I mean as we read it together. **Romans 15:1-7.**

As Christians, it is our responsibility to help others! Because as we all know from Spider-Man... With great power comes... great responsibility! Friends and family don't walk away from those who are struggling. And that's why our main point this morning is simple... **The family of God grows strong when we carry one another.** This morning we are going to see three ways scripture teaches us to carry one another.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **We Must Bear With Them In Love.** **Ephesians 4:2** tells us that with all humility and gentleness, with patience, we should bear with one another in love. Sometimes it is very hard to bear with one another. Some of us rub each other the wrong way. Some of us don't act how the

others think we should. Not everyone's personalities are going to mesh well. But as believers, as friends and families in Christ, we must not treat one another the way the world does. The world will very quickly dismiss anyone they don't mesh well with. They judge a book by its cover. If someone rubs them the wrong way they will instantly become hostile towards them or simply ignore them.

But Christians, have to be better than that. Especially in the church! Bear means to tolerate. You don't dismiss your brother or sister for silly things. Rather you try your best to accept them for who they are and love them. **You shouldn't let pettiness wreck relationships.** Our passage in **Romans 15:1** tells us that we who are strong, meaning those of us who are spiritually mature, have an obligation to tolerate the personality flaws of the less mature. Mature believers step up to the plate and accept and love those who are hard to accept and love. We bear with them in love.

But bear also means to carry. Look at **Galatians 6:2**. We are to carry one another's burdens. We carry our friends... and we carry their burdens. We carry their hurt, their pain, their sin, their struggle, their failures. We carry it by helping them be accountable, by being there to walk them through struggle. We carry it by praying! **In essence, Paul is saying this... You have spiritual freedom, great. Use it to help someone. You have spiritual maturity, great. Use it to help lift someone up. You have been through something, great. Use what God has taught you to teach someone else who's walking through it now! You've got your life together, congrats. Don't look down on those who don't. Use your life to help someone else put theirs back together! Even if they are hard to help, even if they are hard to love. Carry them! Bear with them in love!**

Some things are hard to carry. Some things are too heavy. Think about the Lord of the Rings. The Ring of Power was very hard to carry. It would corrupt, it would weaken, it would manipulate. And though Frodo could handle it for a while... after time he needed help. There's a line that I think is the best line in the whole series. Sam, Frodo's friend, who has been through the whole journey with him, says to Frodo. I may not be able to carry the ring for you... but I can carry you! He then puts Frodo on his back and carries him to Mount Doom to destroy the ring!

Friends... sometimes you need to be carried... let someone carry you. Friends... sometimes you see those who need to be carried... with all of their burdens and issues... carry them! This is what church is for.

And so, since today is Friends and Family Sunday, I have with me a dear friend. His name is Jason Doss. And let me tell you something... this guy is hard to carry! Jason was in my second youth group when I was a 24 year old youth pastor. Jason was the very first student I met and I loved him from the start! He led worship for our students he was a leader. And then he became a teenager and things started to change. Jason, **"Take us back about twenty years. What was your relationship with Jesus and the**

church like as a teenager?" "What happened that eventually caused you to walk away?" "How did your view of Christianity change during those years?" "You have described getting to the point where you actually hated Christianity. What did that look like for you?" Who was there who tried to carry you through those times?

We all need to be carried sometimes. **The family of God grows strong when we carry one another.**

Second... **We Must Bring Them Closer to Christ. Romans 15:2** tells us that we are go encourage our neighbor to build them up... not to tear them down. Again as Paul said in chapter 14, why are you tearing your brother or sister down? This is not what Christ has called us to. **We must build them up to bring them closer.** As the old adage goes, you draw more flies with honey than vinegar.

But contrary to our first inclination, building up does not mean encouragement alone. It also means rebuke, correction, and teaching. In **vs3** we see that Christ shares in our reproach and we should welcome the reproach of the Lord. We should welcome the reproach of well meaning brothers and sisters who want to see us mature. Jesus himself says that those I love I rebuke in **Revelation 3:19**. Discipleship is hard, but it is necessary! We bear with them, we carry them, so we can earn the right to disciple them; to build them! **We don't just carry people through their pain. We carry them to Christ.**

Which brings me back to you, Jason. You rebelled; you left the faith, even while there were those of us praying for you. "Take us to the moment when Jesus started pursuing you again." "What happened that made you realize you needed Christ?" "Was there somebody who helped carry you back?" "What would you say to somebody sitting here today who has walked away from Jesus and thinks they've gone too far?"

Church we must live Romans 15. We must bear with them when they are hard to love and are running from God. And we must bring them back through or prayers and care. We must build them up to bring them back. Sometimes the person you are carrying doesn't have enough strength to make it back. That's why they need you to believe for them until they can believe again.

Third... **We Must Bond With Them To Bless God.** And when they come back what do we do with them? We bond as family! We welcome them back into the fold. Look at **vs. 7**. We welcome them as Christ has welcomed you! We forge meaningful relationships that are akin to family. And why do we welcome them into the family? For the glory of God!

That's the whole point! We aren't carrying one another so people can say, man, what a nice church. We're not building people up so we

can feel good about ourselves. We're not welcoming people to increase attendance. We do it because it brings God glory! Bottom line is this... **we don't bond over our natural humanity; we bond around our supernatural savior.** That's the beauty of this series. We are all different. We have different opinions and preferences. The world says we should all go our separate ways. But in Christ we find our true selves. We find our purpose and our meaning. We find our reason for living. And that is what unifies us. So we welcome one another.

Which brings me back one last time to you, Jason. "What has life been like since you came back to Christ? "What are your plans moving forward? "How can we pray for you and your family?

Application

The application this morning is simple. Who do you need to bear? Maybe its your spouse or child. Maybe its a friend. Maybe its a co-worker or a neighbor. Maybe its someone in here right now? Who needs you to help carry their burdens? Who needs you to accept them and be their friend?

Who do you need to bring? Who could do with some more Jesus in their life? Who could use a supportive and loving church family to wrap their arms around them? Who needs to come to the salvation that can only be found in Christ?

Who do you need to bond with? Who in this church family needs to be brought closer in rather than be pushed further out? Who needs to be welcomed?

Conclusion

The point is this.... We are stronger together. That's what friends and family Sunday is all about! I want to thank my friend, Jason, and his family, for being with us today. Jason could we pray for you. And then would you pray for us.