

# MESSY GROUPS = HEALTHY GROUPS

By Todd Core

## SCRIPTURE

Galatians 6:1-5

*[1] Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted. [2] Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. [3] For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. [4] But each person should examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in respect to someone else. [5] For each person will have to carry his own load.*

## OBSERVATION

Healthy families are willing to get messy in their relationships to restore a family member who drifted away from family values. In the same way, healthy Life Groups will often have to get messy to restore a brother or sister in Christ. On an initial glance, this passage may seem to be giving mixed signals. On one hand, it appears that you should bear each other's burdens and on the other hand, you should carry your own weight. Let's try and clarify the truth from this passage with a few observations:

- Notice the first word is “brothers” in this passage. Paul is speaking affectionately to believers in Christ as he broaches an uncomfortable but necessary teaching. It is a good reminder that we are family when we gather together as the church.
- In verse 1, Paul encourages the family of God to restore brothers and sisters who fall into sin. This may be the most uncomfortable part of being in a Life Group. It is awkward to reach out to someone walking in sin. We have even been conditioned by our culture to “not judge” anyone for their choices. Yet, Paul is asking the mature in faith to restore such a person in gentleness. A few thoughts:
  - Paul understood that to truly love someone is to help them understand truth. To allow a fellow believer to walk in sin is actually unloving. We know by our shared commitment to Christ that sin is a road to destruction. This is why Paul encourages believers to examine themselves before speaking to the offending brother. If the motivation is not love, then be careful that you too might be tempted to sin.
  - We need to recognize that each of us at various times will be the sinner in need of correction and at other times the one helping restore a brother or sister. True community comes when we can allow real conversations about sin and redemption to become normal in our groups.
- Verse 2 reminds us that we have a responsibility to help “carry one another's burdens.” The word for “burden” in the original language carried the idea of a huge stone that is more than one person can carry. There are times in life we need

to admit that we need help. All Christians have burdens that they need help shouldering the load. It might be temptation, illness, relational strife, family hardship, death, or a variety of other life disruptions. God gave us church family so that we wouldn't have to shoulder these things alone.

- In verses 3-5, there is a small shift in Paul's instructions. It is not as clear to the English reader as it would have been to the original readers in Greek. The word Paul uses to describe carrying one's own "load" is a word used to describe a small pack like a backpack today. The basic meaning of these verses is to be mindful of our own responsibility to obey God's calling on our own lives. For example, you can't carry my backpack before the Father to show my obedience or disobedience to the things He put before me. I have to carry that pack alone and you have to carry your pack, too.
- In summary, living in community means providing accountability to each other. We help each other with the heavy burdens that life throws at us, we restore each other to forgiveness and fellowship, and we help each other fulfill God's calling on our life so that we may present our backpack to the Father with a joyous heart.

## **OBEDIENCE**

For most of us, we have to force ourselves to meditate on obedience to a passage like this one. Our tendency is to rush past it because it is uncomfortable. However, our groups will be healthier, and our church will be healthier if we are willing to fight through the discomfort and seek obedience. Here are a few ideas for how to be obedient:

- If you are a group leader, think about ways to incorporate healthy discussions about struggles with sin into the life of your group.
- If you are struggling with a "heavy burden" that is beyond what one person can or should bear alone, share it with your small group today.
- Who are some people in your circles who could use a hand shouldering a heavy burden this week?
- You alone carry the "load" for answering to God for the calling on your life. Have you been obedient? Who could you ask to keep you accountable to your calling and obedience this week?

## **PRAYER**

Father, thank You for offering us forgiveness through Christ and a path to restoration when we fail You. Give us the boldness today to confess any sin strongholds to trustworthy people in our lives so that we may repent and be restored. Give us eyes to see the burdens of those around us so that we may share the load. Help us to be an encouragement to someone shouldering a heavy load this week. Show me how to be obedient to the calling You placed on my life. I want to present to You a life of obedience on the last day. Thank You for providing a faith community to be part of on a weekly basis. Amen.