

*A Study Guide to  
The Crisis of Caring: Recovering the Meaning of True Fellowship*  
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(Originally published as *A Biblical Study on True Fellowship*)

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# Introduction

What is fellowship? Is it coffee and cookies in the church basement on Sunday morning? Or an enjoyable weekend outing with Christian friends? This Bible study has been designed to help you discover directly from Scripture what true fellowship is.

Although a companion to the book *The Crisis of Caring*, this study will direct you first into the Scriptures and only then to the book. This gives you an opportunity to discover on your own what the Bible says about the practice of fellowship before reading what I have to say about the subject.

The goal of any Bible study should be an increased spiritual knowledge that leads to a more godly life. For this reason each lesson contains questions designed to help you make practical application of the truths you are learning in your daily life. Do not skip over these questions. Instead, prayerfully consider in each lesson what God wants you to do to grow in the biblical practice of fellowship.

## 1 What Is Fellowship?

1. The first reference to fellowship in the New Testament is in Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." What is the context in the surrounding verses? Who are "they" in this verse?

What four elements of Christian activity are mentioned in this verse?

Why do you think fellowship was included as one of the first important activities to which those early Christians devoted themselves?

2. Christians have different perceptions of what true fellowship is. Write down your own definition of fellowship as you understand it at this time.

Describe some personal experiences of fellowship as you have defined it.

3. Consider 1 John 1:3. What did John desire for his readers?

According to this verse, what is the basis for all Christian fellowship?

Why is this true?

4. Now read Chapter 1 of *The Crisis of Caring*. In this chapter, two primary meanings of fellowship are discussed, each of which has two subheadings (see pages 16–23). List these two primary and four secondary kinds of fellowship:

A.

- 1.
- 2.

B.

- 1.
- 2.

5. How would you define the community relationship that all believers share?

How do we enter this relationship?

List one or more passages of Scripture on which you base your answer, and explain how that Scripture supports your answer. (Note: If you are unable to think of a Scripture on your own, consider Galatians 3:26–28.)

6. Look up 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philemon 17. How did Paul describe his relationship with Titus and Philemon?

The word *partner* in these passages is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*, which is usually translated *fellowship*. What does this teach us about the nature of true fellowship?

Read Galatians 2:9. What were Peter and John essentially doing when they gave Paul and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship"?

7. What is the basic difference between fellowship viewed as a relationship and fellowship viewed as a partnership?

8. Fellowship sometimes refers to sharing with one another what God has been teaching us. According to the following verses, what is the objective of such fellowship?

Hebrews 3:13

Hebrews 10:24

Hebrews 10:25

1 John 1:3

9. Look up Romans 12:13, 2 Corinthians 9:13, and Hebrews 13:16. The word *share* in each of these verses (in the *New International Version*) is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia* in either its noun or verb form. What does this use of *koinonia* teach us about fellowship?

Look at Acts 2:42–45 again. How did the early believers practice this sharing aspect of fellowship?

10. Write down your definition of fellowship now, after interacting with Scripture.

How does it differ, if at all, from the definition you wrote in response to question 2? Write down how your understanding of fellowship has been either confirmed or changed.

11. What is the most helpful truth you have learned from this study?

How might you apply what you have learned from this study in your life? Consider a practical plan for making fellowship a more dynamic part of your life.

## Union with God

1. *Koinonia*, the Greek word for fellowship, can refer to either an objective fact or a subjective experience. Study Paul's use of the word *fellowship* in 1 Corinthians 1:7–9. Which of these two emphases does Paul use in verse 9?

How do we experience this type of fellowship with God's Son, Jesus Christ?

2. Consider 1 John 1:3–7. What is John's desire for his readers?

What is the vital indication (verses 6–7) that we do have such fellowship with Christ?

Which type of fellowship, objective or experiential, is primarily in view in 1 John 1:3–7? Explain why.

3. In what sense can it be said that all true believers have fellowship with Christ?

4. One of the apostle Paul's favorite expressions was "in Christ." See, for example, Romans 6:11, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 1:3, and Colossians 2:6–7. What do you understand the expression *in Christ* to mean?

5. Jesus used an illustration of a vine and its branches to illustrate a particular spiritual truth (John 15:1–5). Paul used an illustration of a human body to illustrate the same truth (Ephesians 5:23–30). Read these two passages. What do these two analogies teach us about the believer's relationship with Jesus Christ?

What does 2 Peter 1:4 teach us about our relationship as believers to Christ?

What is the significance of this relationship to you?

6. According to John 15:4–5 and Colossians 2:6–7, what is the believer's responsibility in this relationship?

How should we fulfill this responsibility?

7. Consider Colossians 3:4. What is your understanding of Paul's expression, "Christ, who is your life"?

8. How does the truth about the believer's union with Christ in Galatians 2:20 relate to the same truth in Colossians 3:4?

9. How did Paul express in Colossians 1:28–29 the relationship between his personal effort and his faith in Jesus Christ?

10. Now read chapter 2 in *The Crisis of Caring*. Review your answers to questions 1–9. Are there any insights that you've gained from this chapter that shed new light on your understanding of what it means to have a relationship with Christ? If so, write them here.

After considering the concept of one's relationship with Christ as a form of fellowship, write a short paragraph about *your* relationship with Christ.

11. Define in your own words the following expressions:

Union with Christ

Communion with Christ

How does the word *fellowship* relate to these two concepts?

12. What is the difference, if any, between being in Christ and abiding in Christ?

13. In chapter 2 of *The Crisis of Caring*, there is a section on four ways in which Christians tend to live the Christian life. What are they?

A.

B.

C.

D.

Which of these ways do you consider to be most biblical?

Which one best describes your Christian life at this time?

If you do not consider yourself to be following a fully biblical approach, what do you think would be a good practical plan for developing a new approach?

14. What would you like to do to experience more of the reality of your union with Christ?

### 3 Communion with God

1. Fellowship with God consists of both *union* with Christ and communion with Him. But today we usually use the word *fellowship* to signify our communion with Christ. Look at Psalm 42:1–2, Psalm 63:1, and Philippians 3:10. What common desire was expressed by David, Paul, and the writer of Psalm 42?

2. We often think of fellowship with the Lord in terms of our morning quiet time. What do the following passages of Scripture teach us about *when* we should have fellowship with Christ?

Psalm 5:3

Mark 1:35

Psalm 25:5

Genesis 5:22, 24

Isaiah 26:9

Psalm 63:6

What overall conclusion do you draw from the teaching of these passages?

3. Although we should have fellowship with the Lord throughout the whole day, what is the morning quiet time particularly suited for? (See Psalm 27:8, Psalm 130:6, and Jeremiah 29:13.)

Why is this true?

4. Read Nehemiah 1:1–2:5. What two types of prayer are illustrated in verses 1:4 and 2:4?

What is the essential connection between these two types of prayer?

What does Nehemiah's example teach us about communion with God?

5. Take a look at 1 Thessalonians 5:17. How can we fulfill Paul's instruction to "pray continually"?

6. Refer to Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2. In addition to prayer, what other practice is essential in communion with God throughout the day?

How can we do this when so many of us have occupations that require constant mental concentration?

7. Consider Psalm 37:4, Psalm 63:3, and Philippians 1:21. According to these Scriptures, what should be our ultimate goal in daily communion with Christ?

8. We saw in Chapter 1 of this study that fellowship involves sharing with one another. As we think of fellowship with God, one question that might arise is, "What can I share with God?" What answer does Revelation 4:9 give us?

How can you apply this verse creatively in your life?

9. Read the prayers of confession from the lips of Ezra and Nehemiah as recorded in Ezra 9:5–15 and Nehemiah 9:5–35. How do these prayers illustrate a way that you can share meaningfully with God?

10. Read chapter 3 of *The Crisis of Caring*. Write a short paragraph about why it is important to establish a close communion with God.

11. Are there any thoughts from chapter 3 of the book not covered in the Bible study questions that you especially want to remember? If so, write them down here.

12. What area of your daily communion with God needs to be strengthened the most?

What do you think God wants you to do about this area? Prayerfully write down some basic step of action you can take to help you respond to God's prompting.

## Fellowship Is a Community

1. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, what has God done to all believers of every nation, race, and station in life?

If fellowship is, first of all, a sharing together of a common life in Christ, what then does 1 Corinthians 12:13 teach us about the nature of fellowship?

Is this fellowship an objective fact or an experience to be realized? Explain your answer.

2. Paul tells us in Romans 12:5 that "each member [of the Body] belongs to all the others." Look at this verse and the surrounding context. What does this statement mean?

How can a heartfelt realization of this truth help you experience a greater sense of community with other believers, especially those with whom you disagree or those you have difficulty liking?

3. Paul follows up his statement that we belong to one another with some specific points of application in Romans 12:10, 13, and 15. Take a look at these verses. What are these points of application?

Name a particular relationship you have with another believer in which a realization that you mutually belong to each other could greatly improve that relationship.

4. In 1 Corinthians 12:25, Paul states that all the parts of the Body of Christ "should have equal concern for each other." Look up this passage. How should you apply this truth when you hear of a fellow believer who has fallen before some temptation?

What sinful reactions do we tend to have in this kind of situation that we should by all means avoid?

In order to make his point about the unity of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul personifies different parts of the human body, putting words in their mouths (12:14–21). Try doing the same kind of thing to illustrate how Christians often respond negatively to the sin or failure of another Christian.

5. The slander of others in the Body through gossip and harsh criticism erodes the sense of community among believers. In what way does Paul's catalog of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 emphasize the seriousness of the sin of slander?

How can a keener awareness of the biblical meaning of community fellowship help us deal with the temptation to gossip and criticize?

6. Look up Romans 12:10. What is Paul's basic application for belonging to one another in this verse?

How can this scriptural truth help us eliminate the spirit of unhealthy competition within the Body of Christ?

Give an example in your life of how you can apply Romans 12:10 in this way.

What should our response be when God seems to bless another group more than the one in which we are involved?

7. Read Revelation 3:14–19. What kind of invitation was Jesus giving the people of the church at Laodicea (verse 20)?

What was the general condition of the Laodicean church?

What does this passage suggest about how we should treat other Christians whom we consider to be acting in a way that dishonors God?

8. Restate in your own words the message of Ephesians 4:16.

How can the message of this verse help us maintain a balanced perspective between a concern for the individual and a concern for the whole Body of Christ?

How should an awareness of God's purpose for the whole Body of Christ affect our individual prayer life?

9. Read chapter 4 of *The Crisis of Caring*. As you look back over this lesson, what do you see as the primary theme on fellowship as a community?

10. What is the most relevant area of application in this study for you personally?

What might be an appropriate course of action for you to take in this area of community fellowship?

## 5 Spiritual Fellowship

1. Do you consider *spiritual fellowship*—interaction with one another on a close personal and spiritual level—to be vital to your spiritual growth and health? Why or why not?

2. Look at Proverbs 27:17 and Ecclesiastes 4:9–10. What benefits of spiritual fellowship do you see in these passages of Scripture?

3. What purposes of spiritual fellowship do you find mentioned in Hebrews 3:13 and 10:24–25?

4. The expression "one another" in Hebrews 10:24–25 indicates personal interaction, not just listening to a pastor or a teacher. Look up this passage along with Ephesians 4:11–12, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, and 2 Timothy 4:2. What is the role of a pastor or teacher indicated in these passages?

Why are the mutual interchanges with one another and the ministries of our pastors and teachers both important?

How can they complement each other?

5. According to Romans 1:12, what did Paul desire in his relationship with the Roman believers?

What does this teach us about the importance of mutual strengthening for all believers, regardless of position in the Body of Christ?

6. Spiritual fellowship among believers involves various activities or components. What activities are suggested by the following Scriptures?

1 John 1:3

James 5:16 (list two)

Colossians 3:16

Ephesians 5:21

7. Look up Matthew 18:20. What promise does our Lord make to one-to-one or small group fellowships in this verse?

8. Malachi 3:14–16 records fellowship among God's people during a spiritually difficult time. What does verse 16 teach us about God's attitude toward spiritual fellowship among His people?

9. Read chapter 5 in *The Crisis of Caring*. After considering the ideas presented in the chapter, review your answers to questions 1–8. What, if any, new insights have you gained? Write them down at this time.

10. According to the quote from J.I. Packer on page 77 of the book, what is the importance of spiritual fellowship with other Christians?

Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

11. What are two basic requirements necessary for vital spiritual fellowship (pages 80–81)?

Meditate for a moment on your own spiritual fellowship in these two areas. Do you see any need for growth in these two areas? If so, prayerfully list some ideas for ways to grow.

12. List three or four practical suggestions that will enhance your sharing of biblical truth with others.

13. Why is it important to have someone with whom we can share our failures and sins?

Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. What truth stated in this verse can help give us the freedom or confidence to share our failures and sins with one another?

14. How can mutual accountability with another believer help you grow in your spiritual life?

15. I consider prayer the most important ministry we can have in the life of another individual. (See page 87 in *The Crisis of Caring*.) Why do you think prayer might be this important in our fellowship?

16. On pages 87–88 of the book, there is a list of six important qualifications that two people must fulfill for a close one-to-one fellowship experience. When you think about this kind of a relationship, which one of these areas seems most important to you? Explain why.

Do you have such a close friend, or does someone come to mind who might be that friend? If so, write down that person's name.

17. What can you do to begin or to enhance your one-to-one spiritual fellowship with some special person? Try to think of some activities or attitudes that would help you fellowship in a way particularly suited to a specific individual.

## 6 Partnership in the Gospel

1. Read Philippians 1:3–5. What was Paul especially thankful for concerning the Philippian believers as he prayed for them with joy?

2. According to Philippians 4:14–17, what is one important way in which the Philippians demonstrated their partnership with Paul in his ministry?

What did Paul expect to happen for the benefit of the Philippians as they "invested" in his ministry partnership?

3. What additional important partnership activity is suggested by Paul in Philippians 1:29?

4. Christ's last major command to the Church, the Great Commission to disciple all nations, is recorded in Matthew 28:18–20 and Mark 16:15. Take a look at these passages. Do you believe the Great Commission was given to all Christians of every generation? Why or why not?

How can Christians who have not been called by God to go to another nation help fulfill the "all nations" aspect of the Great Commission?

5. Using Paul's prayer requests in Romans 15:30–31 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 as a guideline, what two general areas of prayer should we include as we pray for missionaries?

6. What are some basic prayer requests for a missionary's ministry suggested to us in Matthew 9:36–38, Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:3–4, and 2 Thessalonians 3:1?

7. Now read chapter 6 in *The Crisis of Caring*. Review your answers to the six previous questions in view of the chapter in the book. Do you find yourself in agreement with the ideas presented in the book? Write down any ideas you especially agree or disagree with, or make any revisions in your answers that you feel are appropriate.

8. Chapter 6 contains a reference to both an inward and an outward connotation of *koinonia*, depending on its usage (pages 95–96). What are these two aspects of this word?

9. Is there a sense in which fellowship is not so much an activity to be enjoyed as a responsibility to be fulfilled? (See page 99.) Explain your answer.

10. Look at the suggestions on pages 100–102 for selecting missionaries to pray for. Which ideas seem especially helpful for you?

11. What do you think William Carey meant by his statement, "You must hold the ropes" (page 104)?

12. What do you feel is your specific responsibility as a partner in taking the gospel to "all nations"?

13. Write down a specific step you think God might want you to take to be a vital partner in the gospel. Prayerfully consider your partnership role and your special concern for certain parts of the world or kinds of ministries.

## 7

## The Fellowship of Spiritual Gifts

1. God has placed us in a community relationship with all other believers and in a partnership in the gospel. The Bible continually emphasizes that we are not meant to be passive in these relationships. Rather, we are called to be active participants in the Body and working partners in the enterprise of the gospel. Take a look at Romans 12:3–8. Paul refers to our *function* in the Body in his discussion of spiritual gifts. What do you consider to be the relationship between one's function in the Body of Christ and one's spiritual gift?

2. Write down your own definition of a spiritual gift.

Write down the definition of a spiritual gift stated on page 107 of *The Crisis of Caring*. (Do not read the entire chapter right now.)

How do these two definitions compare?

3. According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:16, and 1 Peter 4:10–11, what are the normal purposes for which spiritual gifts are given?

In what ways are spiritual gifts sometimes used for the wrong purposes?

4. How could you use the passages of Scripture in question 3 to answer a Christian who said, "I don't think I have a spiritual gift"?

5. According to 1 Corinthians 12:14–22, what two dangers can arise from comparing our spiritual gifts with those of other believers?

Do you think all spiritual gifts are of equal importance? Consider 1 Corinthians 12:28–31 as you form your answer.

Are there any gifts that are unimportant? Why?

6. According to 1 Corinthians 12:11 and 18, who determines what spiritual gift each believer has?

What significance does this have for you?

How should we respond to the temptation to covet a spiritual gift we do not have?

How should we respond to the temptation to disparage our own or someone else's spiritual gift?

7. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), each of the three servants was given the same function: to invest money. But each had different levels of ability within that function. What does this fact suggest to us regarding our spiritual gifts?

This parable is about wealth that is entrusted to various people. Think of what it would be like to bury a spiritual gift that was entrusted to you. Why is it important not to bury a spiritual gift?

8. What principle of accountability can you find in your answers to both parts of the previous question?

What does Jesus say on this subject in Luke 12:48?

How would you apply the words of Jesus to the different measures of spiritual gifts in the Church?

9. Look up Romans 12:6. What does grace mean in this verse?

What relationship does it have to spiritual gifts?

Read Ephesians 3:8. To what did Paul ascribe his privilege of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles?

What, if anything, does this suggest to you about personal responsibility?

Taking Romans 12:6 and Ephesians 3:8 together, what do you consider to be the basis for the specific gifts we have?

10. Look up 2 Timothy 1:6 and 1 Timothy 4:14. Paul exhorted Timothy in these verses, "Fan into flame the gift of God," and, "Do not neglect your gift." What do these statements tell us about our responsibility for our spiritual gifts?

11. Examine the statement of Jesus in John 15:4–5. List some ways that you could apply His teaching to the question of how to use our spiritual gifts.

In what way does Peter state the same basic concept in 1 Peter 4:11?

12. Question 10 addresses personal responsibility and question 11 speaks of dependence on Christ. Look up Colossians 1:29, and then describe how Paul balanced these two principles together.

13. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Consider the fact that this chapter, the classic passage on love, is set in the middle of an extensive discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. What does this teach us about the relationship between love and spiritual gifts?

According to 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, what gives value to our spiritual gifts?

Why do you think this is true?

14. Read chapter 7 of *The Crisis of Caring*. What do you consider to be the most important statement made about spiritual gifts prior to the discussion of the seven principles (that is, pages 105–110)?

What relevance does this particular statement have for you?

15. What is the relevance of a discussion on spiritual gifts in a book on fellowship?

16. Write out the seven basic principles of spiritual gifts discussed on pages 110–20. Alongside each one, list the question number from this lesson that applies to the corresponding principle. Compare your answers to the study questions with the ideas stated in the book. If you want to reevaluate any of your answers or add some questions for further study, you can do so at this point.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.
- F.
- G.

17. Where do you think you could make your greatest contribution to the Body?

What does this suggest about how God has gifted you?

## 8 Sharing Your Possessions

1. The most common usage of the word *koinonia* in the entire New Testament is the sense of sharing one's possessions with people who are in need. To appreciate this emphasis on sharing materially with others, look up the following verses and write down the key thought about sharing found in each passage.

Romans 12:13

Romans 15:26–27

2 Corinthians 8:4

2 Corinthians 9:13

1 Timothy 6:18

Hebrews 13:16

What connection do you see between the fact that *koinonia* denotes a community relationship of all believers and this frequent use of *koinonia* as sharing with those in need?

2. What expressions from the verses listed in question 1 indicate that we are *commanded* to share with those in need?

Is there a sense in which obedience to these commands is not burdensome but gratifying? Explain your answer.

3. In addition to obedience to God, what else should motivate us to share materially with others, according to 1 John 3:17?

4. Romans 12:13 says, "Share with God's people who are in need." According to New Testament theologian John Murray, the emphasis in this verse is to "share *in* the needs of God's people, making their needs your own." From what you have learned thus far about *koinonia*, why should we make another believer's needs our own?

What would be the natural result of making someone else's need your own need?

5. Obedience to God and an awareness of our community relationship with other believers should be our motivation for sharing with those in need. According to 2 Corinthians 9:5, 6, 11, and 13, however, what should be the *spirit* in which we give?

How do you think we can develop this spirit?

According to Proverbs 11:25, what will be the result of such a spirit?

How do you think this result will occur?

6. Study 2 Corinthians 9:11–13, and write down what you learn from this passage about how sharing with others in need results in glory to God.

7. Read chapter 8 of *The Crisis of Caring*. On page 138 is this statement: "If we are truly serious about applying this sharing aspect of fellowship, and if we ask God for opportunities to do so and are alert to those opportunities, God will bring them to our attention." Can you think of any opportunities you might have to share with someone in need?

8. What ways of sharing our possessions do we have today other than sharing directly with people we know?

9. Look at chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians. According to this passage, how did Paul establish a biblical precedent for the ministry of present-day relief agencies?

What Christian relief agencies are you familiar with that you have confidence in?

Briefly describe the ways in which supporters of these agencies share with people in need.

10. Read Galatians 6:10. What does this verse teach us about the extent of our sharing with others?

11. What is the main principle of giving stated in 1 Corinthians 16:1–4?

What is the specific need in view in this passage?

What relevance does this passage have for us about sharing with people in need?

12. Another passage often used to teach biblical principles of giving is 2 Corinthians 9:6–8. What is the need referred to in this passage?

What does this suggest to us about the right perspective on priority in sharing with those in need?

How might it be appropriate for you to implement this kind of priority in your giving?

13. What final word of encouragement to share with those in need do we find in Hebrews 13:16?

What kind of *sacrifice* do you think God might be calling you to make?

## 9

# Supporting Your Local Ministry

1. Galatians 6:6 says, "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor." The word translated "share" in this verse is the verb form of *koinonia*. Write out in your own words what Paul is instructing believers to do.

How is this action a kind of fellowship?

In chapter 1 of *The Crisis of Caring*, there is a reference to two primary meanings of fellowship: *to share together* and *to share with*. Which of these two meanings best describes the kind of fellowship found in Galatians 6:6? Why?

Fellowship is usually a reciprocal relationship. In Galatians 6:6, what is the instructor sharing?

What is the pupil supposed to share?

2. Paul applies the principle of reciprocity to a different situation in Romans 15:27. Look up this passage and describe the situation.

What kind of sharing is to take place?

3. Reciprocity is again taught in 1 Corinthians 9:11. What kind of sharing is to take place in the relationship described in this verse?

In what ways have you seen this kind of reciprocal fellowship in those around you?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 9:1–14. What statements does Paul make in verses 7, 9, 11, and 14 about support for those who minister the Word of God?

verse 7

verse 9

verse 11

verse 14

Whose authority does Paul appeal to for this instruction?

5. The *New International Version* translation of Galatians 6:6 says that the person who is instructed "*must* share." Do you think Paul's instruction is a command or a suggestion? Why?

Do you see any relevance in this passage for your own life? Explain.

6. Now read chapter 9 of *The Crisis of Caring*. What do you think of the statement made by a chairman of the deacons about the pastor of his church (page 145)?

How would you describe the attitude of your church or ministry group toward its pastor or leader?

7. The application of Paul's teaching about supporting a local pastor or leader was in most ways more direct in Paul's day. What responsibility do we have today when financial arrangements are far more complex in churches and ministries?

What general guideline is given in 1 Timothy 5:17–18 regarding the salary level of pastors?

How should this basic guideline be applied in present-day situations?

8. How does this study chapter on supporting your local ministry apply to those who minister outside the local church on university campuses or military bases?

9. How should we view full-time workers for Christ who are laboring among those who cannot support them? (For example, the people who minister in prisons or ghetto areas of large cities.)

10. Three distinct groups of people with whom we are to share are discussed in chapter 9 of *The Crisis of Caring*. List each group and, drawing on what you have already studied, state the principle of fellowship that applies to each group.

A.

B.

C.

In which of these three areas, if at all, do you feel God may be calling you to grow?

How do you think you could start to implement such change?

11. On page 150 a distinction is made between a sharer and a giver. What is the distinction?

How can one who accepts the responsibility as a sharer keep this responsibility from becoming a burden or merely a duty to be fulfilled?

12. A possible point of application has already been suggested in question 10 about areas of personal sharing. At this time review the answers to the other questions to see if there is another application, perhaps in the *attitude* of sharing, that you wish to make. If so, use the following space to write it down.

## The Fellowship of Suffering

1. The apostle Paul expressed his desire "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Read and meditate on this verse. From what you have learned thus far about fellowship, why do you think Paul used the expression "fellowship of sharing in his suffering"?

2. Not all suffering, even among Christians, is necessarily the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings. Look up Acts 5:41, Colossians 1:24, and 1 Peter 4:12–14. What characteristics of sharing in the fellowship of His suffering can you identify in these passages?

Why do you think Paul wanted to share in such sufferings?

Are you aware of any instances of such suffering in the Body of Christ today? If so, briefly describe them as well as you can.

3. Do you think "the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" in Philippians 3:10 refers to participation with Christ in His sufferings or to the intimate communion with Christ that believers experience as they share in His sufferings? Explain your answer.

If you were to experience suffering for the sake of Christ, how might the following passages of Scripture help you have communion with Him in your suffering?

Psalms 3:1–5

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 43:2

Romans 8:35–39

4. Sometimes we do not experience communion with Christ when we suffer for Him (or think we suffer for Him). What do the following verses suggest as elements essential for communion in His suffering?

Acts 5:41

1 Peter 3:15–16

5. According to Acts 8:3 and Acts 9:1–2, who was Saul persecuting?

Read Acts 9:4–5. According to Jesus, who was Saul persecuting?

How do you reconcile these two answers?

What does this teach us about the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings?

6. Hebrews 10:33 says, "Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated." The phrase "stood side by side with" is a translation of a Greek word that is a form of *koinonia*. It means *companion*, or *partner*. What insight does this verse give us about the fellowship of suffering?

7. Read chapter 10 of *The Crisis of Caring*. According to 1 Corinthians 12:26, when one part of the Body suffers, every other part suffers with it. In your opinion, why do we not actually experience more of this identity with the suffering of other believers?

What, if anything, have you learned from this chapter that sheds light on this question?

8. Much suffering for Christ occurs today in lands of atheistic governments or oppressive religious cultures. Realizing that most of us will never meet personally these suffering brothers and sisters in Christ, what can we do to cultivate a real sharing in their suffering?

What suggestions are mentioned in chapter 10 as valid actions we can take in response to these intense forms of suffering?

9. We have identified two ways of sharing in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings: through suffering ourselves and through identifying with the sufferings of other believers. What is a third way of sharing in Christ's sufferings described in chapter 10 (page 165)?

10. Look up Genesis 6:6. Describe God's reaction to the universal wickedness of that day.

How should we today view the rampant sin of society that surrounds us?

How should we view our own sin?

11. To help make this lesson more practical, meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Himself and of His followers who are now suffering for Him, and pray about how that suffering bears on the way you should think and live. Write down any applications you feel the Lord might want you to make.

## 11 The Fellowship of Serving

1. One of the most valuable things we can share is ourselves: our time, our talents, and our energies in serving one another. The Lord Jesus Christ is our greatest example of serving others. What does the Bible say in the following passages about His approach to servanthood?

Philippians 2:5–8

Matthew 20:28

2. Read John 13:1–17. Describe the pressure of the imminent circumstances in Jesus' life at this time.

How was Jesus' action all the more remarkable in light of this pressure?

In verse 3, John calls attention to Jesus' acute awareness of His own divine dignity as He performed this act of servanthood. What does this fact teach us about Jesus' esteem of a servant attitude?

What did Jesus expressly teach His disciples after He had completed His act of service?

3. Look up Luke 22:27. According to this passage, what is the world's usual attitude toward servanthood?

What is Jesus' attitude?

4. What is the frequent attitude of Christians toward servanthood evidenced in the examples recorded in Matthew 20:20-24 and Luke 22:24?

5. Read Matthew 20:26-28. What, according to Jesus, is the correct attitude toward servanthood?

6. The following statement is on page 171 of *The Crisis of Caring*: "One of the chief characteristics of a servant is that he serves *downward*, that is, to those who by the world's standards are beneath him in position or station in life." Look at Acts 20:33-35 and Acts 28:1-3. According to these passages, how did Paul serve downward?

7. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, is an example of someone who refused to serve downward. Read the account in 1 Kings 12:1-16. What opportunity did Rehoboam miss?

What was the result?

What can we learn from this account about people's usual response to one who serves downward?

8. Describe an instance you can think of when someone served downward. What was the response?

9. From what you have studied so far in this lesson, write out a definition of serving.

10. What abilities or talents are required to be a good servant?

11. Most of us often find ourselves in the position of serving those over us in our work situations or even in the Body of Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 4:2, what is one of the chief character traits required of a servant in this situation?

Write out your own definition of faithfulness or trustworthiness.

How did Solomon describe the effect of an unfaithful person in Proverbs 25:19?

Describe an instance you can think of when you were either unfaithful in a responsibility yourself or you were affected by someone else's lack of faithfulness.

12. Read Luke 16:10 and 12. According to Jesus, what are two important characteristics of faithfulness?

A.

B.

13. Examine Luke 17:7-10. In this passage, Jesus describes a typical attitude toward servants in His day. He speaks of inconsiderateness in verses 7 and 8, and ingratitude in verse 9. Think of some typical servanthood situations today. How are these same negative attitudes sometimes expressed?

According to Jesus, how should a servant react in the face of unkind attitudes?

14. Read Luke 12:35-40. What is the basic subject of the parable?

Who does the master in the parable represent?

What is promised to the faithful servants in verse 37?

What do you think this promise teaches us about being servants of Jesus Christ?

15. Read chapter 11 of *The Crisis of Caring*. Write down any additional thoughts from this lesson that you want to remember.

16. What action do you think God might be prompting you to take to help you grow in the fellowship of serving?

## 12 Social Fellowship

1. Social activities and fun times do have their place in the fellowship of believers. Fellowship does include social activity, but it includes *much* more. Review at this time the lesson titles of these studies, and write down in your own words the various major facets of fellowship we have covered.

2. When we looked earlier at the various activities to which the people of the early church devoted themselves (Acts 2:42), we did not consider the activity that Luke called "the breaking of bread." Consider this phrase in light of its use in Acts 2:46, and write down what you think it means.

What does this teach us about social activity within the early church?

3. Jesus' moving parable about the return of the prodigal son reaches its climax with the father saying, "Let's have a feast and celebrate" (Luke 15:23). What does this verse teach us about Jesus' attitude toward social activity?

4. Read Luke 7:33–34. What contrast does Jesus draw here between Himself and John the Baptist?

Consider Jesus' statement in Luke 7:34, along with His activities recorded in Luke 5:29 and 7:36, and John 2:2 and 12:2. What insights can we gain from these passages about Jesus' social life?

How did the social life of Jesus differ from that of most Christians today?

5. Look up 1 Corinthians 10:31. In light of Paul's teaching in this verse, what should be the ultimate objective of all Christian social activity?

What Christian social activities do you often engage in?

In what ways do they glorify God?

Are there perhaps some changes you feel God is calling you to make in your social activities that would help them bring more glory to God? If so, write down what they are and how they would have this effect.

6. Read chapter 12 of *The Crisis of Caring*. What practical suggestions from this chapter could help you plan your social activities in such a way that they contribute to a more dynamic sense of fellowship?
7. What basic principle regarding the dynamics of fellowship does the illustration of concentric circles on page 187 teach?
8. How do you respond to the comment on page 188 about some people having a spiritual gift that expresses itself in the arena of Christian social fellowship?

Do you find any particular relevance to this principle in your own life? Explain your answer.

9. Look at Revelation 3:20. How do you think Jesus' invitation might help establish the legitimacy and value of social fellowship in the kingdom of God?
10. What common thread among all the diverse facets of fellowship is mentioned in the "final word" on pages 189–90?

Can you think of any relationship in your own life where this common thread could help improve the relationship? If so, write down how it might help you.

11. As you conclude this study on true fellowship, what is the most important application that you want to continue working on?