

## Session Five



# Carry One Another's Burdens

*Burdens come in all shapes and sizes. Often, they come as a result of an illness, or a crisis, or a broken relationship. Maybe you've recently felt yourself falling from the resolutions you made to do better, try harder, and walk straighter. Each of us, at one time or another, has spiraled downward—and each of us knows someone who has done the same. It is for this reason that Paul urges, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).*

MAX LUCADO

## Opening Reflection

**T**he only thing worse than hitting rock bottom is hitting rock bottom *alone*. While “rock bottom” will look different for everyone—yelling at your kids when you promised to stop, making a commitment to a close friend you broke yet again, cheating on a test after resolving to change—we all know what it’s like to fall into the pit of sin and wonder if we’ll ever get out.

In our individualistic society, we tend to shun relying on one another. If we’re suffering, we feel that we have to help ourselves. But this was never the way the Christian faith was intended to be practiced. Our faith is communal in nature. We worship a triune God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Jesus ministered with twelve friends by his side. The church was set up to be a body of many members. And it was set up this way for a reason (see 1 Corinthians 12:27).

Paul wrote, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently” (Galatians 6:1). This was one way to fulfill the next instruction that Paul gave: “Carry each other’s burdens” (verse 2). When we go through life trying to carry every burden, anxiety, sin, and fear alone, we are bound to crumble beneath the weight of the load. But if we are a part of a

community that helps carry that load, listens to each other, and pulls people back when they are about to go down the wrong path, we are doing what Paul called “fulfilling the law of Christ” (verse 2).

If you want to guarantee leading a miserable life, then carry your burdens alone. Don't tell anyone about them. Don't ask for help and don't offer to help anyone else. Isolate yourself and see how quickly misery sets in. But if you want joy, peace, and true happiness, you need to share your burdens with others. Let your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ carry your burdens for a while—and offer to carry someone else's.

In this fallen world, you will continue to be tempted by sin and face hardships. But rather than going it alone, realize that you have the body of Christ beside you.

## Talk About It

Begin your group time by inviting anyone to share his or her insights from last week's personal study. Next, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- How do you feel about asking for help? Are you quick to ask others for help? Hesitant? Resistant? Why?

—or—

- When was the last time someone helped you to carry a burden? What was the burden? How did that person help you?

## Hearing the Word

Invite someone to read aloud James 5:16–18. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read, and then discuss the questions that follow.

<sup>16</sup> Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! <sup>18</sup> Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops (NLT).

What is one key insight that stands out to you from this passage?

In what ways did that represent a new insight?

Do you believe your prayers can have the same results as they did for Elijah? Why or why not?

## Video Teaching Notes

Play the video segment for session five. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

Carrying one another's burdens is like breaking out your walking stick, hiking alongside a friend, and helping her navigate the rocks, tree roots, and other hazards that could trip her up.

Each of us, at one time or another, has spiraled downward—and each of us knows someone who has done the same. It is for this reason that the apostle Paul urges us to “carry each other's burdens.”

This is the law of Christ: *to love one another*. And one way we demonstrate that love is by carrying one another's burdens.

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Paul recognized that sin not only infects the believer but also affects the community.

When you engage in prayer, it allows you to shift the burden you are carrying for others onto the shoulders of God.

We have to be willing to do something when we see others struggling under the weight of their burdens. We have to be willing to step out and step up.

If you see a congregation called the “Honking Geese Christian Fellowship,” step right in and get acquainted. Geese make community health a priority.

All of us lose our way at times. And when we think back on those times, we will be thankful for the people in our lives who helped us make our way back to the trail.

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*Rex has had so many challenges. He has been through so much. He has so few of even his mementos that he treasured from the past. At one point, I just said, "Rex, I'm so sorry for all that has happened and for all you've lost." And he said, "Well, I'm not sorry, because I found God." I was stunned by his statement. He's lost his former life . . . but he realizes what he's found. Today, I am so thankful to God for the relationship I have with Rex. His being willing to share with me has made me realize I should be more open to sharing. His kindness is such an example to me. It just means the world to me. I feel the Lord brought Rex into my life instead of bringing me into Rex's life. God has blessed me with Rex's friendship and kindness.*

SHARON, FROM THE VIDEO

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## Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. Read Galatians 6:2. Has anyone ever carried a burden for you? If so, how did this affect you and the circumstances around that burden?

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2. Have you ever witnessed a community coming alongside an individual and carrying that person's burden? What did you think about this act of kindness?
3. Sometimes the burdens that we experience are outside our control—an illness, crisis, broken relationship—and sometimes those burdens are due to our own sin. How can our sin be a burden to us? How can our sin affect those around us?
4. Read Galatians 6:1. What are your thoughts about this instruction from Paul? Does it seem extreme, necessary, helpful? Why do you think Paul suggests the community intervene when an individual is sinning?
5. Think back to the discussion in this week's teaching about the difference between seagulls and geese. How have you witnessed the church acting like geese? Like seagulls? How did these experiences affect the way you view God, Jesus, and the church?



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6. How often do you pray for people you know who are facing a difficult sin struggle? Is prayer your first response or last resort? Explain.
7. Is there a Rex in your life—someone who could use help shouldering a burden? Who is that person? How could you pray for that person this week?
8. What is a burden you are carrying right now that you don't want to carry alone anymore? Who is someone you could ask for help?

## Closing Activity

To apply today's study, complete the Scripture exercise below:

- *Fill in the blank with your name:* "As for \_\_\_\_\_, [I was] dead in [my] transgressions and sins, in which [I] used to live when [I] followed the ways

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of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:1-2).

- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone who needs to experience the love of Christ:* “For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_ that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone who needs to experience the restoration of Christ:* “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with \_\_\_\_\_, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

If you feel comfortable, share with your group what this experience was like for you.

## Closing Prayer

Break up into groups of two. Take turns praying for one another’s burdens—whether those are your own sin burdens or something else that you are carrying. After praying for each other, take turns praying for someone you know outside the group who is facing a sin struggle and could use some help in carrying that burden.