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When you open your heart up to the love of God through Christ, that love becomes the bedrock foundation out of which you move in your human relationships.

(Bill Hybels)

Caring For One Another

"Dear friends, let us practice loving each other." (1 John 4:7, Living Bible)

J. Allan Peterson tells a story about a wife who came into newspaper columnist and minister George Crane's office full of hatred toward her husband. "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me."

Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan. "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him." With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" She did it with enthusiasm, acting "as if." For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?"

"Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him."

Love is intentional. Hebrews 10:24 tells us as a church to "Consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds." Many times we read this verse and miss the word "consider". Love does not happen just because we attend the same church. Love does not just happen because we are Christians. We need to practice it. We need to consider it. We need to be intentional about it.

So how can your love be intentional? Consider:

- Whom do you talk to on Sunday mornings? Have you met anyone new in the past month?
- How strong is your desire to be with those in your Adult Bible Fellowship? Do you spend time with them outside of Sunday mornings?
- Do you notice periods of "high stress" in the lives of those in your Adult Bible Fellowship? How can you help support them or meet their need?
- Do you need to forgive someone? Are you willing to look beyond people's faults and accept them as they are?

Many years ago a shabbily dressed boy trudged several miles through the snowy streets of Chicago, determined to attend a Bible class that was conducted by D.L. Moody. When he arrived, he was asked, "Why did you come to a Sunday school so far away? Why didn't you go to one of the churches near your home?" He answered simply, "Because you love a fellow over here."

As we begin a new year, let us continue to "consider" how to love each other.

Joel Sutton

**FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE
PURPOSE STATEMENT**



WE EXIST TO:

BRING PEOPLE INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS
CONNECT THEM TO GOD'S FAMILY,
MATURE THEM IN THEIR FAITH ,
EQUIP THEM FOR MINISTRY SO THAT GOD'S NAME
WILL BE
EXALTED.

SERMON SERIES By The Sweat of Your Brow

pastor Joel Sutton

- Jan. 4 - Thank Goodness It's Monday - Gen. 1 & 2
- Jan. 11- Ever Feel Like A Slave At Work? - Eph. 6:5-9
- Jan. 18- How To Treat Your Employer - Col. 3:22-25
- Jan. 25- How To Succeed At Work – Various Proverbs

The Picture of Care

My thoughts on care call to mind mental pictures of people. I would guess many of us at First Free could tell of the out-pouring of love and care we have received from our brothers and sisters in Christ. For the most part actions flow through helping hands, such as meals prepared for a family after the birth of a child or death of a loved one. When one's spirit is discouraged, care can be felt by a comforting voice over the phone, a smile a hug, the anointing of prayer.

I used to think being a caring person was to fix other's problems. I have seen that view of so-called care cause more pain and sometimes even disaster. I think the burdens of this world have their purpose to glorify God. Our part, as the family of God, is not to change the situation or "fix it", but rather to help each other go through the problems and pain and be understanding and non-judgmental of our brothers and sisters. That's the kind of care I would like to receive and give.

The picture of care from my heavenly father comes from Isaiah 40:11 (N.K.J). "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." Our gentle shepherd may lead us through the valleys that are filled with suffering and pain; some we bring upon ourselves, others we have no control over. But whether we have understood or not, for that which we face, care is there to sustain us.

Lori Peterson

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 NIV

"God wired us up to know and be known, to love and be loved, to serve and be served, to celebrate and be celebrated."

GROUPS:

The Life-Giving

Power of Community



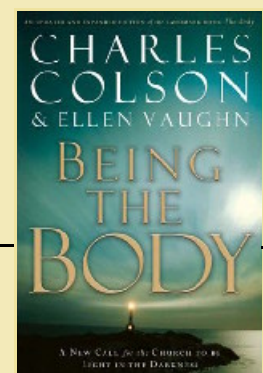
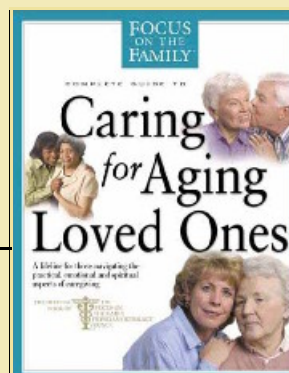
Recommended Books

A Complete Guide To Caring For Aging Loved Ones

Is an excellent book by Focus On The Family that may be very helpful for those seeking guidance in very specific ways. We have a copy available in our church library, so feel free to stop by and check it out.

Another book Being The Body by Charles Colson and Ellen Vaughn does a great job depicting who we are in relationship to other believers. We are called to serve and that is where we find true joy. The gifts of the Spirit are to be used for each other in caring.

Harold Anderson



Check out

LITTLE BROTHERS FRIENDS OF THE ELDERLY.

This local organization's website has

information on how one can volunteer and help.

TWIN CITIES OUTLET OF CARE

How is First Free helping those in our local areas? Here is something that you could pray for. As "Fire" the First Free youth group enters the new year, they are preparing to team up with *Urban Homeworks*.

The youth group will meet tangible needs for this community, by doing some construction work on houses within the Twin Cities. That is exciting and something to praise God for. This organization not only attracts young volunteers, but those who are retired as well! Will you help them in two ways? First keep the group in your prayers, and pray for those that the youth come in contact with.

urbanhomeworks.com

This organization supplies low-income families with affordable housing and a positive and supportive landlord/ tenant relationship.

They empower Urban Neighbors in perpetuating the hope of Christ in the community in which they live.

They continue to educate and energize volunteers by facilitating service projects and opportunities that lend themselves to a more complete understanding of God's Kingdom within the city.

Finally they train members of our community in the basic construction industry.

These are the thoughts that ran through my head as I asked my friend from my evening job what she thought about caring in general. I wanted to understand her, but also encourage and show her where true care comes from and what it means.

Sonia Hupalo

Biblical Perspective

"How do you know when somebody really cares?"

I can tell if someone really cares by how genuine he/ she are in response to my individual circumstance. I tend to be a pessimistic person. I talk a whole lot. I know when someone is persistent and truly interested, I can tell.

The challenge is to communicate the truth and nothing short of that. 1 Corinthians highlights love, which is so synergistically connected with care. This passage defines what love and care is and what it is not. Seek the interest of others above our own. I'm reminded to care with integrity too. Galatians talks about honest actions: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions."

"Describe the most caring thing anyone has ever done for you? How did it affect you?"

I remember when I was young, how often I was sick. My grandma abolished prescriptions and brought out chicken soup. Her actions made me aware that limitless care does exist, and that I can be genuinely caring without being motivated by personal interest.

The truth is that only God's care is limitless, while we fail many times to meet people's expectations, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God had so much of our interest in mind that He went to the extent of dying for us so we could experience full joy and connection. Humans have fainted motives, but God's motives involve loving us and giving Himself up for us.

"Identify one aspect of caring you may not have noticed when you were younger."

It's interesting how each person has a unique ability to care for you. It's like they have their own way of helping you that is so different from someone else. For example, an elderly person cares for you very differently than a close friend your age. I guess I believe that there is a force, or something that exists in the universe that is watching out for me.

God, our ultimate caretaker and friend, notices all the details. Psalm 139 speaks of God's great attention to us. God remembers, and His fascination for us is beyond a simple force that exists. A force cannot love, a force cannot eradicate sin, or transform one's character, or make decisions to encounter us. Also check out the body of Christ. God created us to function as a community. We cannot grow or love alone. Recently we observed in the Purpose Driven Life that we are each designed differently to care for one another in special ways too.

UPCOMING EVENTS

What's On The Menu?

On the 23rd and 31st, First Free is hosting fellowship dinners. These dinners are a great way to connect with the different people in our church body.

Concert of Prayer

Join us for a time of prayer and praise for this upcoming year on Sunday, Jan 11th. The time of prayer will begin at 6:00 pm and end at 7:30 pm.

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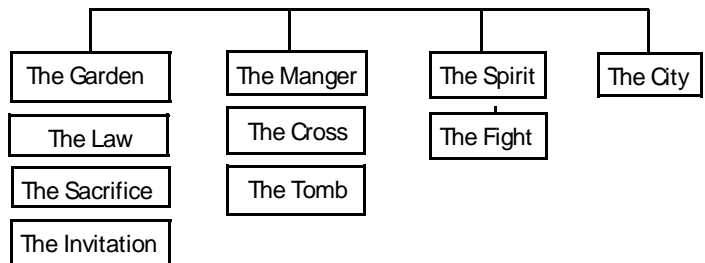
Do you know someone who is new to the Bible, and wants an overview of the Christian faith?

Ten Keys For Unlocking The bible is a ten week opportunity for you to invite someone who is curious. This event gives you the chance to help them discover how the Bible ties together. Bring \$5.00 for guests and \$7.00 for members of First Free for the dinner that will be provided each week.

Ten Keys For Unlocking The Bible



Jan 1-March 22



First Free Evangelical Free Church
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