

Journey Together

Galatians 6:2 New American Standard Bible

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Philippians 4:4 New American Standard Bible

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

James 5:16 New American Standard Bible

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

Introduction

- Have you ever experienced fear of an uncertain future? I have. E.g.1. On the way to boot camp in Korea, I was on the train along with hundreds of recruits. As the train jerked to start, all the smiles turned into tears as we waved our goodbye to our families.
- Have you ever experienced loneliness? I have. E.g.2. Some years ago, I was separated from my family for a couple of months. Alone at home, I cried. Like a baby.
- In both times, I wished that someone had been with me. *Forever.*
- We all experience such a moment of separation, loneliness and the longing for the company, don't we?

Content

- John Donne—an English poet and scholar in the 17th century once said, “*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.*” He reminds us of the reality of human life. The need of togetherness. The longing for company.
- Every baby is born to this world alone. However, as soon as they are born, they are not alone. They are surrounded by loving parents and grandparents who would shower them with love and care for many years to come. Later on, they would meet more people in school, at work, and at church who will surround them with more love and care. No one is an island. No one should be alone. Everyone needs company.
- Did you know that it is not God's will for us to be alone? He designed us to have companionship from the beginning of our life. Check this out. In the Book of Genesis.

Chapter 2. After God created Adam the first human being, He looked at him and said, “It is **not good for the man to be alone**” (Genesis 2:18). And so, God created Adam’s companion, Eve, from his ribs. The man was called ‘Ish’ (אִישׁ). The woman was called ‘Isha’ (אִשָּׁה) (Genesis 2:23). Looking at her, Adam declared, “At last this is bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; (Genesis 2:23). He felt so complete with his companion.

- Companionship, or togetherness, is not only God’s design, but also it brings us strength: ⁹ *Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor; ¹⁰ for if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up! ¹¹ Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? ¹² And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). The power of togetherness.
- Such company is also important in our journey to Heaven. In our spiritual journey, no Christian travels alone. We need each other. Male and female. Old and young. Pastor and members. We travel together. We are interdependent on each other in faith and practice. E.g. Chinese character for ‘people’---“人”. Two strokes support each other. None of us are so strong to stand alone. We need each other. Even Jesus, on the night before He was crucified, at the Garden of Gethsemane, as He was praying, He asked for the disciples to stay with Him in prayer (Matthew 26:36). *I need you. You need me.* We need each other--- the company of believers, the church, the community of faith---in our Heaven bound journey.

Definition of journey: *an act of traveling from one place to another* (www.bing.com).

Journey involves destination. Our final destination is Heaven. What is Heaven? The place where God is King. The kingdom where we are citizens. To that destination, we travel together.

Common foundation: Jesus Christ

- In our journey together to Heaven, we have a common foundation. That is, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. He is the foundation of our fellowship with each other. He bonds us together in His love. He holds us together in the same faith and practice. In Him, we have the forgiveness of sins. In Him, we do have hope of resurrection. In Him, we love our neighbors. In Him, we encourage each other to complete our journey to our eternal destination. Heaven. Life eternal. In the presence of God.

- Because of Him, we stay together not giving up on each other. Because of Him, we walk together not abandoning each other. Because of Him, we work together. In one accord. With patience. With kindness. And with love.

What do we do for each other in our journey together?

- We do at least the following three things:
 - We **Share**: we bear each other's burden with compassion (Galatians 6:2). We share joys/concerns/worries/sadness/pain/sufferings/laughter and tears. The Church of Christ has been doing this for two thousand years. That's what we still do in the Church today. Every Sunday. Every day. E.g. A lonely lady appreciates her sister-in-Christ for daily conversation and support. We share.
 - We **Encourage**: Paul the Apostle was writing his letter in a Roman dungeon. Yet, he encouraged the believers to rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). E.g. Movie "the Lord of the Rings." Frodo, the main character, collapsed to the ground a few steps before the gate to the cave at Mt. Doom his final destination. Being exhausted from a long and hard trip, he was about to give up on his mission. At that very moment, Sam, his companion, encouraged him to go on saying, "Let us be rid of it (the ring)...once and for all! Come on, Mr. Frodo, I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you!" We encourage.
 - We **Confess** sins to each other and pray for each other for healing (James 5:16). We seldom do confession to each other in our church, but John Wesley and his Holy Club would do that whenever they gathered in Jesus' name. E.g. My Haiti Mission Trip several years ago. There was a sharp disagreement among the U.S. team members on how we were going to work with the Haitian workers. From a lenient approach to strict rule and order. Arguments Ensued, Cold War, Apologies Made, Forgiveness Granted, and Peace Restored. Such things are bound to happen among God's children. However, our journey together is too important to give up on each other. Confession and forgiveness must be practiced among us.

Conclusion

- We are called to be the agents for God's Kingdom on earth. It was not an accident that we have become God's children. It was predestined before the creation of the world. Neither is it coincidental that God has put us together here and now at MUMC. We are called to journey together to Heaven. By the way, it is never a trouble-free journey. Of course, like any relationship, we will have bumps and challenges.

However, God is with us. We have each other. Until we reach our final destination--- Heaven. Together.

- Therefore, let us walk together and finish the race by bearing each other's burden, encouraging each other, and supporting each other in prayer.
- Amen.