



“Care Primer”

# Introduction

Thanks for taking the time to read through this document.

This likely means you're a group leader of some sort or have simply identified yourself as someone who wants to intentionally care for others in MRBC. Either way, God bless you!

This is not meant to be a comprehensive set of material, with which after reading you'll know everything there is to know about care. As stated in our definition below, Jesus is our ultimate example in care and to learn from him is a lifetime quest that can't be contained in a document.

We are however the body of Christ (Rom 12:5, 1 Cor 12:27) and as such are called to care for each other and the world around us. When connected to him we can bear much fruit (Jn 15:5) and do all things (Jn 15:16) as his body.

This document contains a series of questions and statements to help further a common understanding of care within our church community.

Thanks for joining with us,

Gary Powell

Pastor of Discipleship & Care

[gary@ridgebaptist.ca](mailto:gary@ridgebaptist.ca)

# What is Care?

We are praying that God will work in and through us to care for each other as the church—and we invite you to join with us!

Our belief is that anyone can care and is called to do this as a part of the body of Christ. However, we need to have a common understanding of care in order to move forward. The second-greatest commandment is to “love your neighbour as yourself.” (Mat 22:39). In 1 Corinthians 12-13 we’re taught that we are the body of Christ, and as such, to “have the same care for one another” (12:25), then that the most excellent way to do that is with love (ch 13).

While the general mandate to love and care for each other is understood, we need to break down the details a little further.

## Personal

One characteristic of care is that it is *personal*.

In a world full of virtual connections and mass-marketed messages, we desperately need the personal, communal nature of care!

Care doesn’t occur within a mechanical transfer of information, it happens through personal interaction in community. It becomes artificial when it’s not initiated by a *person* on one end and specifically intended for a *person* on the other end. No matter what form it takes (visit, email, phone call, hug) the fact it’s from person-to-person is what makes it meaningful.

Breaking it down, care is:

- **Acknowledgement** - We can’t care for someone if we don’t personally acknowledge what’s going on. Ignorance of an issue is an enemy of care. Even if it’s the only thing we do, acknowledgement is very helpful and doesn’t require the person in need to actively receive an offering of care.
- **Loving Response** - Beyond acknowledgment comes a personal loving response. That response may take the form of comfort, encouragement, or challenge depending on the situation. The person in need will have to be willing to take that response and we must remember that caring for someone often takes time.

## God-Centered

Another characteristic of care is that it is *God-centered*.

We care for people “in Jesus’ name” and our ultimate desire is that they would have personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

“We love because he first loved us.” (1 Jn 4:19). Our love comes from him, for as Jesus says, “...apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5b). We believe that we can’t give what we don’t have. As Christians, we’re not loving and caring for people on our own strength—which would be ineffective and incomplete—we’ve received care from God ourselves and are acting out of a relationship and connection with him.

God is the chief shepherd (1 Pet 5:4), the source of love (1 Jn 4:7) God *is* love (1 Jn 4:8) and he is the one who can truly care for the heart of every one of us. Our goal is not to do or say the “right thing” and leave it at that. Our goal is to bring people to the love of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit which overflows through us. That is the best care that anyone can receive!

Breaking that down:

- **Dependent upon the Holy Spirit** - As the ultimate caregiver, God is our example and our power in care. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit and need complete dependence upon him and his leading as we interact with others. We pray for that guidance and strength every day and in every interaction.
- **In line with Scripture** - When we give any sort of guidance to people as we care, we seek to give the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of the world. It’s personal in nature, but always in line with the truth of Scripture.

# Key Scripture on Care

Please look up the following verses and note down below a “one-liner” summary in your own words as it relates to care:

Matthew 22:39

1 Corinthians 12:12, 26-27

1 John 4:19

John 15:5

John 13:34-35

# Cure VS Care

In his book, “Christian Caregiving: A Way of Life”, Kenneth C. Haugk makes a very helpful distinction between God’s role and our role as the church when it comes to caring. He states that, “Christians are responsible for care; God is responsible for cure.”<sup>1</sup> This is something to consider in our approach as we often get trapped in the “curing” approach to situations when really all we need to do (and are capable of doing) is care.

Think of the last time you attempted to care for someone going through a tough circumstance. Was your approach more *caring for them as person* through their situation? Or were you trying to *cure them of their situation*?

## Let’s take another look at this.

Consider the approach you would take when there is a problem with a *something* compared to a problem with *someone*.

Take a moment to think of an example for each (ex. a problem with something = a car breaks down, a problem with someone = a substance abuse addiction) and answer the following question:

- Is a “curing” approach or a “caring” approach better suited for each situation?

Typically, things are better suited for a “curing” approach and people are better suited for a “caring” approach.

In the example above, we could take some time to lovingly support the car that has broken down, giving it some “TLC”, but it’s going to be more effective to get right down to fixing the problem! We could also try to “cure” the person who has a substance abuse problem. Without the support and love of community, they’re likely to still to be stuck in the same place in a short matter of time.

**We can’t fix everyone’s problems, but we can walk alongside them and lead them to the God who CAN.**

Side note for those who typically jump into the curing (or fixing) role as soon as a problem is presented. Resist this as much as you can! If you need to think of something to do in the situation—listen. (Check out the “SOLVER” acronym at the end of this document for some great listening techniques).

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth C. Haugk, Christian Caregiving - A Way of Life (Augsburg,1984), 19.

## Care: We Can All Do It (and We Need To)

Care is not something that is reserved for pastors or other trained professionals, it's actually something we're all called to do. In fact, one of a pastor's main roles is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12), not necessarily doing it all themselves!

Take a moment to look up 1 Corinthians 3:16 and write it in the space below:

As a Christian, you have the Spirit of the living God residing in you! The Spirit empowers you and gives you the credibility and resources to care for others in the body of Christ.

Now look up 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Romans 12:5 write them in the space below:

The Spirit is given to us for the common good and in the body of Christ we belong to each other, not just ourselves. We are called to live for each other.

If you want to really understand the extent of this, take a moment to search the phrase "one another" in the New Testament of your Bible (or just type "Bible one another" in Google). You'll quickly discover the numerous passages about how we are treat and care for each other as a church.

# God is With Us—It's His Deal, Not Ours

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus says, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Earlier we were just reminded that we carry in us the very Spirit of God (1 Cor 3:16). So when we care for others we need to remember that we’re not going into it alone. We are bringing the very presence of God into our caring relationships.

In 1 Peter 4:11 it's stated that, “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” God is the one who gets the glory. We need to depend upon him and point to him in all we do as we care.

## Prayer

Pray before you meet. Pray while you're meeting. Pray after you meet. Just pray!

We're seeking God's will to happen, so ask for it before you jump in. We want to remind the person you're caring for of God's presence and to petition for his help, so talk to God while you're together. We want God to continue working even when you're not there, so ask him to take care of his child when you're gone. Express your dependence upon the Lord.

## Scripture

“The Bible is an excellent resource for ministering to people because it records how God has ministered to the needs of people through the ages.”<sup>1</sup> As the person in need of care is going through their experiences, we can use the examples in Scripture to provide the perspective and hope of the God who has come into the world to save us.

We can't share Scripture if we don't know Scripture. So read it. Study it. Memorize it. Seek to understand the character of God, the nature of his redemptive plan, the promises of who we are in Christ, the direction that God calls his disciples to, etc. Infuse your life with the truth of Scripture and let God shape you by the renewing of your mind with the truth.

Then carefully and lovingly remind the person you're caring for of the truth. Don't beat them over the head with it. Don't mechanically insert it into your

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth C. Haugk, *Christian Caregiving - A Way of Life* (Augsburg, 1984), 118.

conversation. But do point to the goodness of God via the truth of his word. Our world is full of lies and the truth of Scripture is a powerful remedy.

## **Blessing**

A blessing is kind of like “Scripture in action”. A blessing is simply a reminder of God’s grace and presence in our lives.

Take a truth found in Scripture, such as “the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7), direct it to the person you’re caring for like this, “May God’s peace guard your heart and your mind in Christ”, and voila—blessing!

We really do this all the time in our culture. The phrase, “good-bye” has its roots in the phrase, “God be with you”. We also say things like, “take care”, “hope you’re doing well”, “have a good day”, etc. All those things are fine, but wouldn’t it be better to leave someone with the truth and grace of God rather than it what they can do for themselves?

# Do's and Don't's (It's About Them, Not About You!)

A few extra tips when you're meeting with someone in a caring situation.

## Do

- Use Scripture with grace and compassion
- Customize your approach to the person / situation
- Be sensitive; listen compassionately
- Ask specifically how you can pray for them
- Pray when you sense God's leading
- Pray naturally, just as God made you
- Put yourself in their shoes (gain understanding)

## Don't

- Preach a sermon; condemn
- Always use a formula that, "worked the last time"
- Treat people as projects
- Neglect to pray for the requests someone gives you!
- Use prayer as a "technique for leaving" (therefore associating prayer with "time to go")
- Pray like someone else
- Take on another's problems as your own

# Gospel: Share God's Hope

God affirms the fact that our world is broken. We don't have to pretend it's not. But there is hope in Jesus. He is the great healer and binder of brokenness. He is the justifier and forgiver of our sins.

Part of caring is proclaiming the forgiveness of Jesus when someone confesses sin. However be aware of a couple potential pitfalls when this happens.

## **Sometimes we do this too quickly.**

Instead of allowing the person an opportunity to examine their situation, we simply brush it aside. We say things like, "You're being too hard on yourself", or "I wouldn't worry about that too much". It seems loving on the surface, but isn't actually dealing with the problem or the pain.

## **Sometimes we do this too harshly.**

We add to the persons guilt, condemning and judging them without any grace. We say things like, "How could you do something like that?", or "You need to really think about what you've done and make sure you're serious".

## **Instead we can follow the example of Jesus.**

Look up John 1:14 and write the two words it says Jesus was full of in the space below:

As Jesus came this way from the Father, so we can come to others in his name.

# Practical Care: Actions Speak Louder than Words

Sometimes a “cup of cold water” or your silent presence is needed more than anything else. It doesn’t solve the problem but it can show you care a lot more than any words may be able to.

The Salvation Army has been credited with the statement, “You can’t tell a man about the love of God if he has an empty stomach”. The principle we can take from that simple statement is profound and far-reaching.

What practical need does someone have that you can meet so you can show them that you care?

Jesus stated in Matthew 25, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” And later he states that any time we did this, “for one of the least of these brothers of mine”, we did it for him!

*We can show our love for Jesus by bringing a simple, life-sustaining act to someone in need.*

Take a moment and list 3-4 practical acts of care you could do for someone who’s going through a particularly hard time. Ensure they’re not things that will cure their issue, but things that will simply show that you care. (Ex. Bringing a meal)

# Servanthood: Security in Christ

In Christ we have our identity and our freedom. In Christ we are securely loved and therefore can love others (regardless of their response to us) because we're "good" in Jesus. He is the source of our care. We care out of an overflow of God's love.

*It's an opportunity, not an obligation.*

When it's an obligation, it's not really caring and the person you're trying to care for senses that. Remember that apart from Jesus we can do nothing, so stop trying so hard on your own. Ground yourself in Jesus and go from there.

If you find yourself getting to the point of serving out of duty versus a heart of servanthood, take a breather. Talk to God about this. Tell someone who can pray with you and for you. Seek out care for yourself from the Lord and from the body of Christ. We all need care!

Which brings us to our next point...

# Encourage Vulnerability

When we, as the body of Christ, are vulnerable enough to share our life's ups and downs with each other, we are able to support and care for each other as needed.

When we decide instead to keep our lives to ourselves (perhaps due to fear, lack of trust, pride, etc) we are unable to support and care for each other as needed.

Refusing to share the circumstances of your life with other Christians is essentially signing a waiver stating, "I have relinquished my right to receive care."

God designed us to live with each other in community. We are called to, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:15). How can we rejoice or mourn with someone if we don't know what's going on?

*As I've stated many times as a pastor, "If you don't share, then we can't care."*

Whenever caring for someone, strongly encourage them to be vulnerable and share their circumstances with someone they can trust. It's hard, but it's the way God designed it.

Then model it in yourself by ensuring you are being vulnerable in your own life.

# Caring is a Process

Finally, caring isn't a quick fix. It's not a "one and done" situation. And the results aren't up to us anyways.

*Caring is a process and a lifestyle.*

To better understand this, consider the following examples of processes and then the corresponding results:

## Processes

- Kindling a fire
- Farming (Tilling Soil, Planting, Watering)
- Weight-lifting
- Healthy Eating / Resting
- Studying

## Results

- Fire
- Crops
- Greater Strength
- Energy
- Increased Knowledge

A "process" is a verb. Verbs are ongoing, and they imply a passage of time. Compare this with "results" which are often nouns and come out of process.

Caring for someone is coming alongside someone for a leg of their journey, keeping our eyes on God and discovering how we can be a part of his process in their lives. We may be in and out of that process at different stages of their journey and that's okay! If we keep following God's promptings for our lives we'll be fine.

# Listening Acronym: SOLVER

As mentioned earlier in this document, the “SOLVER” acronym is a great checklist to remember when listening to someone.

If you’re tempted to “get to the point” with people you’re caring for, you may want to practice this. It ends up being something you can “do” (if your mind works that way):

- **S - Squarely** face the person (not angled or turned away)
- **O - Open** stance (not crossed arms, legs)
- **L - Lean** in (not leaning away from the person)
- **V - Verbally** respond (“Yes.”, “Mm-hmm”, “So what you’re saying is...”)
- **E - Eye Contact** (look the person in the eyes)
- **R - Relax** (body language, facial expression, tone, tempo)