

Guided Bible Study

**Salendine Nook Baptist Church
Friendship (Growing Side By Side)**

1 Corinthians 12 v. 12 - 31

**A modified Version of Scripture Union's
LifeBuilder Bible Study Series originally written by
Carolyn Nystrom**



About These Bible Studies

*For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using Scripture Union's LifeBuilder Bible Study Series. Our Theme for these studies is: **Friendship (Growing Side by Side)**. The studies were originally written by Carolyn Nystrom, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for home study as church transitions between the church building and home during the ongoing Pandemic.*

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us – much like we would do in our normal Wednesday Morning Bible Study. To give a sense of group study, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

Hope that you enjoy it!

Pastor Ian

Context

God created us to thrive in one another's presence. Friends help us to mature emotionally and spiritually. Friends love us no matter what. Friends teach us about forgiveness. As we look at these studies together, they introduce us to powerful stories about friendship in the Bible, and how we can apply the principles contained within these stories into our own lives. They also help us to discover the riches of godly friendship – the greatest friendship of them all.

Study 3 -

Enjoying Our

Differences

City of Refuge in Houston is a church with a difference – lots of them. Its founders planted their church between two neighbourhoods: one a mostly black slum, the other a mostly white medical community. The church meets in a homeless shelter straddling the two communities. Staff, elders, teachers, members all reflect that balance. So do the many ministries offered by this church. But no one would say it is easy. There is something about our nature that wants to cozy up to people pretty much like ourselves.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. *If you were choosing a church (or a group of friends) what similarities to yourself would help you feel comfortable? What differences from yourself would you accept – or even want? Why?*

Paul opens this section of his first letter to the Corinthians by saying: 'The body is a unit'. **Read 1 Corinthians 12 v. 12 – 31.**

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

- **1 Corinthians 12 v. 12 – 19** speaks of both unity and diversity. What all unites?
- Who among your circle of friends represents diversity: a foot, a hand, an eye, an ear? What do you appreciate about each of these people?
- Sometimes when we focus on ways we are different from other people, our gut feeling is: 'I do not belong' (**1 Corinthians 12 v. 15**). When and why have you felt this way?
- If your friends accepted the teachings of **1 Corinthians 12 v. 12 – 19**, what could (or do) they do to help you cope with the feeling of not belonging?
- Focusing on **1 Corinthians 12 v. 21 – 26**; how would you express what Paul is teaching here?
- What situations tempt you to think of someone else: 'I don't need you' (**1 Corinthians 12 v. 21**)? (*Consider your church, business, friends, family*).
- As you focus on **1 Corinthians 12 v. 22 – 23**, how does Paul tell the Corinthians to deal with people who are 'weaker', 'less honourable', 'unpresentable'?
- What reasons can you find in **1 Corinthians 12 v. 24 – 26** for relating to difficult people in this way?
- **1 Corinthians 12 v. 27 – 31** speaks of how individual differences actually strengthen the church. Describe what you would expect to see in a church where these and other skills were seen as gifts from God to be used for the common good.
- Take a look at **1 Corinthians 13 v. 1**. Why do you think Paul ends this section about diversity among believers with this question?
- What do you appreciate about this passage that could help you become a better church member, a better worker, a better family member or a better friend?

Now or Later

Quietly read 1 Corinthians 13 v. 1. Focus on your relationship with other Christians who shape your own local 'body' of believers. Sit in silence, allowing God to bring to your attention ways that you have given and received love within that 'body' of believers. Expect also that he will reveal relationships in which you may need to think, speak and behave in a more loving way. Pray about what God reveals to you through this spiritual exercise.

Write a letter (or make a phone call) to a friend. Express appreciation for a particular strength that is different from your own.



To help you in your study

The purpose of the study is: To respect and draw on the differences that God has created among his people.

Think about what a foot, hand, eye or ear might do. Name people who especially demonstrate those qualities. For example, a 'foot' might be one who is quick to jump in and do something. An 'ear' might be a person who listens with wisdom, compassion and understanding. Express appreciation for those you might know with these qualities.

Think through; 'How is Paul's approach towards different people different from normal practice'? Take note of words such as: *indispensable, special honour and modesty*.

Take note especially of phrases such as: 'God has combined (v. 24); 'so that there should be no division' (v. 25); 'equal concern for each other' (v. 25). You should also look at the prospect of suffering and rejoicing together. (v. 26)

As you think through practical ways to put all of these observations into practice, ask yourself: 'What is one step that you could take towards meeting that challenge'?

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