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FELLOW FEELING

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, *“But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:24-26).

We can draw several lessons from this passage, but the overriding one is that Christians ought to care for one another. We need to develop and

encourage empathy — what the dictionary describes as *“the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.”*

There’s an old English expression that summarizes this same action: **“fellow-feeling.”** That’s a great word, one that deserves resurrecting in today’s vernacular, especially in the vernacular of today’s Christians. We should be a fellow-feeling people, with the capacity to feel joy with others when they have occasion for joy,

sorrow in times of sorrow,
and compassion in times
of need.

Our brothers and sisters
in the first century of the
modern age were fellow-
feeling folks. They
maintained an
atmosphere of sharing
and mutual concern,
providing for one
another's needs (Acts
2:44-46). Luke, our
inspired historian, tells
us, "*Now the multitude of
those who believed were
of one heart and one
soul*" (Acts 4:32), and that
none among them lacked
anything, because the
others all gave of what
they had (Acts 4:34).

This principle applied not
only to their material
needs, but to their
spiritual needs as well. A
Cypriot Levite named
Joseph not only
contributed his wealth,
selling a piece of property
and giving the proceeds to
the apostles to distribute,
but was also called
Barnabas — "*son of*

encouragement" — for his
efforts to edify the saints
(Acts 4:36).

The fact that many early
Christians actively
demonstrated their
empathy for others did
not exempt them all from
being reminded
repeatedly how important
it was that they continue
in this behavior. Paul
admonished the church in
Rome, "*Be kindly
affectionate to one
another with brotherly
love, in honor giving
preference to one
another; not lagging in
diligence, fervent in
spirit, serving the Lord;
rejoicing in hope, patient
in tribulation, continuing
steadfastly in prayer;
distributing to the needs
of the saints, given to
hospitality*" (Romans
12:10-13). Since the Holy
Spirit is not in the habit of
wasting words, we can be
certain that those Roman
saints needed that
instructional reminder,
even as we do.

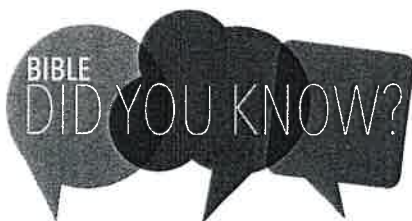
It's also no accident that when the apostle described genuine love to the Christians in Corinth, he did so using actions that define empathy: longsuffering, kindness, and unselfishness (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). If we truly love one another, we will exhibit the patience necessary to seek out each other's needs, and minister to them kindly and sacrificially (James 1:27).

Part of fostering fellow-feeling among Christians is recognizing that every saint has value. We are each different from the others, but we all have qualities and talents that are essential to the life of the body (1 Corinthians 12:20-23). In the physical world, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link; a wall is only as sturdy as its weakest brick. Therefore, for the entire church to be sound and whole, we each need to shore one another up, so that even the weakest

among us is made strong.

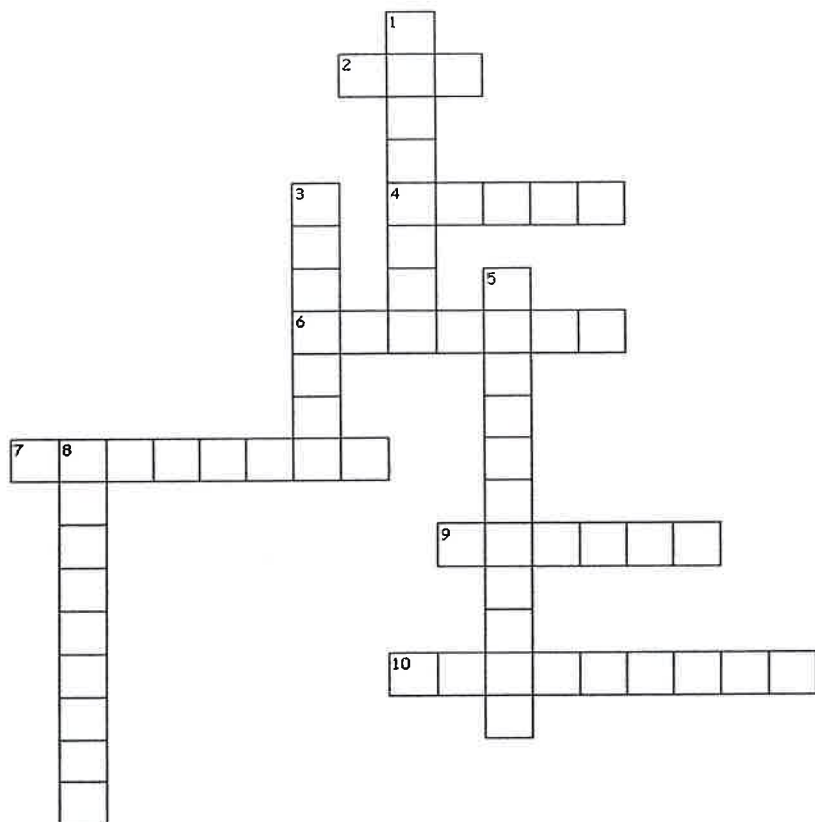
The Bible assures us that our God cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). That being true, we should care deeply for all those who are His — and show it!

— Michael D. Rankins



Paul paid tribute to Timothy's mother and grandmother for their influence of faith on the young evangelist. "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well,"
2 Tim. 1:3-5

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ACROSS

2. We are justified by faith in Christ and not by works of this. (Gal. 2:16)
4. In presence of Gentiles, Cephas began to hold himself ____ (Gal. 2:11-12)
6. Paul warned of those who wanted to ____ the gospel of Christ. (Gal. 1:7)
7. How we are to consider any who will distort the gospel. (Gal. 1:9)
9. Instead of Jerusalem Paul went here after his conversion. (Gal. 1:17)
10. Paul rebuked Cephas to save him from this condition. (Gal. 2:11)

DOWN

1. The hypocrisy of Cephas influenced this brother. (Gal. 2:13)
3. False brethren came not to bring liberty in Christ but this. (Gal. 2:4)
5. If Paul tried to please men he would not be this of Christ. (Gal. 1:10)
8. Paul had been this with Christ. (Gal. 2:20)