

Equipped to carry each other's burdens

Have you ever struggled to carry something heavy and have been so glad when someone has come along and offered to carry it for you? Perhaps they're stronger than you are, so you're quite relieved to hand over your heavy load to that person.

It's the same with the problems of life - they're like heavy burdens that can weigh us down and wear us out if we try to carry them on our own. The apostle Paul gives good advice when he tells us to "*carry each other's burdens*".¹ We're not meant to go through life on our own, struggling as best we can. As followers of Jesus Christ, God has put us in touch with other believers and each of us has the responsibility to help share the load that others might be carrying. This is especially true when someone is being crushed by a heavy burden that has descended on their life. Perhaps we want to point them to the verse that says, "*Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.*"² This is a great biblical principle but, if we're honest, there are times in our lives when the burden of worries and cares saps our energy to such an extent that we just don't have the strength to give them to God. It's like being pinned to the ground by a heavy weight and there seems no way out from under it. Ever been there? What can you do at times like this? *One thing is to admit the burden is too heavy for you and allow others to carry it for you.* An important way they can do this is by praying. Try to find one or two trusted friends who will commit to praying regularly for you throughout your time of difficulty. They don't need to know all the details, but they'll be talking to a God who does!

Maybe you don't have a heavy burden to carry at present. However, you could be the one who might help to carry the burden of someone else by praying for them. I reckon that, if we're going to pray for another person, we need to make sure we do this wholeheartedly and let our friend know we're doing this. Prayer, in itself, is powerful, but it's also a great encouragement for someone to *know* they are being prayed for regularly.

In addition to praying for them, what else could you do to help? Well, a lot depends on what the problem is. If it's financial, might you be in a position where you could give them money, even anonymously, or direct them to someone who could give them helpful financial advice? If the burden is an emotional one, could you offer a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on? When prayer and practice are combined, they go a long way to relieving a person's burdens.

Galatians 6:2 talks about fulfilling "*the law of Christ*" when we carry one another's burdens. What does this mean? Perhaps **John 13:34, 35** helps to answer the question. Here, Jesus gives a new command, or law, to his disciples - they are to love one another. This, he says, will prove to people that they really are his followers. I wonder how we're shaping up when it comes to fulfilling this law of Christ. Are we loving our Christian brothers and sisters by carrying their burdens? Let's not wait a moment longer, but get alongside someone today and carry their load!

¹ Galatians 6:2 (NLT)

² 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)