

*8 Ways to Cultivate  
Meaningful Relationships*

# Caring for One Another



Edward T. Welch

“Most Christians know we should care for one another. But few of us know how. Seasoned biblical counselor and author Ed Welch not only gifts us with the *how* but, like a great chef, serves it up in eight concise, biblically true, and richly wise courses. Each brief chapter can be read aloud to a group and is accompanied by heart-piercing, eye-opening discussion questions. This is a book that can shape the culture of our churches to be safe places of wise mutual care. I heartily recommend it!”

**Alfred J. Poirier**, Visiting Professor in Practical Theology,  
Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA; author, *The Peacemaking Pastor*

“Nearly every Christian has experienced awkwardness in the local church. At one time or another, we have felt ignored, misunderstood, or out of place. The church may be the body of Christ, but we don’t always function as well as we should. In *Caring for One Another*, Ed Welch gives us thoroughly biblical and entirely practical direction to facilitate more meaningful interactions in our churches. In the space of eight short lessons, we learn our need to move toward people and find ourselves equipped to reach out to them in loving and genuinely helpful ways. Whether you read this book alone or study it in a group, you will close the last page with renewed energy for building relationships in your church.”

**Megan Hill**, author, *Praying Together*; Editor, The Gospel Coalition; Editorial Board Member, *Christianity Today*

“One of God’s chosen ways to help people is through the care and concern of fellow Christians. In our busy world with its superficial relationships, many have abandoned this calling and left it to professionals to do the work ordinary Christians could be doing to help others. Through easy-to-follow practical guidelines, Ed Welch shows how we can remedy this and make our churches into caring communities. This kind of caring can be a means God uses not only to bless Christians but also to commend the Christian way to those outside the church.”

**Ajith Fernando**, Teaching Director, Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka; author, *The Call to Joy and Pain*

“This is a short book, but one that packs a powerful punch. Ed Welch has given us a user-friendly guide for our churches to grow together as we seek to better care for one another. I love that the lessons are meant to be read aloud and discussed among church members. I’m already envisioning various groups of people I can read this book with in our congregation. Buy this book. Better yet, buy a case of books to pass out in your church. And even better than that, get people within your church reading it together. The impact of this book could have far-reaching effects in our churches as we seek to love one another in a way that shines the spotlight on Christ.”

**Dave Furman**, Senior Pastor, Redeemer Church of Dubai;  
author, *Kiss the Wave* and *Being There*

“*Caring for One Another* is a concise guide for helping others. It contains gems of biblical wisdom and sound principles, encouraging readers to move toward others with all humility, to be personal and pray, and to sensitively talk about suffering and sin. I highly recommend this very helpful book to all Christians.”

**Siang-Yang Tan**, Professor of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary; Senior Pastor, First Evangelical Church Glendale, CA;  
author, *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective*

“Short, biblical, practical, wise—if you need help building meaningful relationships, Ed Welch will be your perfect guide. *Caring for One Another* will be a must-read for everyone I train.”

**Deepak Reju**, Pastor of Biblical Counseling and Family Ministry, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC; author, *The Pastor and Counseling* and *She’s Got the Wrong Guy*

“I need this book. My church needs this book. My local community needs my church to read this book. Ed Welch envisions a new kind of caring community that walks in dependence on the grace of God. With Christ-centered love and wisdom, he shows us what it looks like and how we can get there. I want this for my family, for my church, and for the glory of God. When it comes to caring for others, this is the first book I will reach for to stir my soul, shape my prayers, and train my church.”

**Ste Casey**, Course Tutor and Speaker, Biblical Counselling UK;  
Pastor, Speke Baptist Church, Liverpool, England

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Meaningful Relationships*

Edward T. Welch

 **CROSSWAY®**  
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# Preface

Our *calling* is to care for each other's souls. We want to bring our struggles to the Lord and to each other so that the church can be strengthened and the world can witness wisdom and love.

But since we have a long list of our own problems, we could easily think that care for others is best left to those who are more qualified. But the kingdom of God operates in ways we might not expect. Here, the humble and weak are the ones who do the heavy lifting of pastoral care:

[Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.  
(Eph. 4:11–13)

Shepherds and teachers do the work of ministry. They also train us to do the work of ministry. Apparently, the

*Preface*

Lord is pleased to use ordinary people, through seemingly ordinary acts of love, to be the prime contributors to the maturing of his people. If you have trusted in Jesus rather than yourself, and you feel weak and unqualified, then you are qualified. Then you are *called*.

The goal of these eight lessons is to further shape the culture of your church so that counseling and mutual care of souls become natural features of the body's everyday life. The lessons are short but dense with essential theology and teeming with possible applications. They are intended to be read aloud in a group (participants don't have to read anything beforehand).

## *Lesson 1*

# With All Humility

Our helpfulness—our care for souls—starts with our *need* for care. We need God, and we need other people. Maturity through dependence is our goal. As a way to put this humility to the test, we ask for prayer. This will contribute to a church culture that is less self-protective and more united.

Imagine—an interconnected group of people who entrust themselves to each other. You can speak of your pain, and someone responds with compassion and prayer. You can speak of your joys, and someone shares in them with you. You can even ask for help with sinful struggles, and someone prays with you, offers hope and encouragement from Scripture, and sticks with you until sin no longer seems to have the upper hand. There is openness, freedom, friendship, bearing burdens together, and giving

and receiving wisdom. No trite responses. And Jesus is throughout it all.

We want more of this.

As we come to Jesus, he has forgiven and washed us so that we can speak openly without shame, he has loved us so that we can love him and others freely, and he has given us wisdom and power from his Spirit so that we can help each other in ways that build up and give hope. In his honor and in his strength we want to grow into a wonderfully interdependent, wise, loving body of Christ—one in which we can help each other in times of trouble.

### **The Apostle Paul Makes Humility a Priority**

In Ephesians 3, Paul actually prayed that we would be this kind of community (vv. 14–21). He also taught us how to do it:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, *with all humility and gentleness, with patience*, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1–3)

Augustine wrote, “That first way [to truth] is humility; the second way is humility, and the third way is humility.”<sup>1</sup> If humility does not precede our wisdom and help, our efforts are meaningless. Paul, it seems, would agree. Life in Christ starts with humility.

Humility simply acknowledges our many sins and limitations, and it responds with, “I need Jesus, and I need

other people.” It is an attractive package that includes trust in God’s control, confidence in the Lord’s forgiveness and love, and an openness that comes not from having to *be* someone but from resting in Jesus. It turns out that the simple acknowledgment of our neediness and weakness opens a door to the grace of God where we find confidence, peace, security, wisdom, strength, and freedom in him.

### **Humility Leads to Prayer**

One way to put humility to work is this: ask someone to pray for you. God has established his kingdom on earth in such a way that we must ask for help. We ask the Lord for help, and we ask other people. Until we see him face-to-face, God works through his Spirit and his people.

It only *sounds* simple. It is one thing to ask the Lord for help. Even if our faith is especially weak, we have heard that he invites and hears our cries for help (Ps. 62:8), and we are willing to risk a little openness before him. It is something much different to ask a friend. Our pride resists being vulnerable. Even more, if you have ever confided in someone and received comments that were hurtful or less than supportive, you might have decided on the spot never to let that happen again, which means that you keep your troubles to yourself. This self-protective strategy might seem effective in the short run. It is not, however, how God created us to be with each other, so it will eventually lead to misery rather than safety. We opt instead for a better way. The process of asking for prayer is outlined below.

### ***1. Identify Trouble in Your Life***

Trouble is always knocking at the door. The list of troubles usually includes money, work, relationships, health, and matters specifically connected to our knowledge of Jesus and how to live for and with him.

### ***2. Connect a Particular Trouble with Scripture***

When you connect your troubles with Scripture, you are joining your life to the promises, graces, and commands of God. It takes time to develop this skill because there is so much Scripture, but you probably have the gist of what God says:

“Sometimes I find it hard to even pray for difficult things in my life. Would you pray that I know—deeply, in my heart—that God cares and invites me to pour out my heart to him?” (Ps. 62:8)

“I have been sick for a while and can get so discouraged. Could you pray that I would be able to turn quickly to Jesus when I feel especially miserable?” (2 Cor. 4:16–18)

“I have been snippy with my spouse over the last few weeks. Could you pray that I live with humility and gentleness as we try to talk about difficult things together?” (Eph. 4:1)

“I have been so frustrated with my daughter to the point where I want respect more than I want to be patient and show kindness to her. Could you pray for me?” (1 Cor. 13:4)

“My department manager has been critical and gruff recently. I don’t know how to even think about this. Do you have any ideas on how I could pray?” (Rom. 12:18)

If you don’t know how to pray, ask others to help you make the connections between your needs and God’s Word.

It is God’s will that we say “help” both to him and to others. As we do, we will take an important step toward being able to help others, since needy, humble helpers are the best helpers. And along the way, we will bless our community and induce others toward being needy, open, and vulnerable.

### **Discussion and Response**

1. Have you ever asked another person to pray for you?  
How did it go?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Practice making the connection between your needs and God’s promises. If possible, identify specific Scripture, but that isn’t necessary to begin. You could practice with your own needs or use scenarios such as these:
  - Health concerns
  - Financial fears
  - Relationship difficulties





**Imagine** . . . an interconnected group of people who entrust themselves to each other. You can speak of your pain, and someone responds with compassion and prayer. You can speak of your joys, and someone rejoices with you. You can ask for help with sinful struggles, and someone prays with you.

The goal of this book is that these meaningful relationships will become a natural part of daily life in your church. With short chapters and discussion questions meant to be read in a group setting, Ed Welch guides small groups through eight lessons that show what it looks like when ordinary, needy people care for other ordinary, needy people in everyday life.

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