

“AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?”

A study of our responsibilities toward one another

Prepared by

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LESSON #1: PLACING MY BROTHER AHEAD OF MYSELF

1. Consider Philippians 2:3-4. What do these verses teach concerning my relationships with others?
2. Romans 12:10 teaches: "In honour preferring one another." Compare other translations. What do you think this phrase means?
3. What lesson was Jesus trying to teach the apostles in John 13:3-17?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. To what is Paul comparing the church in this passage?
What lessons is he trying to teach us?
5. Read James 3:13-18 and answer the following questions:
 - a. What is a wise and knowledgeable man encouraged to do?
 - b. What attitudes characterize earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom?
 - c. What attitudes characterize the wisdom from above?
6. **Thought Question:** List some situations in the service of the Lord in which I ought to place my brother ahead of myself.
7. **Thought Question:** What qualities of character will bring me to place my brother ahead of myself?
8. To what extent were Aquila and Priscilla willing to go in placing their brother ahead of themselves, according to Romans 16:3-4?
9. Consider 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Which of the qualities listed here indicate that love will bring one to place others ahead of himself?

LESSON #2: RESTORING MY BROTHER

1. According to Galatians 6:1, who is to restore a wayward brother?
With what kind of spirit is he to do this work?

2. What two things are accomplished when an erring brother is converted, according to James 5:19-20?

3. Read the story of the prodigal son as recorded in Luke 15:11-32 and answer the following questions:
 - a. What steps were involved in the younger brother's return to his father? **Think!**

 - b. How did the father demonstrate his joy in seeing him return?

 - c. What attitudes caused the older son to reject his brother?

4. Read Acts 8:18-24. What steps did Peter take in restoring Simon?

5. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-14. Discuss briefly the wisdom Nathan demonstrated in restoring David.

6. Consider Jude 1:22-23. Do we approach all sinners in the same way?

Discuss this.

7. **Thought Question:** Make a list of hindrances that keep us from trying to restore our brothers and sisters who fall back into sin.

8. According to 2 Peter 2:20-22 and Hebrews 10:38-39, what is the position of one who falls back?

Does such a person need to be restored?

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9. What are some of the causes of people falling away?

Is it important that we understand why one has fallen away as we try to restore him or her?

10. **Thought Question:** What are some qualities you must possess if you are to be active in restoring the wayward?

11. **Challenge for the week:** Each person in this class is to try to restore some wayward Christian this week! What steps must you take in trying to do this?

LESSON #3: ENCOURAGING MY BROTHER

1. According to 2 Timothy 1:16-18, what were some things Onesiphorus had done to encourage Paul?
2. Read 1 Kings 19:1-18. Make a list of things God did in lifting Elijah out of discouragement.
3. If you have several translations of the scriptures, read 1 Thess. 5:14 in various translations, and then summarize in your own words what this verse teaches.
4. **Thought Question:** Make a list of things that tend to cause discouragement in a Christian's life.
5. **Thought Question:** What are some things that I might do to discourage a brother or sister?
6. **Thought Question:** What are some things that I can do to encourage a brother or sister?
7. Commending people when they do well is one of the best ways of encouraging them. List several occasions in which Jesus commended others. Give the passages that tell of His doing so.
8. Barnabas was given the name "son of encouragement" by the apostles. After reading Acts 9:26-27; Acts 11:22-26; and Acts 15:36-40, discuss what he did to encourage his brethren.
9. **Thought Question:** What are some of the basic qualities that one must possess if he is to be successful in encouraging others?

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10. We rarely accomplish anything without well defined goals. What goals should we be striving for as we encourage one another?

What is the ultimate goal? Consider Hebrews 10:24; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 3:13-17.

LESSON #4: PRAYING FOR MY BROTHER

1. Read Acts 12:1-12. Under what circumstances were Christians praying for Peter?

Do you think Peter was aware of their praying for him? Give reason for your answer.

2. Read Luke 22:31-32. For whom had Jesus prayed?

What was His request concerning this person?

3. According to 2 Thess. 3:1-2, for what things did Paul ask the Thessalonians to pray?

4. James 5:13-16 is a passage that encourages prayer. What are some circumstances that should prompt Christians to pray for their brethren as given in this passage?

5. **Thought Question:** It has been said, "It is difficult to continue feeling ill will toward a person for whom you are fervently praying every day." Do you agree?

Discuss this.

6. **Thought Question:** What are some of the hindrances to our praying as we ought?

7. **Thought Question:** When we do pray, what are hindrances to our praying for our brothers and sisters as we ought?

8. **Thought Question:** What are some steps that can be taken to remove these hindrances?

9. Paul must have spent a great amount of time in prayer. Consider the first few verses of each of Paul's epistles, and make a list of those for whom Paul prayed continually.

10. What is said of the value of prayer in James 5:16?

LESSON #5: BEING BENEVOLENT TOWARD MY BROTHER

1. Consider Galatians 6:10. Is my own personal benevolence to be limited to helping other Christians?

To whom should I give priority?

2. Consider Acts 2:44-45 and Acts 4:32-35. List a few expressions that indicate the degree of sacrifice that was shown in the benevolence of the Christians in Jerusalem.

3. Read Acts 5:1-11. What problem arose out of this benevolent work?

What specific sin were Ananias and Sapphira guilty of?

4. From this same passage show that the sacrifices being made were voluntary.

5. According to Matthew 25:31-46, how will one’s benevolent work affect his standing in judgment?

6. **Thought Question:** Make a list of excuses that one might offer for not helping a brother in need.

7. **Thought Question:** Are there any circumstances in which a brother in need ought not to be helped?

Discuss this. Find scriptures to support your answer.

8. **Thought Question:** What harm could be done to a brother if we helped him when he was unworthy of our help?

9. **Thought question:** Someone has said, “We help a brother most when we help him to help himself.” Do you agree with this statement?

Discuss your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing.

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10. Many feel that they are not in financial position to help others. What does Ephesians 4:28 teach concerning this?

What other considerations should be given before we give this as a reason for not being benevolent?

LESSON # 6: SHOWING PATIENCE TOWARD MY BROTHER

1. In Galatians 5:22-23 the New American Standard Version gives "patience" as a fruit of the Spirit. What word is found in other versions instead of "patience"?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. List several expressions found in these verses that indicate that love will lead one to be patient with his brother.

3. **Discussion Question:** Read John 7:24. Is all judging sinful?

What then is the meaning of Matthew 7:1? In answering, consider the context of the verse.

What does this have to do with patience toward a brother?

4. **Thought Question:** List some circumstances that require patience toward others.

5. **Thought Question:** It is especially important that we be patient toward new converts. Do you agree?

Give reason for your answer.

6. **Thought Question:** Jesus is the greatest example of patience toward others. List some actions on the part of His apostles that must have tested His patience.

7. What is taught in Matthew 18:21-22 that would require patience on one's part?

8. What is said of God's patience toward man in 2 Peter 3:9?

Will His patience one day end?

How are we to look upon the Lord's longsuffering according to 2 Peter 3:15?

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9. **Thought Question:** Can a person be too patient in his dealings with a brother?

Give reason for your answer.

10. Any strong Christian can look back and see moments in his own conversion and spiritual development that required patience on the part of those working with him. In some instances he or she can even remember some specific person whose patience especially stood out. Write briefly of this in your life. (Any discussion in class will be voluntary)

LESSON #7: EXTENDING HOSPITALITY TO MY BROTHER

1. What extra effort did the Shunammite couple go to in order to extend hospitality to Elisha, according to 2 Kings 4:8-17?
2. What blessing (or blessings) did they receive as a result?
3. The little book of 3 John is written to commend Gaius for hospitality he had extended. What pressure had Gaius faced according to verses 9-10?
4. What attitude are we not to have as we extend hospitality, according to 1 Peter 4:9?

What does this mean?

5. **Thought Question:** List some of the occasions found in the scriptures when hospitality was extended.
6. **Thought Question:** It takes cooperation between husband and wife for a couple to be hospitable. Do you agree?

Discuss this.

7. What are some of the hindrances to hospitality?
8. What are some of the blessings enjoyed by hospitable people?
9. Read 2 John 1:9-11. Under what conditions should one not extend hospitality?
10. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What in these verses suggests a connection between being hospitable and eternal salvation?

LESSON #8: REJOICING AND WEEPING WITH MY BROTHER

1. What are Christians taught to do in Romans 12:15?
2. Consider John 11:32-35. On what occasion did Jesus weep with those who wept?
3. Consider Acts 15:2-3. What report caused the brethren in Phoenicia and Samaria to rejoice with Paul and Barnabas?
4. **Thought Question:** List several circumstances that bring sadness to our brothers and sisters.
5. **Thought Question:** What are some hindrances to our truly sharing their sadness?
6. What are some ways we can communicate our sympathy?
Can you think of some Bible examples?
7. **Thought Question:** List several circumstances that cause our brothers and sisters to rejoice.
8. **Thought Question:** What are some hindrances to our truly sharing their joy?
9. Which do **you** think is easier, rejoicing with those who rejoice or weeping with those who weep? Explain.
10. In Luke 15:21-32 we read of an occasion when one refused to rejoice with another. What was the occasion?

What attitudes prevented him from rejoicing?

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11. Are there occasions when we ought not to rejoice with others or weep with others? Explain.

12. What steps can we take to improve our rejoicing and weeping with others?

LESSON # 9: FORGIVING MY BROTHER

1. Consider Matt. 6:14-15. Why is it so important that we be forgiving of one another?
2. To what extent should we be forgiving, according to Matt. 18:21-22?
3. Briefly summarize the parable of Matt. 18:23-35.

4. What do we mean by the term, "forgiving my brother"?

How does one treat another whom he has forgiven?

5. The real test of forgiveness comes, not so much when a brother has sinned in some general way, but when he has sinned so as to cause me personal harm and suffering. Do you agree?

Discuss this.

6. Consider Luke 17:3-4. Is one to forgive another whether he seeks forgiveness or not?

If your answer is "no", what attitudes is he to have toward the person who has wronged him?

7. **Thought Question:** What are some consequences of an unforgiving spirit? (In answering, you might consider the elder brother of Luke 15:25-32)
8. Consider 2 Cor. 2:6-11. What are some dangers that threaten a brother who does not feel that he has been forgiven by his fellow-Christians?
9. **Thought Question:** List some qualities of character that will help us to be forgiving toward our brothers and sisters.

LESSON #10: DEALING WITH MY BROTHER WITH IMPARTIALITY

1. Consider James 2:1-4. What picture does James give of partiality among brethren?
2. What instruction does Paul give Timothy in regards to partiality in 1 Tim. 5:21?

In what context does this verse appear?

3. How could partiality affect a church's choice of elders and deacons?
4. In what other actions must we avoid partiality?
5. **Thought Question:** Are we saying in this study that a person cannot have closer friendships with some in the church than with others? Discuss this.

6. What three men seemed to form an "inner circle" among the apostles?

Can you think of occasions when Jesus took them with Him rather than all the twelve?

Was Jesus guilty of partiality? Explain this.

7. What is said of God, in Romans 2:11?
8. Considering the above passages and thoughts, write a brief paragraph describing the actions of one who deals with his brother with impartiality.

LESSON #11: DEALING WITH MY UNBROTHERLY BROTHER

We have little trouble being brotherly toward those who are brotherly toward us. The real test of our attitudes comes when our brother is thoughtless or when he acts in an unbrotherly way.

1. According to Matthew 18:15-17, what is to be one's actions if a brother sins against him?
2. Does this mean that he ought to "make it an issue" every time his feelings are hurt or someone has acted thoughtlessly toward him? Discuss this.
3. It is often said that "we ought to place the very best interpretation upon another person's words or actions." Do you agree with this?

How will this affect one's attitude toward another who may have acted thoughtlessly?

4. What do **you** think is the meaning of 1 Peter 4:8?
5. What is one never to do when another treats him wrongfully, according to 1 Thess. 5:15?
6. What is one to do, according to Matt. 5:44?
7. List some basic qualities that will enable one to act brotherly toward an unbrotherly brother.
8. Consider 2 Tim. 4:16-17. What was Paul's attitude when certain brethren let him down?
9. Read 1 Cor. 13:4-8. Which of these characteristics of love will enable one to act properly toward an unbrotherly brother?

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10. All of us have probably acted in an unbrotherly way at times. Can you think of an occasion when a wronged brother's reaction helped you to see your mistake?

What did that person do? (Any discussion in class will be on a voluntary basis)

LESSON #12: GIVING NO OCCASION TO MY BROTHER TO SIN

1. Consider 1 Cor. 5:5. According to the latter part of this verse, what should be one's major concern for any brother?

2. Read Romans, chapter 14, and answer the following questions:
 - a. According to verses 2 and 5 what differences had arisen among these brethren?

 - b. According to verses 14 and 23, what is said of the person who considers meat to be "unclean" and doubts that he should eat meat?

 - c. What should be the actions of others in relation to that brother, according to verses 13-15?

3. How does Jesus express the seriousness of causing another to stumble in Matthew 18:6-7?

4. What is said about God's concern for such "little ones" in Matt. 18:11-14?

5. People are sometimes heard to say, "I don't care what others think of my actions." Discuss this statement in light of this study.

6. **Thought Question:** Does this mean that I must refrain from doing **anything** that someone might think is wrong?

What must I refrain from doing, according to the above passages?

7. **Thought Question:** There are some things that are right in and of themselves but become wrong under certain circumstances. Do you agree?

Make a list of some of these circumstances.

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8. Consider I Cor. 10:31-33. What consideration must we give in everything we do?

How does Paul describe his own actions along these lines?

LESSON #13: WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR MY BROTHER

1. Consider John 15:13. How does one show the greatest degree of love?
2. What should one be willing to do, according to I John 3:16?
3. What is said of Priscilla and Aquila along this line in Romans 16:3-4?
4. Consider Philippians 2:30. For what purpose was Epaphroditus willing to risk his life?
5. What was Paul willing to do for the Philippians, according to Philippians 2:17?

What would be his feelings if such were to come to pass?

6. What qualities would a person have to have to make this supreme sacrifice for his brother?
7. **Facing realities:** Can you name ten Christians for whom you would be willing to die? (There will be only a general discussion of this question in class. No names will be called. But each person should face this question seriously.)
8. **Thought Question:** If you cannot name Christians for whom you would be willing to die, why is this the case?

Why would you be unwilling to die for another?

9. **Thought Question:** You may be thinking that there are legitimate reasons why you would not die for another. If this is the case, make a list of such legitimate reasons; then make a list of reasons why one would be unwilling to die for another that are not legitimate.

Legitimate

Not legitimate

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10. We have now studied thirteen lessons on the subject, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"
Write a short paragraph stating steps you can take to build better relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ.