

“Together” – Week 3

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - "Together in Life"

Week 3 of our “Together” series - “Together in Life” - moves from what the early church believed to how they actually lived. Acts 2:42-47 has framed this whole series: a church whose connection in Christ spilled over into connection in life – shared meals, shared prayers, shared needs. This Sunday’s sermon asked the harder question: Why does that kind of life feel so rare for us? Too often the honest answer to “How are you doing?” gets hidden behind two words: “I’m fine.” Before Paul tells the Galatians how to carry one another, he names what pulls community apart. Conceit – an empty, self-focused glory – shows up two ways: provoking one another to prove who is better, and envying one another because we suspect someone else is better. The Gospel flips that. Because Christ served us, we consider others ahead of ourselves. We aim to serve others as Christ served us; sacrificially. From there, Galatians 6:1-3 calls believers to be gentle, restoring accountability – truth and tenderness in the same conversation – and to bearing one another’s burdens, which fulfills the law of Christ. The sermon names pride as the culprit that keeps us from both carrying burdens and sharing them. Hebrews 10:23-25 adds that we gather not only to receive but to consider how to stir one another toward love and good works. The invitation is simple, but it does require action: choose one or two trustworthy believers, let yourself be known, help carry someone’s burden, and follow up.

Scripture - Acts 2:42-47; Galatians 5:25-6:3; Hebrews 10:23-25 (ESV)

Acts 2:42-47 - 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Galatian 5:25-6:3 - 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Hebrews 10:23-25 - 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Daily Reflection Questions (Use T.R.U.T.H. below)

DAY 1 | ACTS 2:42-47 – CONNECTED IN CHRIST, CONNECTED IN LIFE. Verse 42 says they “devoted themselves” to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Of those four, which is most present in your life right now – and which is most missing? Verse 46 says they broke bread “in their homes” with “glad and generous hearts.” When was the last time someone from church sat at your table – and who could you invite this month?

DAY 2 | PHILIPPIANS 2:3-8 – YOU > ME. Verse 3 says to “count others more significant than yourselves.” In which relationship – spouse, child, coworker, friend – is it hardest for you to put someone else’s needs first right now, and why? Verse 7 says Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant.” What is one specific act of service you could do this week for a family member that no one will notice or thank you for?

DAY 3 | PSALM 32:1-5 – THE COST OF KEEPING SILENT. Verse 3 says, “when I kept silent, my bones wasted away.” Where do you notice the weight of something you have been keeping to yourself – in your sleep, your temper, your energy, your patience at home?

DAY 4 | ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12 – TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE. Verse 10 says, “woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up.” If you stumbled spiritually this week, who would notice – and who would come? Verse 12 says “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Who are the one or two believers you could ask to be part of that cord with you – and what has kept you from asking?

DAY 5 | PROVERBS 27:5-6, 17 – FAITHFUL WOUNDS AND SHARP IRON. Verse 6 says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” Think of a time someone told you a hard truth in love. How did you respond then – and how would you respond today? Verse 17 says “iron sharpens iron.” Who in your small group or circle of friends sharpens you – and who has given you permission to sharpen them?

Daily Real Time with God (T.R.U.T.H)

T TALK TO GOD IN PRAYER- Start by asking God to help you understand the text and prepare your heart.

R READ THE BIBLICAL TEXT- Read the initial text, then read it again to look for key words and context clarity.

U UNDERSTAND THE TEXT - Explore who wrote the book and their audience, examine verses around the text, or look up key words to better understand their meaning. Ask questions like: Is there a sin to avoid? A promise to claim? A command to obey? What does it teach about God?

T THINK ABOUT AND APPLY THE TEXT- How does this verse change the way you live? Is there an application or choice you need to make to live or think differently?

H HONOR GOD IN PRAYER- Pray through God's Honor/Adoration, God's Kingdom/Surrender, God's Provision/Gratitude, God's Forgiveness/Confession, and God's Power/Protection (see Matthew 6:5-15).

Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/>
- <https://gospelcoach.ai/>
- <https://carm.org/>

Key Thoughts

From "I'm Fine" to Together in Life

Every Sunday someone asks, "How are you doing?" And most of us answer the same way: "I'm fine." The sermon pointed out what that phrase often really means:

- Please don't ask follow-up questions.
- I don't want to be a burden.
- I know you don't have time for an honest answer.
- I am surviving, not thriving.

A faithful volunteer named Jim insisted he was "totally fine" – until a pastor gently asked again. Then it came out: a sick wife, a car broken down on the highway, a speeding ticket on the way to drive a golf cart, and two hours of sleep. Jim's confession: F.I.N.E. means Faking It, Not Explaining. Like Jim, many of us wear that mask because pride says we must look like we have it all together.

"Being together in Christ should lead us to being together in life." – Pastor Michael Bowers

Two commitments belong together: Pursuing Godly Accountability (Galatians 6:1-3) and Building Gospel Community (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:23-25). Relationships give accountability a foundation of trust. Accountability makes relationships places of spiritual growth.

What Undermines Togetherness (Galatians 5:25-26)

Before Paul tells us how to carry each other, he names what tears us apart: conceit – literally "empty of honor" or "vain glory."

Our conduct toward others is shaped by our opinion of ourselves. Conceit shows up two ways:

- Provoking – challenging others to prove we are better. It is a fight to be right rather than a desire to bear the Spirit's fruit. (Put two men and anything resembling a ball at a cookout, and a competition will break out.)
- Envy – "I want what you have, and if I can't have it, I'll undermine your happiness."

Both run against the Gospel. Christ's example was not rivalry but service. He wasn't the athlete pounding his chest – He was the one who was pounded for our sin.

"You are a person of importance in your own right (because God made you in His own image and Christ died for you) and it is my joy and privilege to serve you." – John Stott, The Message of Galatians

Key Thoughts

Because of the Gospel, You > Me. Want to transform your marriage, your parenting, your relationships? You > me. (**Note on this point: Someone in a controlling or abusive marriage could hear “consider your needs over mine” as a call to stay silent and absorb harm. Please understand that what we are speaking of here is Christlike sacrifice in serving and caring for others. You > me does not mean submitting to continual mistreatment or abuse.)

Godly Accountability: Close Enough to Help (Galatians 6:1).

To have accountability, you have to let someone get close enough to help you. Paul’s goal is restoration – the word means to mend, to reset a bone. No loving parent looks at a broken arm and says, “Leave it and hope for the best.” Godly accountability brings truth and tenderness into the same conversation.

- Don’t confuse tenderness with timidity. We speak truth because sin harms people.
- Check your aim. Restoration seeks healing, not someone’s downfall. Legalism turns us into private investigators keeping score – “Me 1, You 0” – and that is bondage, not freedom.
- Keep watch on yourself. The one restoring is vulnerable to temptation too.

Accountability is not one person with all the answers and the other with all the problems. We need the humility to say both, “I’m concerned about what I see in your life,” and, “Here is where I’m struggling in mine.” Real accountability moves past “Pray for me” to honest specifics:

- I have stopped praying because I am disappointed with God.
- I keep rehearsing what someone did – keeping score instead of forgiving.
- I am looking at things online that feed sinful desires. Check on me more often.

You don’t need to share every detail with everyone. You do need one or two trustworthy believers who will protect your confidence, open Scripture with you, and help you take the next faithful step.

Bearing Burdens and the Problem of Pride (Galatians 6:2-3).

Bearing one another’s burdens fulfills the law of Christ – to love one another.

Some burdens are grief, illness, exhaustion, or family responsibilities. Others are temptation, the consequences of sin, or the hard work of repentance.

Accountability asks hard questions, but it also stays to help with the answers – sometimes with a meal, sometimes by sitting through tears.

“Burdens cannot be carried by imaginary friends.” – Pastor Michael Bowers

Key Thoughts

The culprit behind both refusing to carry and refusing to share is pride. Verse 3 is Paul's uppercut: if you think you're too good to carry someone's burden – or too good to let someone carry yours – you are deceiving yourself.

Consistency Builds Trust

Trust grows through repeated, ordinary moments: a meal, a phone call, a walk, a prayer after a hard day.

Group meetings start relationships, but they need room to grow outside the walls – at work, on the ball fields, around the table.

What tears us apart: isolation, pride, comparison, and more time with imaginary friends online than real ones in front of us.

With consistency, we earn permission to ask:

- Where have you seen God at work this week?
- Where are you facing temptation?
- How can I pray for you specifically?

Then we listen, remember, and follow up. And we never confess to earn a place in God's family. Through faith in Jesus, we already belong.

Consider One Another (Hebrews 10:23-25)

Notice the word consider. The focus is not on what I receive from the gathering but on what I can give to it. Imagine the believer who finally says, "I'm not fine. Could we talk?" That conversation may become the beginning of confession, prayer, practical help, and renewed obedience. This week, take three steps:

- Choose one or two trustworthy believers and ask them to meet for prayer and honest conversation.
- Share one specific area where you need to grow – clear enough that they can help.
- Agree on a next step and a time to follow up.

"Let yourself be known. Help carry someone's burden. Encourage their faith. Take the next step together." – Pastor Michael Bowers

G.R.A.C.E Questions

ICE BREAKER: What is the most ridiculous thing you have ever turned into a competition? (Who can skip a rock the farthest at the lake, who finishes their plate first at the cookout, who gets to the front seat of the car first – go.)

G – GIVE YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST - Surrender, both initially and daily.

- The sermon said that because Jesus bore our sin at the cross, we can stop pretending we have no need. How does knowing you already belong to God's family change how honest you are willing to be about where you are really struggling?
- Conceit means "empty glory" – living for our own image. Where are you most tempted to protect your image in front of your family or your small group, and what would surrendering that look like this week?

R – REAL TIME WITH GOD - Bible reading, prayer, scripture memory, journaling

- The sermon said "I need to pray more" is too general for anyone to help with. If you were completely honest with God about your prayer life right now, what specific sentence would you say to Him?
- One follow-up question the sermon offered was, "What is God teaching you through His Word?" If someone in your group asked you that tonight, what would you honestly answer – and what does your answer tell you?

A – ACT IN OBEDIENCE - Following through on what God is teaching

- The sermon warned us not to confuse tenderness with timidity. Is there a friend, family member, or coworker you have watched drift while you stayed silent? What would a gentle, restoring conversation with them actually sound like?
- Paul says, "Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted." Before you speak into someone else's life, what in your own heart needs examining first – a need to be right, a quiet scorecard, or a temptation of your own?

C – COMMIT TO COMMUNITY - Accountability, discipleship, doing life together

- Who has permission to ask you a follow-up question when you say "I'm fine"? If the honest answer is no one, who in this small group or at Rich Fork could become that person? (Accountability of this nature is best when shared with the same gender.)
- The sermon admitted that sharing burdens is often harder than carrying them. Which is harder for you – and what is one burden you could let someone in this group help you carry before we meet again?

E – ENGAGE YOUR WORLD - Stewardship of your life, influence, and mission

- Hebrews 10:24 tells us to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Who is one neighbor or coworker who seems to be living "I'm fine" – and what would a meal, a phone call, or a walk with them look like this month?
- Most people around us are surrounded by online "friends" and still feel alone. What might it say to a watching coworker or neighbor if they saw you carrying someone's burden in a practical, ordinary way?

"Burdens cannot be carried by imaginary friends."