

INTRODUCTION

On my mission trips to China, I've noticed the standard of living keeps rising. More Chinese people are driving cars, and because of American fast food, they are getting overweight as well. But there is one thing that hasn't changed yet—the main mean of transportation and delivery is still the bicycle. And inside the cities I've seen men on bicycles carrying loads weighing hundreds of pounds. You wonder how they loaded that burden on the bike and how they are even moving it. Whenever I see one of those heavy bike burdens, I always think it's a picture-parable of most Americans. We aren't carrying a visible load of cargo on our backs. But most Americans are carrying a crushing weight of invisible burdens.

Everybody has burdens. Not everyone has wealth, but everyone has burdens. Not everyone has health, but everyone has burdens. Not everyone has talent, but everyone has burdens. At this moment you may be carrying family burdens, financial burdens, or physical burdens. You may be struggling under a vocational burdens or an emotional burden. Emotional, physical, and relational burdens are a part of life. If you're not carrying any kind of a burden today, then you're free to leave and get an early lunch. But for the rest of us—me included—we need to see what God's Word says about this.

Galatians 6:2-5. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load. Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."

Now we're reading this passage from the New International Version, but I grew up reading the King James Version. In the KJV verse 2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens." And verse 5 says, "Every man must bear his own burden."

That can be confusing. In fact, during my senior year in high school I was on fire for the Lord. I was already known as a preacher and many people called me that just to make fun of me. I had a classmate named Steve who didn't care for my faith or the Bible. Steve was always ridiculing me saying the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions. So one day I handed him my Bible and said, "Find me one mistake or contradiction." I thought that would shut him up. But to my surprise he turned to Galatians 6 and he read those two verses. He said, "See! In verse two it says, 'Bear ye one another's burdens.' But then in verse 5 it says, 'Every man must bear his own burden.' Which one is it? I guess God can't make up His mind."

I wish this story had a good ending, and that I gave him some clever reply to defeat his logic. But the truth is I was a little shocked myself. That seemed like a glaring contradiction to me. There were some other guys standing around and they join in laughing with Steve because the "preacher" had been shot down.

So later when I got to college, and started learning to read Greek, the original language of the New Testament, I was glad to finally learn the answer to Steve's taunt. There are two totally different words used in verse 2 and verse 5. The word for burden in verse 2 is *baros*, which

means a crushing weight, like being trapped under the rubble of a building after an earthquake. The word in verse 5 is *portos*, which was used to describe a soldier's backpack.

With that background, I want to talk about how to handle burdens; I want to mention three kinds of burdens. There is a kind of burdens we share; a kind of burden we bear; and a kind of burden we wear.

1. A BURDEN TO SHARE—THE PAIN OF OTHERS

Verse 2 says, "Carry each other's burdens (crushing weight), and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

What is the law of Christ? In the Old Testament there are over 600 laws, and when you add the regulations of the Talmud that meant a good Jew had to remember several thousand laws and rules. But Jesus made it simple for us. There is only ONE law of Christ. If you don't know what it is, just turn one back Galatians 5:14, "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" When you love someone you are willing to share his or her burdens.

The other day I saw a pickup truck stalled near a busy intersection. The driver had gotten out and was trying to push the pickup off the road to get it out of traffic. He wasn't able to push it because there was a slight incline. So without hesitating, I pulled my car to the shoulder, put on the flashers and jumped out and started helping him push his truck. One more guy helped, so the driver could get in and steer the truck off the road. I asked him if he needed a ride and he indicated he had a cell phone to call someone. He said, "Thanks a lot!" I said, "Happy to help. I did it in the name of Jesus." I don't know if I'll ever see that guy again, but he might remember someone who helped him with a burden in the name of Jesus.

You can see some heavy burdens, most of them are invisible. In Greek mythology there is a story about King Sisyphus who was assigned to the underworld for his treachery. But Sisyphus tricked the god of death, Hades, and escaped his chains in the underworld. For his added trickery, Zeus assigned Sisyphus the impossible task of rolling a gigantic boulder up a steep hill. But whenever Sisyphus got the massive stone near the top of the slope, it would always roll back down and he had to start over. So a Sisyphean task is considered one where someone is frustrated because they toil at a task they can never finish.

There are people all around us who are crushed under a Sisyphean existence of trying to bear a crushing weight all alone. The Bible says, "A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14) There are burdens in life that are like the rock Sisyphus was trying to roll up the hill. We keep trying and they keep crushing us. Wouldn't it have been a good story if someone had come along and helped Sisyphus with his burden? It never would have made Greek Mythology, but Sisyphus would have been happier!

What are some of the crushing burdens people are carrying? One of the heaviest is grief. When a loved one dies, there is a pain in your heart like nothing else. We're here to share the pain with you. Our church is full of wonderful widows who know what it's like to lose a husband. When I

go to visit a woman whose husband has died, I can only say, "I'm so sorry." But when one our widows in our Widows in Need Ministry goes and develops a relationship with them, they're saying, "I know exactly how you feel. I've been there. It's tough. Let me share this load with you." Those of you who have gone through pain are better equipped to share the load of those who are burdened.

George W. Truett was the pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas for many years. He wrote that once he tried to minister to a young mother in his church whose baby had died. He tried to comfort the woman, but he was unable to help her. Then he remembered another lady in the church who had been through the same thing. He enlisted her help and she did more in five minutes to share her load than he could have ever done.

Divorce is another crushing burden. There are thousands of people in our community who wish they were still married, but for a variety of reasons their marriage fell apart. That's a devastating burden. That's why we have a Divorce Recovery Ministry at Green Acres so people who've gone through the pain you're facing can help you carry the load.

The problem is many people aren't willing to admit they need help. Like the Chinese who carry huge loads on their bicycles, you think, "I can relate to that!" But you don't want to share it with anyone. Somewhere along the way Christians have adopted the idea that we should be able to handle every crisis of life by ourselves. In fact, you'll hear people say, "Oh, I don't want to be a burden to you." You think you just need to keep your chin up and push through, but what you need to do is to put your head down in prayer and ask for help.

A couple of years ago, Christian singer Mandisa was here in concert. I got to meet her on the afternoon of her concert and gave her one of my books entitled, *No That's Not in the Bible*. She later said she was thumbing through it before the concert and came across the chapter that says, "God Won't Put More on You than You Can Bear—No, that's not in the Bible." Mandisa said when she read that she said, "Oh yes, the Bible DOES say that! I use that very phrase at most of my concerts!" So in the hour or so before she sang, she read that chapter and searched her Bible and that night she said, "I was wrong. The Bible never says that God won't put more on you than you can bear." She came to realize God will sometimes allow you to suffer such unbearable pain that you are FORCED to cry for help. You're driven to your knees to cry out to Jesus and driven to others to ask for help.

Will you look around you and look for people who need you to share their burden? You may be thinking, "I've got my own burdens!" Well, I know it doesn't make sense, but when you start thinking about sharing the burdens of others, your own burdens get lighter!

William and Catherine Booth founded the Salvation Army in 1865 in England. Its original name was the London Christian Mission. From the beginning, the goal of the Salvation Army was to demonstrate the gospel to the lowest and the least—and they're still doing that. When General Booth was sick and dying he was invited to address a large convention of Army workers and volunteers. When it was determined he was unable to attend, he was asked to send a greeting instead. Between the salutation and the signature, the telegram contained only one word:

To the delegates of the Salvation Army convention:
Others.
General William Booth

The Christian life isn’t about me—it’s about Jesus and others. And once you get the Jesus part right, you’ll be consumed by loving others.

2. A BURDEN TO BEAR ALONE—MY RESPONSIBILITIES

“Each one should carry his own load (soldier’s backpack).” There is a burden that we should share, but there’s also a burden that we must bear alone.

The word for “burden” or “load” here was used to describe a soldier’s backpack. To illustrate this, I invited one of our military members to show us what it’s like to carry a fully loaded military pack. This is Greg Winters, a member of the U.S. Navy.

I have several questions for Greg. First, how much does that pack weigh? (65 pounds). Who packed it? (You did) When you were out on maneuvers did someone else carry your pack, or do you carry it? (I carry it). So what’s in the pack? (essentials for combat and survival). Greg, when you were out on maneuvers, did you ever think about carrying a couple of bricks in there? (too heavy –not necessary) So, what would have happened if you had said to your CO, “I’m tired of carrying this backpack, I’m going to just lay it down and leave it?” (No, don’t tell me what he would say, we have children present!)

Let me illustrate the difference between the burden we share in verse two and the burden we bear alone in verse 5. Imagine we’re on a hike in the mountains. Everyone is carrying his own backpack. What if I said, “Hey, I’m getting a little tired, and my backpack is too heavy. Will you carry my backpack?” Now unless you’re very strong or very gullible you’re going to say, “You carry your own backpack. I’ve got my backpack to carry. If yours is too heavy, it’s your fault because you packed it!” You’re not expected to carry mine and I’m not going to carry yours.

But let’s imagine a few hundred yards up the trail we hear a rockslide and as we run up we see one of the hikers has fallen and a huge boulder is resting on his leg. He’s pushing as hard as he can, but the boulder isn’t moving. We’re all going to gather around and add our combined strength to remove that boulder. That boulder represents the kind of crushing weight that people find themselves under and we need to share that load. But the backpack represents our own responsibilities. I like the way *The Message* paraphrases Galatians 6:5, “Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.”

For instance there are things I can’t do for you and you can’t do for me. You can’t worship for me, and I can’t worship for you. I can’t receive Christ for you and you can’t receive Christ for me. I can pray FOR you, meaning I lift you up in prayer, but I can’t pray as your substitute pray-er and you can’t pray as my substitute—it’s in our own backpack. And although you may realize it, I can’t serve the Lord for you. Through the years there has been the attitude that we hire a staff of super Christians, and these seminary trained experts serve the Lord for us. We pay them, and

they do the work of ministry. Nope. I can't serve the Lord for you. You have a ministry to which God has called you, and it's in your backpack, not mine, or anyone else's.

What's in your backpack? I've never been Alpine camping, but I went to an Alpine camping website and it gave three rules for packing your backpack. First, you must pack your own backpack. The military may tell you what to put in your backpack, but when you're camping, you get to choose. But you'd better choose carefully. If you find yourself along the trail of life and you don't have what you need you have nobody to blame except yourself because you packed it. Second, you must carry your own backpack. The word for "load" in Galatians 6:5 is "*portos*" and we get the word "porter" from it, but there are no porters to carry your backpack on an Alpine trail. Third, you must control what goes into your backpack. If you over pack it, you're the one who will stumble under the load. And there are always people out there who will try to load you down with a couple of bricks of condemnation, so you need to dump those.

Today, I want to ask you to take a minute and unpack and repack your personal backpack. What's in there? Is there a lot of junk in there that has accumulated? Do you need to get rid of some of the junk so you can leave room for the most important things?

So what are you going to repack? Family? Good. Job? Good. Hobbies? Good. What about your relationship with God? Is there room for Him in there? Does He occupy the first and best place in your life? It's not really a burden, it's a blessing to know God, but it is a burden only you can bear.

There is one more kind of burden I want to mention because Jesus mentioned it.

3. A BURDEN TO WEAR—THE YOKE OF JESUS

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) Although not many of us are familiar with a yoke, it is a wooden bar farmers use to link two animals together to pull a plow or a wagon. You may cringe at the idea of wearing a yoke, but don't worry. Jesus is your yokefellow and He supplies all the power and the direction. In a real way, you're just along for the ride; you even get to rest. But where He goes you WILL follow.

So do you need to wear the yoke of Jesus? He extends this invitation to anyone who is tired and burdened. He offers to give us rest. If there's one word to best describe our generation, it might be TIRED.

Time Magazine recently published an article about the increase in stress among American workers. They cited a study conducted by a U.S. Senate subcommittee in the 1960s. A so-called expert testified at these hearings that advances in technology over the next 50 years would radically change how many hours a week people would have to work. This study predicted that instead of working 40 hours a week, that American workers could expect to work an average of 22 hours a week by the 1980s and that this amount would be reduced to 15 hours a week by the beginning of the 21st century. This report said the greatest challenge for American workers

would be figuring out what to do with all the "leisure time" they would have. Were they ever wrong!

There are burdens that we can share with others. There are burdens we bear alone, but there are also burdens so heavy and personal, the only thing we can do with them is to cast them on the Lord. The Bible says, "Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22 NKJV)

Sometimes when it comes to our own burdens we're reluctant to cast them on the Lord. We're like the farmer who saw a man standing by the road with a heavy bag of potatoes on his back. He stopped his truck and said, "Friend, the cab is full, but if you'd like to sit in the back, I can drive you into town." The thankful man climbed up in the back of the truck and sat down. As the truck pulled away, the man kept the heavy bag of potatoes on his shoulder. The driver stopped and said, "Friend, lay down your bag, why are you still holding it on your shoulder?" He said, "Oh, I thought it might be too heavy for the truck, so I'm still carrying it." How foolish! We sometimes come to the Lord and give Him our life, but we hang on to our own burdens.

Peter wrote, "Cast all your anxiety on Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

We try to carry our own burdens, but God invites us to cast them on Him. It's easier said than done. I can personally relate to the little poem that says: It is His will that I should cast / My care on Him each day. / He also bids me not to cast / My confidence away. / But oh, how foolishly I act / When taken unaware; / I cast away my confidence / And carry all my care! (Author Unknown)

Casting your anxiety on the Lord is like putting a saddle on a horse before you ride it. It would be preposterous for you to ride a horse while carrying the saddle on your shoulders. But that's what many of you are doing today with your problems—you're trying to carry them yourself instead of tossing them on the Lord.

CONCLUSION

I don't know all your burdens and you don't know all of mine. There are some burdens we need to share, and some we need to bear alone. But we all have one burden in common. It's the heaviest burden that we'll ever carry. It's the burden of GUILT we bear because we are sinners. That burden is too heavy for me to bear alone. It's too heavy for us to share it together. There's only One who can carry that burden, and He has already carried it to the cross. There's an old song that says, "Burdens are lifted at Calvary." For sure, your sin and guilt burden was lifted at the cross!

Listen to these powerful words about Jesus: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed...The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:4-6)

The only person who every walked this planet who didn't carry a burden of guilt was Jesus, and

yet on the cross He carried the weight of my sin and the weight of your sin. It was a weight we couldn't bear and we couldn't share—only one that Jesus could carry.

As another wonderful hymn says, "He took my sins and my sorrows; He made them His very own; He bore my burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone. How marvelous! How wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!" (Charles Gabriel, "I Stand Amazed in the Presence")

So there are burdens to share. Look around at the people who are like those Chinese bicycle riders? Will you offer to share their load? Maybe you're the one with a ton of care on your back. Will you humble yourself and ask for someone to share your burden?

You're going to carry your life backpack out of here. Make sure you have the essentials—not a religion, but a relationship with God. And make sure the only burden you are carrying is the burden of the yoke of Christ and remember His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

And that's how you can handle your burdens.

OUTLINE

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The Message

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes