

Week 1: Caring

Icebreaker

Ask members of the group to think of (and share if they wish) the most caring thing that someone else has done for them, and what it meant to them.

Watch

Watch the introductory video together and think about the five levels of communication:

1. Cliché
2. Reporting facts
3. Expressing ideas and evaluations
4. Sharing feelings and emotions
5. Openness and honesty

Memory verse

Read the week's verse (John 13:34) aloud as a group and then ask group members to share what it means to them.

Discuss

1. What aspects of the Sunday message ('Who Cares?') struck you the most, and why? (You could refer back to your notes in the *Daily Guide*.)
2. What do you think might be some of the reasons why the priest and the Levite decided not to get involved with the man left by the side of the road?
3. What might be some characteristics of self-focused living?
4. What might be some of the characteristics of other-centred living?
5. Read the 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 passage on page 12 of the *Daily Guide*. What is your initial reaction to the paraclesis concept?
6. What might encouragement look like in practical terms? Share experiences of encouragement.

7. What do you think of John Powell's assertion that 'I am afraid to tell you who I am because if I tell you who I am, you might not like who I am, and that is all I have to give'?
8. How might the fear of rejection and unacceptance affect us in engaging with others? And how does this relate to the five levels of communication?

Do

In this first week of the series, the **Tips for journeying together** in the *Daily Guide* have been focused on the idea of awareness. Share together how you have been getting on with these tips, and then complete the following practical exercise on the ability to encourage sensitively.

Encouraging words ...

An encourager uses words wisely and sensitively, in such a way that they will build others up. Ephesians 4:29 says, '*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen*' (NIV).

Give out paper and pens to the group. Ask the group to **jot down** a list of reasons why the following statements might be insensitive:

- 'You need more faith.'
- 'Praise the Lord anyway.'
- 'You shouldn't feel like that.'
- 'It might never happen.'

Can you think of other insensitive statements that are sometimes made? Or ones you may have made recently? (**Write them down and/or discuss.**)

Now **jot down and/or discuss** some statements that are:

- Prompted by love (Prov. 15:23) eg: 'I may not be able to help but I am a good listener and I care.'
- Chosen with care (Prov. 25:11) eg: 'I sense you are struggling at the moment. If you need someone to share with I am happy to make the time.'
- Spoken with tenderness (Prov. 12:25) eg: 'Thanks for sharing that, I know it wasn't easy for you and I sense something of the pain you are feeling.'

Lastly, if your group has a **Kindness Box**, ask everyone to take a kindness card for the week ahead and encourage them to try and complete the act of kindness before your next group meeting.

Copyright © Trevor J. Partridge and must not be reproduced in any format without written permission from CWR.