

“To Your Soul Be True: The Soul in Community”
Galatians 6:1-5

Despite all of our human cruelty to one another, something deep within us knows that we are deeply connected. Our souls know that we are part of each other. A few examples come to mind about this kind of deep connection.

The first comes from the tragic bus rollover accident that took place in our county on August 22nd. The response of care and compassion was amazing. Even though we had no idea who the people on the bus were, we all felt the pain of this tragedy. Those who were able to lend a physical hand did, and those who could not responded in prayer and compassion. We didn't pause to ask if the people on the bus agreed with us politically, or looked like us, or spoke our language. During such experiences, we lean into that deeper knowing of connection to all of God's creatures.

The second example is the story of two men who became like brothers. Kevin Berthia and Kevin Briggs were strangers until they met on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco on March 11, 2005. Kevin Berthia was in a time of grave despair, intending to end his life. California Highway Patrol officer Kevin Briggs spotted him and stepped into action to help save his life. The two men began a conversation that lasted 92 minutes. Briggs focused on Berthia's daughter, which helped them connect on a deeper level. They were later reconnected eight years later at a public service award ceremony. Both men now use their experience to speak publicly as advocates for suicide prevention.

<https://youtu.be/xMmu0C8EH8A>

The third example comes from our sense of awe when we spend time in nature. Consider the deep sense of rootedness to all of life when you look at the stars in the night sky. All of a sudden, even in the worst of times, something shifts within us because the soul comes to life.

And so today we are invited to remember to be true to our souls, and to claim that it is well with our souls as we claim our birthright of connection. There is often a misconception that soul work is purely individualistic. Yet, in reality, part of living true to our souls is knowing that the soul always longs for unity and connection. The soul is expansive. Our egos often like to divide and control in order to make life predictable and safe. But our souls like to expand and to connect with all of creation because the soul is part of that larger unity.

The Apostle Paul was calling on the followers of Jesus in Galatia to connect with that deeper sense of soul unity. The church in Galatia was at a crossroads. There was conflict, and they wanted clear solutions and answers from Paul. Galatia was a Roman province in what is now central Turkey. There were agitators among the followers of

Jesus, and Paul was counseling them on how to be faithful to Christ in the midst of a church conflict.

The agitators told the Galatian believers that they needed to be circumcised. It wasn't enough for them to just follow Jesus; they needed to become culturally and religiously Jewish to be protected from the wrath of the Roman Empire. Jews had an exemption from the emperor for not participating in the worship celebrations of the imperial cult. The Jewish communities were a recognized entity for Rome, and they participated in the imperial cult by having honorable inscriptions of the emperor in their synagogues and participating in festivals, but they did not have to worship the emperor himself. The followers of Jesus who were Gentiles were not included in that special protection. So, the big issue here was safety from the Empire.

But what the Apostle Paul did was ask the Galatians not to participate in the imperial cult and not to succumb to the temptation of safety and security by demanding circumcision. That was the wrong motivation. Paul wanted the Galatians to access the larger sense of connection, which is the essence of God in our souls. The old worldview which Paul himself held was that power and superiority were the tools for bringing order out of chaos. But after his encounter with the living Christ on the way to Damascus, Paul saw things very differently. He finally recognized the original unity that God has implanted deep in our hearts.

One of the best ways he knew to connect to that sense of original unity and wholeness was to share in **vulnerability** with others. Let's listen to how he put it in Galatians 6:1-5:

"My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads."

Consider our world today and how we could so benefit from this wisdom of faith to live each day sharing our burdens together instead of believing the myth of disunity. What would our world look and feel like if we started to enter into the pain and struggles of one another?

In her book *Our Green Hearts*, Diana Beresford-Kroeger talks about the ancient wisdom of the Irish culture with the word **Ceile**. This word was based on the observation of how an individual's existence related to the next person and how these relationships connected to the universe as a whole. This form of unity is called **Alceile**: binding to

each other. Diana looks at trees for their wisdom of connection to one another and invites humans to remember that we are bound to each other.

In her book *Seasons of Your Heart*, Macrina Wiederkehr talks about uniting her friends during her prayers. This is a powerful reminder for us to pray for the world, its people, and its creatures in this way.

“Every day I take my friends to my prayer. They are remembered in my heart... I bring a friend from Little Rock into the sacred space within then I gather up someone from New York City and walk into my heart with her. Finally all these wonderful people, many of them strangers to each other, are there in the sacred space of my heart. It feels like a great homecoming. I truly believe that these Saints of God receive energy from each other simply by being gathered together in my heart. They may be strangers to one another but the Christ-connection that they share makes them kinfolks.”

Together in the heart, we are reminded to (Source: Christian Aid [Ecumenical prayer vigil for peace in Gaza - Christian Aid](#)):

Pray not for Arab or Jew,
for Palestinian or Israeli,
but pray rather for ourselves,
that we might not
divide them in our prayers
but keep them both together
in our hearts.
When races fight,
peace be amongst us.
When neighbors argue
peace be amongst us.
When nations disagree
peace be amongst us.
Where people struggle for justice
let justice prevail.
Where Christ's disciples follow
let peace be our way.

Amen.