

# Out of Sight but Not Out of Mine

## Bible Study • Study Guide

I was asked to write this study because I teach a class on becoming a volunteer respite caregiver. I wanted my dear sisters in Christ to look beyond the people on the church's prayer and shut-in list to see the other members behind the scenes who care for these people. I wanted them to see people in need in their communities.

Then, God put me in the crisis hopper when my husband had a detached retina. As I write this Bible study, my husband and I are primarily homebound, and I am a full-time caregiver. While I am thankful that this is only temporary, I now can relate on a deeper level to those who are caregiving and care-receiving. This Bible study helps us dig deeper into the Word to find our calling as the Body of Christ and to serve as a reminder that **all** Christians are included in this Body, whether they are gathered in one place or scattered in many homes.

It is easy to feel the unity of the Body of Christ when we worship together. In this Bible study, we will look at how to encourage unity when some members of the Body are isolated. If your church is like most, you will have several people listed as homebound. Often it is more than just one person who is being tied down in that home! Have you thought about those who are the caregivers to these people living at home? List all the women you know who were once active at church and now are isolated at home either caring for themselves or for a loved one. Keep these people in mind throughout this study.

**Opening prayer:** Father, as Jesus has bound us to You through His death and resurrection, open our eyes to have the kind of relationship with each other, as You desire us to have with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Read Ephesians 4:4–6.

**List all the phrases that start with the word “one.”**

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**From where do we have unity or oneness?**

**What does that unity look like among the women gathered for this Bible study?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How is the unity of this group extended to those missing from the Bible study?** \_\_\_\_\_

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In his letters, Paul gives very practical advice on how the Body of Christ can maintain unity and purpose. I teach a course on volunteer caregiving. It is meant for the general public, and the curriculum includes how to give physical and emotional care. However, as Lutherans, we know that care must also include caring for the soul. We often relegate this care to the pastor, because he rightly brings the Sacraments to these people. However, in the following passages we will discover that all Christians have the responsibility to care for the needs of the whole person.

Read Ephesians 4:1–6 again.

**What fruits of the Spirit are found in this passage? (Refer to Galatians 5:22–23 to see a list of the fruits of the Spirit.)** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What does bearing with one another look like to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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During my time of caregiving, my group did many things — they were patient with me responding to emails and phone calls; they texted me Scripture and words like “stretch, breathe, relax;” they gave me grace when I had to miss a meeting; some sent cards; some offered to shop or to make meals.

Read Colossians 3:12–17.

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**What similarities do you see to the Ephesians 4 passage?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What instructions does Paul give us as we bear each other's burdens?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paul specifically mentions music as a way to encourage one another. What music might you recommend to the caregiver and care-receiver?** \_\_\_\_\_

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What came to my mind right away is the old familiar hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (LSB 649). Read or sing the first verse. There are so many thoughts to explore.

**Read Romans 12:3–13. As members of the same body, what gifts do you have that you could share with those who are homebound — both the caregiver and the care-receiver?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How could you further explore ways to use gifts in the Body of Christ to the glory of God?**

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**Finally, read 1 Peter 4:7–11. What is the ultimate goal of this mutual serving of each other, whether together or separately?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Applying What We Have Learned

Most of us have learned how to "visit" during the separation stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's take those skills and continue to build community among people who are absent from the physical assembly of church and Bible study, using the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

List all the activities that were shared during the Bible study that could be done by both the people who are able to get together and those who are not. This Bible study could be done on a visit with someone! Pick one or two activities to implement during the next month.

**Sing or read:** Blest Be the Tie That Binds (*LSB* 649, verses 2 & 3).

**Closing prayer:** Father, thank You for using Scripture to open our eyes to the needs of our sisters in Christ, both those who are present physically and those who are present in spirit. Give us the wisdom and courage to continually seek to bear one another's burdens in practical ways. Right now, we lift up (name those who were mentioned by your group) who are now in caregiving and care-receiving roles at home. Move us to reach out to them with the Word of Your presence and peace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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