A TRINFINITY MINI BOOK

Growing Together as the Church

Unity, community, and the use of our gifts

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Introduction

God has not called His people to live without one another. We need encouragement, correction, help, and opportunities to serve. Unity becomes practical when we give attention to those responsibilities. I want a church life that reflects Christ in the way we care for people, including the ones whose gifts, experiences, and preferences differ from mine.

1 Members of one body

First Corinthians 12 (NASB) describes a body with different members. Their differences do not make them unnecessary. The comparison challenges both pride and discouragement. I should not act as though the church depends only on my contribution, and I should not assume I have nothing useful to give.

The passage calls for care when one member suffers and shared joy when another is honored. That reaches beyond attendance. It asks whether we notice people, whether we respond when they need help, and whether another person's recognition can be received without resentment.

A task can require contributions no one person can supply alone. A family, a work crew, or a team learns quickly why different contributions matter. The church's unity, however, has a deeper basis than convenience. We belong to Christ. Our service should reflect His care for the people who belong to Him.

I want to resist the tendency to value only what is visible. Preparation, practical help, patient conversation, and faithful prayer may happen away from a platform. A healthy community learns to appreciate service without turning every contribution into a competition for notice.

2 What weakens our fellowship

Pride can turn a difference into a contest over who matters most. When I need to appear right in every conversation, other people become obstacles rather than fellow believers. Humility makes room to listen while still taking truth seriously.

Some disagreements involve the central claims of the gospel. Others concern matters on which faithful Christians reach different conclusions. I should not treat every preference as a test of salvation. I hold a pre-tribulation view of the Rapture, and I explain it in Living in Hope of the Return of Christ. Disagreement over its timing does not determine a person's salvation.

That distinction does not make study unnecessary. I should know why I hold a position and be willing to explain it from Scripture. It does mean that contempt is an inappropriate way to defend the position.

Bitterness and unforgiveness also weaken fellowship. A grievance carried from one relationship into the next can make the whole community feel unsafe. I need to address wrong truthfully and seek repair. Unity requires more than asking everybody else to be easier to live with.

3 Using what God has given

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

Romans 12:6 (NASB)

if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

Romans 12:7 (NASB)

or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:8 (NASB)

Romans 12:6-8 (NASB) names different gifts and calls for their exercise. Service should be practiced in serving. Teaching should be practiced in teaching. Generosity, leadership, and mercy are also described with attention to how they are carried out. The emphasis is on using what God has given.

Natural ability and spiritual gifts should not be treated as identical categories without explanation. Musical talent or medical training can certainly be used in service, but I should not present them as items specifically listed in Romans 12 (NASB).

Discovering how to serve may begin with an available responsibility. Offer help, listen to those who know the need, and receive feedback. I do not need a public title before I can encourage someone, give practical assistance, or make room for another person's growth.

I also need to remain teachable. A willingness to serve does not mean I already know how every task should be done. Preparation, supervision, and dependable follow-through can be expressions of humility. The gift is being used for the good of others, rather than as a reason to avoid responsibility.

4 Staying close enough to care

and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Hebrews 10:24 (NASB)

not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25 (NASB)

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NASB) connects gathering with encouraging one another toward love and good deeds. It gives fellowship a purpose. I am not simply present to receive something. I also have a responsibility to help another believer remain faithful.

There is a difference between time alone with God and a pattern of avoiding every relationship that could bring help or correction. Solitude can refresh us. Isolation can leave us without people who know what is happening in our lives. I need enough honest connection for care to become possible.

A practical beginning may be smaller than a new program. Learn a person's name. Follow up on a need. Make room for someone who does not already know the group. If I have withdrawn because of a hurt, I may need support in finding a healthy way to reconnect.

I want unity to be visible in the way we live together. We will not agree on every detail, and we will sometimes fail one another. We can still practice repentance, forgiveness, and faithful service. A church grows in strength when people remain willing to love the real members of the body, rather than an imagined community that never disappoints.

Growing Together as the Church

God never meant for His people to go it alone. This book looks at what it means to be members of one body, what weakens our fellowship, how to use the gifts God has given, and how to stay close enough to care.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.

Romans 12:6 (NASB)

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