

### Week #3 – Community ... What Does it Take? (Romans 12:1-18)

#### Key Concepts:

Community Takes a Willingness to Grow

Community Takes a Willingness to Serve

Community Takes a Willingness to Love

#### Introduction to and Context of Romans 12 (Romans 11:33-36)

Everything starts with **God**. Who God is *always* dictates who we are and how we should respond to who He is. In fact, chapter 12 marks a major **shift** in the book

Chapters 1-11 = Orthodoxy/Right Theology; Chapters 12-16 = Orthopraxy/Right Living in response to Right Theology). This is the Pauline model in the New Testament.

#### I. Community Takes a Willingness to Grow (Romans 12:1-3)

##### *Growth Requires a Heart for God (12:1-2)*

**12:1** – Because of **who** God is and **what** He has done (His mercies) ... live in this way (i.e. as “living sacrifices”). Paul indicates that this lifestyle of worship is the only appropriate way for the Christian to respond to God for all that He has accomplished for us through Christ. Our very being/self is to be a **sacrifice** to God as we respond in gratitude for what He has done.

**12:2** – We conduct ourselves as living sacrifices by not buying into the lies of secular culture and its “anti-God” worldview. We don’t **isolate** ourselves, but we make sure that we aren’t being conformed to the standards and values of this world/age.

Instead we must be **transformed** (μεταμορφώω) by the Holy Spirit as our minds are renewed.

##### *Growth Requires Humility (12:3)*

Humility is the **most** important virtue of the Christian life, but yet it is also the **least** practiced. “Measure of faith” does not refer to a comparative situation (i.e. “I have more/less faith than someone else”). Rather, this phrase describes what **all** Christians have received – the same measure of faith.

## Questions:

1. Where is your mind headed? Is it being conformed or transformed? How can we practically make sure that our minds are being transformed rather than conformed?
2. How do you view yourself? More highly than you ought? What does Paul mean when he says that we should think of ourselves with “sound/sober judgment?”

## II. Community Takes a Willingness to Serve (Romans 12:4-8)

We all have different **gifts** (χάρισμα; “charisma;” 12:6), which are given to us by God’s grace (χάρις “charis”). Thus, we have *no room* to boast about any of our gifts, we are given these by God’s **grace**. We, who are living sacrifices, carry out our spiritual service of worship by serving God and the body of Christ through our gifts. **No one** is more important than anyone else, at least from God’s perspective.

### **Growth Requires Awareness (12:4-5)**

There is more involved and more at stake in life than just us and our self-centered pursuits. We’re talking about the body of Christ (i.e. the community of God’s people) and its health – that is of the utmost importance. Consequently, each of us should view ourselves as one **member** within the larger **community** of the body of Christ.

### **Growth Requires Initiative (12:6-8)**

Step up and **DO IT** (i.e. serve). The gifts mentioned here are:

- Service
- Teaching
- Exhortation
- Giving
- Leadership
- Showing mercy

A case could be made that a “spiritual gift” is **any way** that you choose to serve God and others within the body of Christ.

## Questions:

1. Do you really believe that all gifts are equally important? What if everyone in the church had the same “gifts?” What would happen?
2. What are your gifts? Are you using them? Why or why not? Have you ever served together with others here at TBC (or elsewhere)? As a Community Group/Class?
- \*3. How do you view church? Like a cruise ship? Or like a battleship? In other words, do you approach life and your church community at TBC in hopes of getting something out of it or in hopes of giving something to it?

## III. Community Takes a Willingness to Love (*Romans 12:9-18*)

These verses demonstrate what love looks like on a practical level within the body of Christ.

### *Love Requires a Heart for God’s People (12:9-13)*

True love is free from **hypocrisy** and it pursues good rather than evil (12:9). Being “devoted” (φιλόστοργοι)<sup>1</sup> to one another (12:10) is related grammatically and conceptually to “brotherly love” (τῆ φιλαδελφία).

Additionally, we see that true love is fervent (12:11), and it is demonstrated by rejoicing, perseverance, and diligent prayer for one another (12:12). True love is also demonstrated through generosity and hospitality (12:13), although this generosity is not limited to monetary giving. Rather, generosity and hospitality incorporate both the material *and* relational needs of the body of Christ. These verses demonstrate what real “biblical community” is all about.

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<sup>1</sup> The occurrence of φιλόστοργοι here marks the only time this term appears in the Greek New Testament.

## Love Requires Unity and Forgiveness (12:14-18)

Immediately, we see that love is described just as it was taught and modeled by **Jesus Christ** (12:14; Matthew 5:44; Isaiah 53:7; cf. 1 Peter 3:9). We must also share in others' rejoicing and mourning (12:15). Failure to share in rejoicing and mourning signals a failure to love and reveals underlying jealousy that we have. We also love by pursuing unity with other Christians, which requires **humility** (12:15).

The capstone of genuine love is **forgiveness** (12:17-18). Without forgiveness, you will not be able to love anyone authentically. An unforgiving spirit quenches any hope that you might have for real biblical community.

In summary, until we cultivate a loving and forgiving heart, we will **never** experience the community, marriage, etc. that God desires for us to experience (Ephesians 4:32).

### Questions:

1. How authentic are you being with those around you? Why do you hold back from fully sharing your life with others?
2. Describe a time when you were comforted by someone else? How did the individual specifically demonstrate love to you through their empathy and friendship?
3. Do you need to forgive someone for what they've done to you? Are you holding onto resentments from the past that you simply need to let go?

### Key Terms:

Orthodoxy  
Orthopraxy  
Living Sacrifice  
Transformed  
Humility  
Spiritual Gifts

## Key Verses:

Matthew 5:44  
Isaiah 53:7  
1 Peter 3:8-9

## Scripture Memory:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(Romans 12:1-2, NASB)

## Homework Assignment #3:

- 1) Know definitions for Key Terms
- 2) Memorize *Romans 12:1-2*.
- 3) What is the significance of “presenting your body a living and holy sacrifice” to achieving biblical community?
- 4) Why is it vitally necessary that every Christian exercise their spiritual gifts within the body of Christ?
- 5) **NextStep APPLICATION:** Take seven days to journal how you are being conformed to the world or transformed by the renewing of your mind. Create two columns on a sheet of paper labeled “Conformed” and “Transformed.” As you make decisions throughout the day (how you spend your time, what you read, what you watch, who you spend your time with, etc.), categorize the decisions you make as an example of being “conformed” or being “transformed.”

The purpose of this exercise is to show us that being conformed or transformed is a function of our decision to present ourselves a living and holy sacrifice.

- 6) Review class notes.

**Next Week: – Community ... The Joy of Authenticity**