

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Being Concerned For One Another

by Dan Trygg

“God has so composed the Body... <sup>25</sup> in order that there may be no division in the Body, rather the members may have the same care/concern for one another.” I Corinthians 12:24,25

“But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; <sup>33</sup> but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” I Corinthians 7:32-34

“For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.” Philippians 2:20

“Apart from external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.” II Corinthians 11:28

**Have you ever felt like no one cared about you? Did you feel like no one was concerned about your struggles, or what you were dealing with in life?** Or, maybe it wasn't as extreme as all that, but nevertheless you felt overlooked, passed over or unimportant, in comparison to others. **These are feelings and perceptions that are not all that uncommon.** Many, many people experience them, or have gone through periods in their lives where they struggled with such thoughts. **The truth, of course, is that each one of us is valuable and significant. We are loved by God, and gifted by Him to make a difference in life.** Sometimes we don't see or understand who we are in Christ, or what we have to offer, ...and it may seem that all too often others hardly even notice us, as they pass by. **One of the ways we can minister to one another directly confronts this feeling of isolation and insignificance. We are to “be concerned for one another”.**

You may say, “Great build-up, Dan, but I was hoping for a little more. **Being ‘concerned for’ one another doesn't sound that significant. That doesn't sound like it is realistically going to change very much.** People can be ‘concerned’ and not ever *do* anything different.” Good point. Before you give up on this, let's dig into it a little more. This *is* one of the 21 “one-another” responsibilities mentioned in the NT. They are there for a reason. Each one will help the Body of Christ experience the grace, love and power of God, as we express His heart to each other.

**The Greek verb, *merimnaō*, occurs 19 times in the NT.** 6 times, mentioned in the first three passages above, it is translated as “concern”. The other 13 times, it is translated at “being anxious”. There is a noun form, too, *merimna*, which occurs 6 times. One time, in the last verse listed above, it is translated as “concern”. Every other time, it is rendered as “anxiety” or “worry”. That doesn't sound very positive, either, does it? What's the connection? How can this be a positive thing in some contexts, and a negative thing in other contexts? *Merimnaō* is a compound word, from the word *merizō*, meaning “to divide, share, portion-out” and the word “*nous*”, meaning “mind”. Thus, *merimnaō* means to have a “divided mind” or a “distracted mind” or to “portion out your mind with more than one thing”. In the positive sense, it is to “have someone on your mind” or “keep someone in mind”.

**In the negative sense, it means to “worry” or “be anxious”, because your mind keeps being distracted by something you have no control over.** To “worry” or to “be anxious” is always presented as a negative thing in the Bible. **We are not to worry or be anxious. We are to give our concerns to God, and trust in His care.** Paul tells us to bring our needs before God, “Be not anxious, rather in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God” (Phil. 4:6). Jesus had told us to not be anxious, either (Matt. 6:25,31; 10:19). Peter instructs us to cast all our anxieties, cares or distracted thinking on God, for He will care for us and our needs (I Pet. 5:7). **When we can truly do that, trust God with all our needs, then we will experience His peace, which goes beyond anything that the world has to offer** (Phil. 4:7; Jn. 14:27).

**It is clear, from the usage of this word, that this “having you on my mind” often goes beyond a mental distraction to acts of consideration, love and service.** Our English word, “care”, has a similar range of meaning. It started out referring to a mental concern or anxiety (“not a care in the world”), but it has become more commonly understood as describing feelings of affection (“I care for you”) or acts of service (“she was caring for her elderly parents” or “the doctor cared for his wound”). The preoccupation or distraction of the mind can be a pleasant experience, with emotional closeness or empathy, or it can describe the actions that would result from a heart of empathy and concern. In another scenario, the term can be used for oversight and training. In the Presbyterian tradition, ministry candidates go through a period of their training where they are placed “under care” of another minister or a church board. This is a probationary or apprentice-type period, where the candidate is under the watchful oversight of others. He is a “care” to them, in that he is on their mental radar, and *they* need to be mindful of *him*, his needs, and how he is handling his

responsibilities. They “care for” him, by offering their support, assistance, feedback and training to help him become a more effective minister. He, in turn, is learning to “care for” the needs of his parishioners, as a shepherd cares for his sheep. They become a concern to his mind and heart. He observes what they need, to be healthy and mature. His “shared mind” motivates him to bring them repeatedly to God in prayer, and his “thoughtful preoccupation” translates into action through his home visitations, his counsel, teachings and encouragement.

**We see this natural progression from (1.) the distracted or preoccupied mind to (2.) feelings of affection to (3.) acts of consideration** in Paul’s description of a romantic relationship in the I Cor. 7 passage mentioned above. It is an observation that someone in a romantic relationship, or a healthy marriage, would, *and should*, have a divided mind. The other person *will* invade their thoughts, and they will be “mindful” of them. This will naturally translate into action through words, notes, letters, acts of affection and service that communicate “I am thinking about you”, “I care about you”, “you are important enough to me that I delight to put aside the busyness of the day and so something that is special *to you*”. Paul wanted the unmarried to have that kind of wholehearted devotion and distraction for the Lord alone. **To have undistracted, wholehearted love for God makes life a whole lot simpler. Someone motivated by love for, and delight in, God will not only find joy in the journey, but will eagerly and freely do radical things for God.** The apostle recognized that people in relationships “share a portion of their mind” with the other person. They need to consider how their relationship with Christ would impact their human relationship, or vice versa. He acknowledges that there *are* responsibilities there, and he would encourage single people to not rush into such complications in life. It is better, from his perspective, that they could maintain undistracted devotion to Christ.

The fact that the apostle even communicated this to the Corinthians was an example of his own mindfulness of them. As you read through the epistles, it is very apparent that **Paul had a genuine concern for the people he had shared Christ with**, and had spent time with. **They were on his mind and heart, and motivated him to regularly pray for them, write letters to them, visit them, and send others to check on them, as he could.** This “portioned-out mind” did not stop only with those he knew personally. It was also extended to other believers in Christ that he heard reports of, but had never met! For example, the book of Colossians was written to a group of believers he heard about through Epaphras, who ministered there and in Laodicea and Hierapolis (1:7; 4:12,13). From the day he heard of their existence, he had not ceased to pray for them, that God would give them a clear understanding of His will for them, and that they would grow to live fruitful, God honoring lives, filled with joy and thanksgiving (1:9-12). This gives us a small glimpse into what he described as “the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches”. **The churches of Christ, wherever they may be, were on his mind constantly. He did not live in anxiety, however.** He did not stew and worry about things that were outside of his control. No. **He brought these “concerns” to God, and asked Him to intervene**, ...to watch over and work within each church and each person. He also wrote letters to these people, to let them know that he valued them and was praying for them, so that they would be encouraged. **The preoccupation of his heart, his mindfulness of the churches and his earnestness in prayer, was taught and communicated to others, so that they, too, became mindful of them**, greeted them, and prayed for them, ...and some were even sent to them or intended to visit them of their own accord (cf. Col. 4:7-16). In fact, in Philemon, Paul wrote that he himself intended to come for a visit (Philem. 1:22). This was just *one* church!! Truly, Paul’s mind and heart were sold out and preoccupied with Jesus Christ and His Body, the church! There was no room for a distracted mind in his life. Of all those whom he disciplined, and who traveled with him, he singled out Timothy as one who was of a kindred spirit with him, ...one who had no self-interest or selfish agenda of his own, but one who was genuinely and wholeheartedly concerned for the welfare of those he worked with (Phil. 2:20).

We have seen that **this “concern” or “mindfulness” can be an extremely powerful thing.** It is not *just a feeling* of empathy. It is a *verb*, ...an *action* that results in other actions and decisions downstream. When Paul wrote “that the members of the Body may have the *same* care/concern for one another”, he was describing how **some parts of the Body of Christ are more visible and noticeable. Nevertheless, every part of the Body, every person in Christ is valuable and has gifts and abilities that are necessary to the health of the whole.** Every life is important. Paul said that this is by God’s design, so that no one would be passed over, or neglected. God has gifted us, and put us together in such a way that, if we could only grasp it, we would recognize how each one of us is a treasure, an incredible blessing. **God gifted and assembled us in such a way that we need one another to be at our best. His design is to motivate us to have the same concern (‘mind-ful-ness, preoccupation, ‘consider-a-tion’, ‘thought-ful-ness’, affection, appreciation, oversight, acts-of-service, practical-care) for one another.** Again, this is meant to be a reciprocal action. *We* are to think of and care for *others*, and *they* for *us*. We only can do *our* part, however. We have to trust that God will take care of us, as we obey Him. **This is specifically meant to motivate us to discover and reach out to those who tend to be overlooked.** Don’t miss out on what God has for you by withholding yourself from others. Begin to open your mind to the needs and interests of your brothers and sisters in Christ. You will be glad you did.