



“The Body of Christ”

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

God joins our lives together as one to continue the work of Jesus in this world (12-13)

Having emphasized the reality that all believers are given specific gifts in order to use them in specific ways in the body of Christ, Paul uses an illustration of a body to help the believers in Corinth begin to understand how they are to work together as the body of Christ. His emphasis is clear. With the human body, there are many parts or members; however, all of these parts or members function as one. Paul tells the church in Corinth that it is the same with Christ. He reminds them that they were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, and they were all made to drink of one Spirit. In other words, Paul is telling them that they are one in Christ! There may be many members in the church in Corinth, but they can't see themselves as disconnected individuals. They can't see their differences as points of division. They have to see themselves as one in Christ so that they can continue the work of Christ in this world.

1. For the church in Corinth, there were obvious points of difference — such as race and social standing — that caused division in their fellowship. What are some points of difference that tend to cause division in our lives in our community and in our faith family?
2. What point of difference do you struggle with most in your life?
3. What are some things that we can do to help us remember that God desires that we see ourselves as one in Christ?
4. What are things that we can do — that you may need to do — to protect and to grow oneness in our Connect Groups and faith family?

God arranges our gifts to fit together to fulfill the work of Jesus in this world (14-20)

One of the problems in the church in Corinth was likely that they were experiencing some division in their church because they were emphasizing certain gifts at the expense of other gifts in the church. Paul continues his illustration of the human body to help them understand God's design for the body of Christ. He illustrates his point in two ways. First, Paul makes the point that if a foot or an ear says that they aren't a part of the body just because they aren't a hand or an eye, that doesn't make them any less a part of the body! In the same way, overemphasizing certain gifts at the expense of other gifts can cause some people to undervalue their gifts in the body of Christ. Additionally, Paul supports his point further by pointing to the fact that the body can't be the body if it's only one part. All of this leads to Paul's primary point related to God's design for the body of Christ, which is that every part or member is important because it is God who sovereignly arranges them all so that they can fit together to fulfill the work of Jesus in this world.

1. Did you take the spiritual gift discovery survey? If not, take time in your group to do so now on your mobile devices. Again, share what you discovered? What surprised you? Why?

2. Have you ever undervalued the gifts that God has given you simply because they weren't the gifts that you really valued or the gifts that others seem to value? If so, share and discuss your experience.
3. Read 1 Cor. 12:18. What are some implications of this truth on the way that we view and use our gifts? What does this truth say about undervaluing our gifts? What does this truth say about using our gifts?

God desires that we care for each other as we should care for our own bodies (21-26)

Overemphasizing certain gifts at the expense of others in the church is a serious problem that can lead to serious issues in the ministry of the church. Paul continued to build on his illustration of the human body by pointing to the fact that one part of the human body can't disregard another part of the body simply because it thinks that it doesn't need that part of the body. "The eye cannot say to the the hand, 'I have no need of you....'" In fact, Paul points to the fact that we all take care of the parts of our bodies as needed to protect and preserve them. Perhaps — among other things — Paul was pointing to some of the differences and divisions between the rich and the poor in the body of Christ in Corinth. Regardless, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that God has put them together as the body of Christ so that they would take care of the parts of the body as needed to protect and preserve them. If they are all one, suffering in one part should cause suffering in the body as a whole. If they are all one, honor in one part should cause honor and rejoicing in the body as a whole. In other words, God desired that they would care for each other as they should care for their own bodies.

1. Read 1 Cor. 12:24b-26 again and discuss the following questions:
 - A. The last part of verse 24 states that God composed the body and gave greater honor to the part that lacked it. What does this mean?
 - B. Verse 25 begins with the words "so that" or "in order that." In other words, God composed the body in that way for this reason: "That there may be no division in the body...." What does this say about how God desires that we appreciate and view each other's gifts? What does this say about God's desire for unity in the body? How can we do a better job of doing these things in the body of Christ at our church?
 - C. Verse 26 shows the reality that we experience physically in our bodies and that God desires that we would experience as the body of Christ. How does your Connect Group do these things? Are there ways that you can improve on how you care for each other?

God wants us to work together to be who we are: The body of Christ! (27-31)

The point of all of this is clear: The church in Corinth is the body of Christ! Every member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and every member of the church has a part to fulfill in the body of Christ. While there are many different parts of the body, they are all important. Every gift needs to be used if the body is to function as God designed it to work. Every gift has to appreciate the value and the purpose of every other gift if the body is to work as one. God doesn't want them working apart. God doesn't want them divided. God wants them to work together as one to be who they are: The body of Christ!

1. Do you know your gifts? Share and discuss again if needed.
2. How are you using your gifts in our faith family for the edification of the body of Christ? If not, why?
3. Read 1 Cor. 12:27. Who does this verse say that we are as a body of believers in our community? Who does the body of Christ include?
4. Pray for God's grace and strength to help us work together to be who we are: The body of Christ!