

## The Glorious Body of Christ - Unity and Diversity

1 Corinthians 12:12-20

***12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves<sup>[d]</sup> or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.***

***14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts,<sup>[e]</sup> yet one body.***

### Introduction:

- The use of Spiritual Gifts was causing division and dissension in the church. They had classified the gifts based on perceived importance and value. The problem was that they seemed to have forgotten what was important and valuable in the church according to God.
- When we seek the Scriptures to see what God prefers in our corporate worship we find that his desire is not only the exaltation of his name but equally he desires that we be united

in mind and heart and love one another for the purpose of building up the faithful and reaching the lost.

- God gives gifts to the church through the Holy Spirit so that the most important work of the church does not depend on our abilities and creativity.
- The Corinthians wrong view of spiritual gifts were working counterproductive to their intended purpose. They are given to be used selflessly for the common good of the whole body.
- In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul leaves the main topic of spiritual gifts to relay the foundation of the glory of the church in order to reset the Corinthian's thinking and hopefully restore them to a right heart for the Church and its head Jesus.
- My hope for the next 2 weeks is very similar. Here is my thesis which captures my heart's prayer for us.

"If the weight of the glory of the church were to fall upon us it would inevitably transform us as individual members, and consequently would transform this local chapter of the church, and ultimately contribute positively to the well-being of the church universal and speak well to the world of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## 1. The Body Metaphor

***12 For just as the (human) body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.***

- There are several metaphors used in the Bible to describe the church. It is referred to as the bride, the vineyard or the vine,

the flock, the people of a kingdom, a household or a family, and a building. Those are either directly mentioned in the Old Testament or at the very least alluded to in the New Testament. But the metaphor of the human body to describe the church has no old testament reference or illusion. It is unique to the new covenant Church.

- Each of these metaphors are given to describe spiritual realities about the church. All of which dramatically affect the way we understand our position in the church.
- The metaphor of the body is unique to the new covenant because it presents the spiritual realities of how we relate to one another through corporate worship and global missions. It is a simple metaphor with infinite implications.
- Let's go back to before the beginning and walk through the formation of this body. It is imperative that we understand how we got into this body from a biblical perspective. This is where we're going to see the true glory of the Body of Christ.
  - It all began before the foundation of the world was laid. God the father chose all the members that would one day serve the body (Rom. 8:29). He also designated specific works that each member would be called and gifted to accomplish in their lifetime (Eph. 2:10).
  - God created the world, the world fell under the curse of sin, and God promised a way of salvation to come through his chosen people. Gods chosen people under the old covenant preached about a salvation that was coming. When the fullness of time had come God sent his son to fulfill that promise by dying on the cross and being raised from the dead. Now God's people under a new covenant preach about a salvation that has come.

- That brings us to the body of Christ to which we now belong. According to the Scriptures we were dead and our sins and trespasses and following the course of the sinful world just like all of mankind. We lived according to the passions of our flesh and were destined to receive the full wrath of God for our sin. But God, interrupted our lives and raised us from that spiritual death by giving us his Holy Spirit.
- That brings us to our text today. When the Holy Spirit regenerated our hearts and brought us to believe the gospel we were spiritually baptized into a body and made to drink of one spirit. **13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves<sup>[d]</sup> or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.** Paul is not talking about believers baptism here. Believers baptism is an outward expression of all of these inward realities. In Matthew chapter 3 verse 11 John says that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is unto salvation and inclusion into the body of Christ. The baptism of fire is the judgment upon all unbelievers.

When Paul says we **were all made to drink of one Spirit** he is referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer. At our conversion we ingested the Holy Spirit and he now lives in every believer. The Holy Spirit is as essential to every believer as the water we drink to nourish our bodies.

Paul will go on to say in verse 27 **Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.** If you are a born again Christian you are in this body and there is no getting out of it. You are stuck. You might as well open your eyes to see the glory of this calling and embrace it.

We are going to attempt to unfold some of the glories of the body of Christ under two main headings; Unity and diversity. Under those two main headings we are going to explore six different

implications that if the Holy Spirit is truly at work today will be life-changing.

## **2. The Unity of the Body**

***12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves<sup>[d]</sup> or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.***

- again, this is a simple yet profound metaphor. Everyone has the ability to understand this metaphor. The human body is one body made up of many members. Each member has a responsibility but an obligation to the body as a whole. If we cut our hands off they are useless to the body. Each member only has life as it relates to the body as a whole. And so it is with the body of Christ. Our life is found in its relationship to the body as one. So let's look at some implications of the unity of this body.

### **a. Unified in Position**

***15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.***

If you are a Christian you have every right to be here and to be a part of this body. That right has been granted to you by the God of this body and by its head Jesus Christ. Every person that comes into this body comes through the same door and in the same way. You came by faith in Jesus Christ just like everybody else. And the ground is equal at the foot of the cross. No one

was included into this body based on any merit, race, ability or any social status. There was no distinction between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. Everyone came by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone by the sovereign choice of God alone and by the Holy Spirit alone. We all equally deserve to be here in that none of us deserve to be here.

***God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.***

#### b. Unified in Purpose

Everyone that is here is here for the same purpose; to glorify God through humble submission and faithful obedience. We are unified in purpose because our purpose is God's purpose. We are all here to be used by God to fulfill his purposes in the church and in this world. God's purpose is to glorify himself through the redemption of his people. To keep us on task God gave us the great commission and the new commandment. The great commission is to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and the new commandment is to love one another as Christ loved us (Jn. 13:34).

As this pertains to the exercising of spiritual gifts, we are all here for the purpose of fulfilling the common good of all the members of the body (1 Cor. 12:7). We accomplish that by leading everyone to Christ through the use of our spiritual gifts. We'll talk about it again when we talk about the diversity of our responsibilities, but the unity of our responsibility is to lead people to Christ. That's how you accomplish the common good of all.

#### c. Unified in Dignity

Dignity is the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect. Being unified and dignity is the pipe dream of the fallen world in

which we live. It is the stated goal of the body of Christ to which we must all strive to attain. Paul will later refer to the weaker parts of the body as indispensable. The truth is it could be said of every single member of the body.

Our unity in dignity is not just in relation to the sanctity and value of every human life. It goes beyond that as it relates to the purpose and function of the church. Every member's contribution is crucial and worthy of respect and honor. It all keeps coming back to the fact that ***God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.***

As can be said about all of the others, our dignity is not based on our own merit. Our worth and value was given to us by God when he chose to baptize us with his Spirit into this body.

### 3. The Diversity of the Body

***19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?*** The answer is, not in a good place. Paul is not trying to argue for diversity, diversity is obvious, he's trying to lay a foundation that will lead the Corinthians to celebrate necessary diversity.

We can see by the example of the world that celebrating diversity can backfire if not kept within a proper perspective. It's important that we understand how to celebrate diversity within the body of Christ. Thankfully the scriptures are pretty clear in guiding us in this matter.

#### a. Diverse in Identity

In Paul's metaphor he refers to each individual member as a body part. This is to describe function and responsibilities but it would also imply diversity in identity. This church has just spent a week teaching our children through vacation Bible school that everything in all of creation has been meticulously designed for

the purpose of celebrating diversity. We have a body we call animals yet within that body are hundreds of classifications and divisions of species. Even within those classifications and species there are numerous unique characteristics that separate the animals in identity. On top of that human beings are wonderfully and fearfully designed in the womb not to be replicated. Every human being is a snowflake. No two are alike.

So there is a sense in which we must check our individuality at the door when we enter the church for the sake of the unity of the body. However, scripture makes it clear that since no two human beings are alike our diversity and individuality should be embraced and celebrated.

Not everyone was created by God and gifted to serve as an eyeball for the body. That doesn't make that person any less important to the body. Not only are we each individually created with certain characteristics and personality traits, but each of us have our own upbringing and culture that influences who we are as people.

#### b. Diverse in Spiritual Gifting

This point is at the heart of Paul's argument. Not everyone is gifted by the spirit in the same way. Some are eyeballs, some are ears, some are feet, and so on. But, not everyone has or should seek the exact same spiritual gifts.

In next week's text, in verses 28 through 30, Paul is going to put forth some rhetorical questions. He asks, ***“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”*** The answer is an emphatic NO!

There are two problems with the Corinthians when it comes to celebrating the diversity in spiritual gifting. First, they're not

celebrating the fact that each one of them should have a unique spiritual gift. They are all seeking the "show gifts". They're all desiring the same gifts instead of embracing the fact that they may have other gifts. The second problem is that they're not celebrating all gifts as important. We're going to see next week that they have deemed certain gifts as less honorable and weaker. The problem with that is that if you demean a spiritual gift you insult the Holy Spirit. These gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

### c. Diverse in Responsibilities

If we are going to truly celebrate diversity in spiritual gifting we must then also embrace a diversity in responsibilities. We must be careful when dealing with the diversity of our responsibilities because this is where we tend to create the hierarchy that is diametrically opposed to all of the other things we've talked about today.

For example, it's easy to think that this morning I have been tasked with the single most important responsibility. And we may tend to think that it makes me somehow better or more important than others. It also appears that I am getting more attention and thus more applause. However, the truth is I am replaceable. Absolutely, preaching is an important use of the spiritual gift of preaching and teaching, but the person chosen is chosen by grace to fill that role. It is not based on personality, popularity, charisma, or public speaking abilities. Me being here this morning, preaching this sermon is a product of the sovereign choice of God.

As with all other gifts, my motive this morning cannot be a pat on the back. Every single one of us, when using our spiritual gifts, must have the motive of pointing each other to Christ. That's the very reason Paul began the argument of spiritual gifts by saying, ***"I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit***

***of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.”***

Closing:

- I want to restate my thesis so that we can contemplate whether or not this is being accomplished in us this morning.

“If the weight of the glory of the church were to fall upon us it would inevitably transform us as individual members, and consequently would transform this local chapter of the church, and ultimately contribute positively to the well-being of the church universal and speak well to the world of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- My Covenant

I am a member of the body of Christ. I have a right to be here because God is the one who chose to put me here. I have value in this body. It is a value determined by God alone. I have a role to play in the fulfillment of this body's purpose. I have more than enough ability to fulfill my purpose because it is the Holy Spirit working through me providing that ability. I am proud to be a member of the body of Christ, yet I am humbled beyond belief. I know I do not deserve this privilege. It was by grace alone that God chose and equipped me for this calling. It is with a humble heart I commit myself wholly to this body and its work. I will rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish my part through me. By God's grace I will seek the good of every member. I will strive to protect the testimony of this local chapter of the body. According to the example set by the head of this body I will seek to sacrificially love and serve every member. And in all things I will give God the glory because he's worthy.

- a word to the lost

## CG Discussion Questions

1. Let's spend some time discussing how the body is unified in position, purpose, and dignity and talk about how that affects the way we should treat each other in the church?
2. Let's spend some time discussing how the body is diverse in identity, spiritual gifting, and responsibilities and talk about how that affects the way we should treat each other in the church?
3. Verse 18 says that God arrange the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. How does that affect the way we approach using our spiritual gifts and receiving the use of other people's spiritual gifts?
4. How do spiritual gifts differ from personal talents and abilities?
5. What are your spiritual gifts?
6. We've spent a lot of time talking about finding our spiritual gifts and using them, but can you recall being on the receiving end of another person's spiritual gift where your faith was built up?