

## The Diversity of the Body

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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Open your Bibles this morning to first Corinthians chapter 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 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, yet one body.*

*21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*

*27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

It is absolutely amazing to me the way God gifts different people, in different ways, to strengthen the body of Christ and to encourage the body of Christ.

And many of us get church all wrong. We look for what the church can do for us, not what our role is in the church. We’ve all heard it in comments such as:

I’m just not being fed.

There’s nothing here that interests me.

If the church would just...

The sermons are too boring for me.

The service is too long.

I don’t like the music.

If I were in charge I would...

The truth of the matter is that possibly the greatest problem the church faces is the lack of involvement by its members and attenders. This morning we will look to see what God’s word says about the members of God’s church.

My relationship with God, through Jesus Christ is the most important relationship in my life! Nothing compares! What would my life be like without that relationship? I can't imagine.

But let me tell you, it is more than just knowing Jesus. It is knowing that God has called me to a specific purpose in life – and that is incredibly fulfilling. And I am not talking about the call to the pastorate.

I know my purpose here on this earth. I was created to serve God. The Bible makes it clear. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For WE are HIS workmanship, created IN Christ Jesus for good works, WHICH GOD prepared beforehand so that WE would WALK IN THEM.

Did you catch that – why were we created – for good works. You have a purpose. People go through life asking:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What is my purpose?

So we were all designed a certain way to do certain things. There isn't any random chance about it. And while we see his new creation in us, and that God prepared special works for us to do, DON'T MISS THAT THERE IS OBEDIENCE ON OUR PART INCLUDED IN THIS FORMULA!!

I believe there are certain things I can do better than anyone else in this room, because that's what God made me to do. Those things we may call talents or abilities. And I believe there are things you can do that I or no one else in this room can do as well as you.

And we saw last week that when God brought me to salvation, the Bible plainly teaches that the Holy Spirit gifted me with certain supernatural, spiritual gifts. Gifts that I am to use for the edification, the building up, of the members of this specific congregation. What an incredible thought.... To know your purpose!

Question 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks:

What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

Answer: First, that all and every one, who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts; (a) **secondly, that everyone must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.**

In 1 Peter 4:10 it reads, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace”

So often in the church people say:

- Oh - I could never speak or teach like him
- I could never sing like her

Good! It would be horrible if we all did the same thing. God has gifted us all. And many still wonder what your spiritual gift is. How do we know? How do you determine it?

I don't think the answer is a Spiritual Gifts Test. And as I say that, I don't mean to offend all of you who have taken one, but they don't measure spiritual gifts. They are aptitude tests. How do I know this? Because you can give one of these tests to an unbeliever and it will tell him what his spiritual gift is.

But go back to 1 Peter 4:10. "As each has received a gift, use it to **serve** one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"

You start serving one another. And that is how you will find what your gift is. The idea of this passage is serving within the church body. This is what God is talking about 1 Corinthians 12. And he is talking about the church body using the metaphor of the physical body. God wants us to see ourselves as one unit.

While in our passage this morning we see the diversity in the body, versus 12 and 13 remind us of the unity in the body. And then in verse 14 Paul ramps up his discussion of the diversity of the body. Why?

The oneness of the body, the church, is built on the fact that all its members have been baptized in one spirit into one body. This was an important lesson to be applied to the problems in Corinth that we have just seen earlier in chapter 12.

Verse 14 summarizes the rest of the chapter.

Remember that there was an elitist group claiming to have an inside track on the gospel. These insiders felt secure and smug, while those outside the circle felt threatened. In verses 14 through 19 of this chapter, Paul tells these outsiders that precisely because of the diversity of gifts God has distributed in the church, that member who feels inferior cannot reasonably say he does not belong.

Then in verses 20 through 26, Paul addresses those elitists themselves. The Christian who has any particular gift, whether tongues or anything else, has no right to dismiss in any sense that fellow believer who has some other gift.

As in a physical body, the pain of one member is the pain of all. If you slam your finger in a car door you may say, "I hurt my finger" or "I hurt myself". And so Paul concludes in verse 26, "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

But I think Paul has another concern, a more universal concern. There is a big picture here. Paul is calling our attention to a tension that we live in the middle of. Every believer in Jesus Christ lives in a tension of desiring, discovering, and developing spiritual gifts that are identified in this truth of one body made up of many parts. And I think Paul is concerned that we being, by nature, a people of extremes, have a tendency to gravitate to one side or the other of any particular area of our lives. One extreme is putting too much emphasis on the whole, the body. The other extreme is putting too much emphasis on the individual parts.

While Paul is specifically addressing the elitists, and the inferiors, another way to describe the tension is as the difference between those who are “self-deprecating”, and those who are “self-exalting”.

Self-deprecation, or being critical of yourself, is what we find in verses 15-20.

Do you see what the foot is doing? He is comparing himself to someone else, in this case, a person with hand gifts and hand graces. The foot is saying, “I’m not like that person. I don’t have anything to offer because I’m not like them. I shouldn’t even be part of the body.” Self-deprecation.

But then, Paul will come to the other extreme, self-exultation in verse 21.

Do you see the difference? Before, back in verse 15, there was one that was comparing them self to another and concluding, “I don’t have anything to offer.” Here, there is a body part that’s looking at another body part and saying, “I don’t need **you!** We can get along without **you.**”

So Paul brings us into the middle of this tension, and it’s a tension which every believer in Jesus Christ lives.

The comedian Jeff Foxworthy became famous by telling a series of jokes that all began with, “You might be a redneck if...”

**Well, you might be a self-deprecator if you think we don’t need you in the church.**

Does that ever cross your mind? You come in on Sunday morning or you go to flock and you think, “They don’t need me.”

The logical conclusion that follows from that is, “I’ll just watch from the sidelines. I don’t have anything to bring to the table. I love the music so I’m just going to stay connected and be a part of this, but I’m really not a part of the body.

The apostle Paul completely rejects that line of thinking in verse 15 when he makes it clear that you are no less a part of the body.

**Well, you might be a self-deprecator if you think the sovereignty of God is actually a mistake.**

You can accuse the sovereignty of God of being in error if you compare yourself to someone else and draw the conclusion that you have nothing to offer.

The apostle Paul completely rejects that line of thinking.

In verse 11 we have seen that the Holy Spirit apportions to each one individually as he wills. And now in verse 18 we see that God himself arranged the members in the body each one of them as he chose. And so in a very real sense, if you are not participating in the body life of Clearcreek Chapel, the rest of us are being shortchanged.

You see what Paul was saying to the Corinthians?

- Some of you think God made a mistake, don’t you?

- Some of you think God blew it.
- You think he was taking a nap when it was your turn to stand in line.
- You think he overlooked you.

**Well, you might be a self-deprecator if you think unity and diversity are mutually exclusive.**

The apostle Paul completely rejects that line of thinking in verses 19 and 20.

**And on the other extreme, you might be a self-exaltor if you think we can't do without you.**

That's exactly what he is saying in verse 21, I don't need you.

But Paul says the body doesn't work like that. The body doesn't even make sense like that.

**You might be a self-exaltor if you desire to be sensational - or do you desire to be beneficial.**

As I move forward please don't hear me wrong, the sensational type gifts are necessary in the body of Christ. All gifts are beneficial when they are exercised correctly.

The issue here is the heart. What is your heart desiring? When you get up in the morning what do you want? Do you want to be sensational, or is the desire of your heart to be beneficial?

Paul compares different parts of the body in verses 22 and 23. He calls some weaker he calls some less honorable, he calls some unrepresentable. The temptation is that, in the body of Christ, we would mistakenly look around and conclude that there are some individuals who are not as important or needful in the body of Christ. And Paul words this very carefully. Look with me at first 22 and 23. On the **contrary** the parts of the body that **seem** to be weaker are **indispensable.**"

"And on those parts of the body that we **think** less honorable we **bestow** the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty..."

The way that we perceive ourselves and one another may be totally contrary to the way God perceives.

**You might be a self-exaltor if you foster faction more than fellowship.**

The apostle Paul completely rejects that line of thinking in verse 25.

**You might be a self-exaltor if you prefer independence over dependence.**

We don't need to spend a lot of time here because we rejoice in the fact that this chapter emphasizes that every Christian is given at least one gift. Nobody was left out.

There is no one who is intended to act independently.

**And finally, you might be a self-exaltor if you want the Spirit's gifts more than his fruit.**

And that thought will propel us into next week as we begin to look at chapter 13.

**CONCLUSION**

THERE IS NOTHING MORE FULFILLING IN LIFE THAN TO KNOW YOU ARE DOING EXACTLY WHAT GOD DESIGNED YOU TO DO.

You must believe that because:  
BELIEF leads to VALUES that lead to BEHAVIOR

For those of us in Christ, we must get Beyond BELIEF to service.  
I can't explain it to you. You have to experience it yourself.  
But that's when you will find out what true life in Christ is all about.  
That is the introduction to the great "love" chapter which is the essence of the fruit of the Spirit.

There is a big difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit.

- The fruit is what God is after. That is the character of Christ coming through.
- The gifts are given to enable us to achieve in increasing degree, by mutual exercise, the fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit is what God is after, and we should be much more concerned with the fruit of the Spirit than we are with the gifts of the Spirit.