

One Body, Many Parts

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Key Verse: 27

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

We thank God for his blessings and faithfulness throughout the past year. We took Psalm 66:20 for our key verse last year. It says, “Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!” We had many prayer topics last year, some more serious than others. All the Bible club leaders were graduating and there were no clear students who could take over the club leadership. So we prayed. We prayed the whole school year. And we thank God who did not reject our prayer or withhold his love from us instead he provided not one, but two new leaders. God is faithful. 2012 is now behind us and we are looking forward to 2013. We come before God and ask for his mercy and blessings for the New Year. This year we chose 1 Corinthians 12:27 as our fellowship’s key verse. Let’s read it together. “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” Now you may be wondering why in the heck we chose this verse but the reason is because each one of us, that believe, are part of the body of Christ and it’s good for us to see how we fit into the whole body of Christ.

In this passage Paul compares the church of Christ to a human body. Through this analogy we can see several instances in how the church and body have similar qualities. We find the first similarity in verses 12-13. Let’s read them. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” Our bodies are truly amazing. For example your foot has 26 bones, 33 joints, 107 ligaments, 19 muscles and tendons. And yet all of these pieces work together as a single part of your whole body. What is even more amazing is the sheer complexity of our bodies. The online anatomy encyclopedia, Anatomica, lists over 7,500 parts of the human body which include around 650 muscles, 206 bones, 78 organs and 11 systems. Each one is different from another serving its own specific purpose and function and yet they work together perfectly as one body. Paul explains that just as the various parts of our body work together, so the church is filled with many different people that come together to form one body. Through this the first similarity we see is the unity of the body, for all believers have been united in Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit to form one body that works together for a common purpose. This unity exists even though there are so many differences such as race, age, gender, culture, education, and income to name only a few. It is not easy to have this kind of unity. Just look at how divided our country is at the moment. Even though America is at a critical state with the economy, still congress couldn’t come together as we approached the fiscal cliff. The only way we can be really unified, and remain that way, is if we were all baptized by the same Spirit and have it dwelling within us. Otherwise our pride and differences will tear us apart. One of the things that I love about our ministry is this beautiful unity. We are united in Christ. I have experienced it so many times. Many many years ago, I was doing a project in California and I visited one of our local chapters in L.A. I was amazed at how they treated me there. They treated me as if I was someone important and they didn’t even know me. Another example is from this summer when about 30 of our members from the Chicago-land area visited Washington DC and our UBF chapter there. Again they welcomed us with open arms. Not only did they open their

church for us letting us sleep there but they fed us dinner and breakfast. Some even they opened their houses to us as well. We have this beautiful unity simply because we love of Jesus.

The second thing we see is the diversity of the body. Take a look at verse 14. “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.” As I mentioned earlier it’s not easy being united in one body because we’re all different. And those differences threaten to tear us apart. However the other danger is to become all the same. Generally speaking, people like to gather with those who are like themselves. If you go to cafeterias you find that people gather according to their similarities, by race or whatever. But just as the body has many distinct parts, so the church has many distinct people. And just because there is unity in the body of Christ, we all don’t have to become the same. In the body, the bones don’t start to become like muscles, or the organs like bones. Unity does not mean uniformity but diversity brought together by the love and Spirit of God. And that’s the beauty of it, where all of us can use our individual differences to build up the body of Christ. I have heard some people say that we are a Korean church, or we are an American church, but we are neither of those, we are a Christian church that has many different nationalities in it. Sometimes because of our pride we desire to make other people more like ourselves or think that our way of doing ministry is the only way, and since it is close to lunch and we are all hungry I will use a food analogy. We want to make everyone into a puree where everything is ground up until we are all made the same, but in reality we are more like a stew, with chunks of carrots, potatoes and meat so we are all one but we have distinct flavors. We are one body but we are different. We have to remember this especially when we have difficulties because of our differences. We are not the enemy, that is Satan and he tries to use those differences to cause division.

Our diversity is the beauty of the body of Christ because it’s not boring with everyone being all the same, but sometimes it’s uncomfortable because we may feel inferior to another person in the body. Take a look at verses 15-16. “If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.” There are times when we may wish that we were more like someone else. But according to God’s providence, we can’t choose what part of the body we want to be. Maybe God has made you the foot to serve, but you really wanted to be the hand because it can wear beautiful rings and play an instrument or draw wonderful things like designing a building. Or maybe you’re an ear in body of Christ and good at listening, but secretly you envy someone who is an eye because people comment on how beautiful eyes are but no one ever says how beautiful ears are. And it seems that people may value the eyes more and even make the ears bear the weight of glasses just to help the eyes. Do the eyes ever thank the ears for their help? According to verse 18, God arranges the parts of the body as he wants. It’s according to God’s choice for his good purpose that he puts us where he wants us. We must believe that God is good and he loves us as we are and he created us for a purpose.

The third similarity we see is interdependence. Take a look at verses 17-20. “If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” Just as God arranged our human body with all its various parts to

work together effectively, so he has also arranged the church body with diverse people who depend on one another to work as one. God's work is not a one man show, just like the body is not made up of one part but many parts that all work together in unison for the glory of God. This means that we need each other to carry out the mission that God has for us. If we are all the same, we would be lacking in other areas. If the whole body is an eye, we would be like Mike in the movie *Monster's Inc.* and we would not be able to hear. We need our eyes, ears and mouth to communicate effectively. Missing any one of them, we still may be able to do it but not as effectively. The body works so well together. The teeth chew the food, the stomach processes the food, the blood carries the food and the colon removes the food. Each has its function to do and it does its part and passes it to the next one in line. And according to verses 24-26, the parts of the body should have equal concern for one another. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it and yet if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Likewise as the body of Christ not only do we have to work together, we have to care for and love one another. How can we go on if one of our brothers or sisters in the body is suffering? That's one reason we why join the international day of prayer every years so that we can participate with other Christians throughout the world who are suffering persecution. And last year when Ruth, Moses, Vincent and Minah graduated, we were so happy for them and celebrated with them.

The fourth similarity we notice is one's worth. Look at verses 21-25. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it,²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." Unlike the culture of our day where people are considered more valuable than others because they are more beautiful, smart, talented, rich, gifted, or whatever the church should be different. This is an area that we struggle with, but we should be different from the world. According to Jesus, every Christian is so important and can contribute something to the church body because God created them. Much like our own body, the parts of the church that are strong can help carry people who are weak. And, like the parts of our body that are important but are not often seen, there are many important people in the church who are not always visible. Just because they are not visible doesn't mean they are any less important. Think about the colon, who in the world would want to be the colon? Nobody, but I tell you that it still very important and the body can't function without it. Could you live without your colon? In the body of Christ, no one honors the one who takes out the trash but it still has to be done. And sometimes the parts of the body that are not honored are more important than those who are. For example, people are often admired because of their beautiful eyes or full bodied hair, but what would you rather have, a good hair style, or a good digestive system? You can live without an eye, or a nice head of hair but you can't live without a good heart. In the church of God, every Christian who is willing to function as a part of the body is deemed worthy of love, respect, and participation because they bear the image of God and are filled with the Holy Spirit and are an equal part of the church family, even though they are not always seen. Our sense of value, or worth, must come from God and not from what we do. If we derive our value from what we do instead of from our heavenly father, then we are setting ourselves up for failure. For if we do not achieve the goals that we've set up for ourselves, then we feel unworthy and not valued. It's only when we know that we are

valuable because our heavenly father loves us, we can be happy no matter what happens in our life because our happiness comes from God and not from our success. Also when we have the right perspective of who we are in the body of Christ it keeps our significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but rather a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own but is extremely important to the body as a whole.

Let's read verse 27 together. "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." From this verse we learn that each of us, that believe in Jesus is a part of the body of Christ. None of us are insignificant for according to verse 28 God has appointed us to our task. Some to the task of teaching, speaking, healing and many more. And like an orchestra the more parts there are, the more majestic the sound. And there are different quantities of instruments. There are more violins than double basses because of the needs of the music. It's very dynamic and the needs change. However one thing always remains the same, they all must work together otherwise the music will not be good. In high school, a friend I had was a bit of a trouble maker. And he played the bass drum in the concert band. He was late for one performance they were doing. Being the trouble maker that he was, he decided that even though he was late, he was going to play all the notes he missed. So all of a sudden, he enters and starts beating the bass drum furiously to catch up. What a disruption he made and the music teacher was furious. Every person in the body of Christ is important as well as our role is also important and how we play our role is important. We have to know that in our heart. And it's good for us to tell each other how valuable we are to one another. This is one way we love one another.

You may wonder why you are here. You may have thought, "Why in the world did God lead me here?" I don't believe there are any accidents in God. God brought each of us here according to his grace and for his good purpose. We have to do it together. Each one of us is needed for there are many parts but one body. And it's important for us to remember that we are called not serve our own purpose but to serve God's purpose. The hand doesn't say I want to be a better hand to serve its own purpose. Rather the hand should serve the body for the body's purpose. And the body of Christ serves God's purpose. And according to Ephesians 4, God called some of us to be teachers, pastors, musicians, encouragers, and many more to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus until we become mature. With Jesus as our head and we are the whole body joined together by every supporting ligament building each other up in love as each part does its work.