

Romans 12 Unity and Diversity in the Body

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by^[e] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ 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 stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ 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 put the body together, giving 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. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[d]? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

Lesson: Psalms 139 says You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (You are wonderfully complex)

30 trillion cells compose the human body. Each cell has a nucleus with 23 chromosomes. One cell of codes from a DNA would make a 4000 volume library. 33 billion dollars a year a spent on things for the body.

The church is actually a living organism. Paul like to use this analogy. The body of Corinth was not functioning properly

First—Emphasize unity! If we don’t we will become disjointed.

- The head is Jesus, the Holy Spirit is the nervous system—relays orders.
- 10 Billion cells in the brain ????
- It talks about the church of Christ is one body

Second--Recognize that there are diversities of gifts in the body of the church just as the body is diverse.

- There are multiple styles on ministries
- God loves variety—just look around at creation. Look around at variety.
- But one and the same Spirit controls each of the gifts
- This tells us how we should act in groups—we should ask the Holy Spirit.

It's good to discover your spiritual gifts

Third—Need to maximize equality.

- The body of the church malfunctions when we place one member of the body over another—all parts of the body are necessary.
- So he compares two parts that are often seen, the eye and the hand, to two parts that are rarely seen, the ear and the foot.
- Some people will be jealous because they do not believe they are as important as someone else.

Fourth—Minimize self-sufficiency. People will say they don't need fellowship, they do not need to go to church. God created us to be interdependent. Verse 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. For example, the pituitary gland.

Fifth—We are all related so if one member is honored we are all honored if one member suffers then all members suffer. When honored Paul says "first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues."

Sixth—Earnestly desire the best gifts. The best gift for you is the gift God gave you. It's like saying earnestly desire the best tool.

John Piper 1 Cor 12:12-31.

Every person in the body of Christ is to do two thing; Manifest the Spirit of Christ and to bring good to the people.

When the special grace of Salvation mingles with the soul of believers there is a special manifestation of grace to unbelievers.

Perspective: Chap 13:1 indicates our gifts are nothing without love. The gage of true spirituality is the fruit of the spirit.

13 If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

...¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

PASTOR'S CHAT

First Baptist

COMMUNITY GROUPS
DECEMBER 31, 2023
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TODAY'S PASSAGE: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

THE MAIN POINT

Understand that just as God has made our bodies to work together to serve Him, He has also made our spiritual gifts to work in unity to serve the church and its mission.

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

The Grecian city of Corinth is about 48 miles west of Athens. Its history goes back at least as far as 900 B.C. Corinth was a seaport and known for its vices. Immorality and sexual sins were rampant, in part, due to a pagan temple within the city limits that was dedicated to the pagan goddess Venus. As a result, the church of Corinth had a mix of Jewish and pagan converts and related internal problems. The initial problem Paul addressed is they were confused about leadership. In 1 Corinthians 1:12 Paul says, "2 What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I Follow Paul'; another, 'I Follow Apollos'; another, 'I Follow Cephas'; still another, 'I Follow Christ.'" In addition, Paul dealt with idol worship, incest, lawsuits, marriage, etc. In Chapter 12 Paul is dealing with confusion over spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians

ICEBREAKER

Read

Psalms 139:14. What do you think this verse means that the body is "fearfully and wonderfully made?"

GROUP DISCUSSION...

1. UNITY

The parts of the body work wonderfully together. It is amazing to watch an athlete perform different movements in any sport like in the Olympics. In the same way, it is critical for the various parts of the body of the church to act in unity to meet our mission of reaching the world's lost people. Verse 13 says "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body..." If we don't emphasize unity, then we—the body—can become disjointed.

Discussion Questions:

- How does our body work in unity to serve the Lord?
- Do you consider unity when discussing church issues?
- Do you recall cases where the church had issues that disrupted unity?

CONTINUED

God loves variety—just look around at creation. God has created an incredibly diverse, beautiful, and, yes, scary universe. When dealing with spiritual gifts it is important to understand that just as the human body is diverse there is also diversity in spiritual gifts. Verse 18 says, "But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." This diversity God made allows the church to function in many parts and many ways when dealing with congregations but also dealing with non-believers outside of the church.

- Have you taken an inventory of your spiritual gifts?
- Consider the diversity of spiritual gifts and how they work together in the church.
- How do multiple styles of ministries work with spiritual gifts?

"Wholeness" is an important consideration when taking care of our bodies. One disfunction of certain parts of the body can cause sickness or even death. In the same way, the body of the church malfunctions when we place one member of the body over another—all parts of the body are necessary. Verses 24–25 says, "...But God has put the body together, giving 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." As members of the church we are all related so if one member is honored, we are all honored; if one member suffers, then all members suffer.

- How does self-sufficiency relate to equality in the church?
- How can we avoid jealousy of spiritual gifts in the church body?
- Can we achieve balance in the body by earnestly desiring the best gifts?

The following are five tips for understanding the lesson Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31:

- Read other verses in the Bible that talk about spiritual gifts (e.g. Romans 12:6, Hebrews 2:4, 1 Timothy 4:14).
- Consider your spiritual gifts and how they relate to your relationship with God.
- Look at the spiritual gifts of members in your community and understand how they relate to the mission of your community group.
- Read verses 27–31. Think about how Paul elevates the gifts over one another when the church meets as a body.
- Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 and determine the relationship between spiritual gifts and love.

NOTES:

Lessons Learned

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart

Peter teaches how the prophets searched for evidence of the Messiah, of God's plan. He speaks of the Spirit of Christ—the Holy Spirit. They were saved without fully understanding God's plan. They experience grace through faith.

He also says the angels were curious. Even angels long to look into these things. They can't relate to some of the things we experience.

¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." We are very blessed in that we have the gospel and a clear declaration of God's plan. Peter and Paul teach us how to conduct our lives to be holy through the gospel.

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

Employee to employer—most of our time is spent working. As a result, it's a chance for Christians to make an impact on non-believers.

For example, in 1 Peter 4-5 last week we learned how to be humble—turn your cares, your anxiety, over to God so you are not trying to take care of it yourself. Ask God to go first.

¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

We also learned the churches in Asia Minor were apparently suffering because of man's sin but also suffering as part of God's plan to purify the churches. Is that happening now?

Melchizedec met Abraham when returning from the rescue of Lot. His name, "King of Righteousness," doubtless suitable to his character, marked him as a type of the Messiah and his kingdom. The name of his city signified "Peace;" and as king of peace he typified Christ, the Prince of Peace, the great Reconciler of God and man.

As a result, "This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:22). Because "he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever" (Heb. 7:24), "he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

It is evident that the sacrifices of Christ are infinitely better than those of the law, which could neither procure pardon for sin, nor impart power against it. Sin would still have been upon us, and have had dominion over us; but Jesus Christ, by one sacrifice, has destroyed the works of the devil, that believers may be made righteous, holy, and happy.

The great difference between what Christ did and what the priests of the Old Testament did is summed up briefly in verses 11 and 12: Every priest stands daily ministering and offering, time after time, the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.

." This faith says, "Christ, today I have sinned. But I hate my sin. For you have written the law on my heart, and I long to do it. And you are working in me what is pleasing in your sight. And so I hate the sin that I still do, and the sinful thoughts that I contemplate.

So, in Hebrews 9–10, the Great Absence of Christ in the old covenant is a thunderclap of warning and wonder. The old covenant in and of itself is powerless. We must have a Redeemer. Otherwise, our guilt will not be removed, and God's wrath will not be averted.

That's the meaning of redemption in Hebrews 9:12: "By means of his own blood, [he secured] an eternal redemption." Redemption means that there has been a blood payment to liberate us from the bondage of the guilt of sin.

This is the greatness and the wonder of the sanctifying Christ. As he prepares his people for heaven, the only people he perfects are the perfected. The only people he sanctifies progressively are those who are already sanctified decisively. The only people he purifies are the perfectly pure.

This is the most foundational, most central, most essential achievement of Christ. By it all other achievements stand. Don't hide this. Tell it from the housetops. In Christ all guilt is removed, and all wrath averted.

The True Meaning of Christmas

1 John 1-4 John describes the meaning of Christmas.

The Incarnation of the Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

Five things that Christmas means:

1. **Salvation is by grace**—Understand the Christmas is not just a nice story, it is Bible Doctrine—the incarnation. People will say doctrine is not needed. They say, *“look I like the story, and the concepts Jesus taught but I live a good life and that will save me”*.

Christmas is not only a specific doctrine, but it is also unique. In every other religion the founder is a prophet pointing the way to God. According to the Bible Christmas is about God who come to life as a human being.

On one had you have religions that say God is so immanent in all things that incarnation is normal. If you're a Buddhist or Hindu, God is immanent in everything. On the other hand, religion like Islam and Judaism say God is so transcendent over all things the incarnation is impossible.

These other religions tell you all the things you have to do to be saved. Christianity is not a doctrine of works, it is a doctrine of salvation through grace.

2. **Christmas means we can have fellowship with God.** The doctrine means the God has gone through infinite lengths to come near to us.

But Christianity is unique because it doesn't say incarnation is normal, but it doesn't say it's impossible. It says God is so immanent that it is possible, but He is so transcendent that the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is a history-altering, life-transforming, paradigm-shattering event. In Romans 5 it says because of the incarnation at Christmas we...

3. **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.**

3. **Love really matters.** Only Christianity says that God is a communal glorious love in itself. Christianity teaches us that love was in the beginning of the world, it created the world and it is saving the world.

1 Corinthians 13

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

4. Christmas means Joy! So look at what God has done to get you to know Him personally. If the Son would come all this way to become a real person to you, don't you think the Holy Spirit will do anything in His power to make Jesus a real person to you in your heart? Christmas is an invitation to know Christ personally. Christmas is an invitation by God to say: Look what I've done to come near to you. Now draw near to me. I don't want to be a concept; I want to be your friend.

The role of joy in suffering—1 Peter 4 Suffering for Being a Christian

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

5. Christmas means a new covenant. Instead of the Mosaic covenant, now we have a new covenant that exist as a personal relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit in each believers heart.

Hebrews 10:15-18

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶ "This is the covenant I will make with them
after that time, says the Lord.
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds."^[b]

¹⁷ Then he adds:

"Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more."^[c]

¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.