

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

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INTRODUCTION

Remember, a healthy body of Christ submits to Christ as its head, recognizes that it is one body with many members, functions with individual members using their individual gifts for the common good, experiences God's promised grace, enjoys true fellowship, and results in an outward focus.

This definition of health flows from the conviction that Paul's use of the phrase *body of Christ*, always has in mind the nature and implications of two relationships: 1) the relationship between Jesus and Christians; and 2) the relationship among Christians and the fact that both are a gift from God through the Spirit.

In the last session we looked at the nature and implications of the first relationship; namely, the relationship between Jesus and Christians. Specifically, we looked at the headship of Jesus. For the next five sessions we're going to look at the nature and implications of the second relationship; namely, the relationship between Christians. We start here with the fact that in Christ we form one body with many members.

Romans 12:4 *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 *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.*

The simple fact of the matter here is that God has given us, by his Spirit, the gift of belonging to the body of Christ. Please stop for a moment and consider this. Consider with me the body metaphor.

Consider the unique necessity and value of the head. Consider that the head is that which drives the rest of the body. Consider how everything else in the body takes its cues from the head and how the carrying out of its functions are set by the head. Consider that the rest of the body can only function rightly when all parts are functioning. Consider that each part of the body has a different function. Consider that arms didn't decide to be arms and legs didn't decide to be legs. Arms and legs were designed to function in a particular way. Consider that legs don't make good lungs and lungs don't make good elbows and elbows don't make good padding to sit on. Each part of the body is especially good at doing what it does.

Now we never want to push metaphors too far, but it seems to me that we can push this one quite a ways. It's almost as if God created our bodies with the Church in mind. My main point here, is that we need to really feel this one. Our health as a body depends, in part, on whether or not we embrace the facts that as members of this one body we are all equally valuable and necessary and we share a common purpose. What a glorious thing it is when we live and think and feel according to these great truths.

COMMON PURPOSE

A right understanding of the fact that we form one body with many members begins with a right understanding that as a body we have a common purpose. Our primary purpose is to bring glory to our head, Jesus Christ.

Pastor, Matt Chandler says, "God's mission and the mission of His Church are inseparably linked. If God's mission is to be glorified through the redemption and reconciliation of a people, the Church's mission must orient around the glory of God and seek to glorify Him through redemption and reconciliation."

John 17:9-10 *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.*

In this short passage we hear Jesus talking to the Father and declaring that his aim is to be glorified by his people. Our purpose as individual members and as a collective body is to bring glory to Jesus, our head.

Again, please consider this. The way we talk together and talk about each other, the way we listen to sermons and serve in the nursery, the way we participate in DGs and pray for missionaries, the way we serve snacks and run PowerPoint, and ... are all meant to bring glory to Jesus. There has never been an animal cracker served or a volume level adjusted or a chair stacked or a gospel tract handed out or song sung that was meant to accomplish any purpose other than the glory of Jesus. Our single purpose as a body is to glorify our head.

This entire seminar is dedicated to describing how we glorify God as one body.

VALUE OF ALL OTHERS

We glorify Jesus, in part, when we recognize the value of every other part of the body. It is absolutely crucial to everyone here to recognize that you and everyone around you have value because of whose you are. Because of who your head is you have a value that is far beyond anything that you can imagine. Jesus is infinitely valuable and he bestows that value on his body.

Because of this, we want to avoid: 1) thinking of others as less valuable; and 2) thinking of our selves as less valuable.

It seems to me that we think of others as less valuable within the body primarily because we think too highly of ourselves and fail to rightly see ourselves before God.

Romans 12:3-5 *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

In this passage we see that we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought because we form one body. In other words, God, in his infinite wisdom and glory, determined, before he laid the foundation of the universe, to unite all of his people in one body as a display of our collective dependence on him. Where, then, is the place for thinking too highly of our selves or too lowly of others? No one deserves to be a part of Christ's body and there is, therefore, no place to think of others as less valuable.

Similarly, we must avoid the notion of thinking of ourselves as less than valuable or less valuable than others. This too results in a wrong focus; one that's entirely too much on ourselves and not nearly enough on God. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem you and assign value to you as a part of the body of Christ. We must embrace that value and not despise the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16, 19-20 *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... ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

1 Corinthians 12:22-24 *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. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

I don't get the sense that there's a consensus among scholars about precisely what each clause of 1 Corinthians 12:22-24 means. What is clear, however, is that while some members of the body may *appear* more honorable, the truth is, it is the rest of the body that we're called to bestow greater honor upon.

All members of the body of Christ have tremendous value because Christ, our head, has tremendous value. We must act accordingly.

NECESSITY OF ALL OTHERS

In addition to the fact that all members of the body of Christ are equally valuable before God we see in Scripture that all members of the body of Christ are equally necessary because of God. We are, as the body of Christ, quite literally made to be interdependent on one another.

1 Corinthians 12:17, 21 *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?...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."*

1 Corinthians 12:22 *On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...*

If you don't do what God made you to do it makes it impossible or, at the very least, much more difficult for us to function in a healthy way. This is real.

We're going to get more into this in the next session when we talk about our individual gifts/functions, but for now, I want to make it clear that in order for us, as a body, to function in the way God intends and communicate what God intends we absolutely, literally need each other.

Consider for a moment what we're charged with as a body:

1. **Matthew 5:12-16** *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house."¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
2. **Matthew 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
3. **Romans 12:10-18** *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited.¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*
4. **1 Corinthians 12:24-26** *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.*
5. **2 Corinthians 13:11** *Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*
6. **Galatians 5:13** *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
7. **Ephesians 4:31-32** *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*
8. **Ephesians 5:18-21** *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord*

with all your heart,²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

9. **Colossians 3:12-16** *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*
10. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*
11. **Hebrews 3:12-13** *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
12. **Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*
13. **James 1:27** *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*
14. **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
15. **1 Peter 4:8-10** *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another*
16. **1 John 3:11** *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*
17. **1 John 3:23** *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

This is just a relatively short, simple list. Much, much more could be listed under the heading of the God-given responsibilities/charges of the Church. Hopefully this is enough, however, to convince you that you simply can't do the things you're charged to do on your own. We need each other.

Many of our charges are physically impossible or made extremely more difficult to do on our own. It's not physically possible to make disciples of all nations on our own. It's not physically possible to teach everyone all the commands of Jesus on our own. It's not physically possible to visit all the orphans and widows on our own.

And some of the charges are simply logically impossible to do on our own. It's not logically possible for us to love one another on our own. It's not logically possible for us to be a city on a hill on our own. It's not logically possible for us to exhort one another on our own. It's not logically possible for us to stir one another up to good works on our own.

CONCLUSION

Again, simply, we need each other in the body.

Together, all Christians everywhere from all time, make up the body of Christ. We make up one body. Our body has one purpose. And each member of the body is valuable and necessary because God has made each member valuable and necessary.

It is wrong to think of our selves solely (or even primarily) as individuals. When we came to faith in Christ we were forever brought into the family of God. God intends to show and accomplish certain things in the world uniquely through his body.

In the next session we are going to talk about the unique, individual functions or gifts assigned to each member of the body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the most significant thing that you heard in this session? Why?
2. Have you ever thought of the church in the same way as you do your body? Talk about some of the parallels that Pastor Dave mentioned between your body and the Church.
3. What do you think of the fact that we have a collective purpose as the body of Christ? What do you think of our purpose (to glorify our head, Jesus)?
4. Have you ever thought of yourself as being as valuable as everyone else in the church? Have you ever thought of everyone else as valuable as yourself in the church?
5. Have you thought of yourself as necessary to the church? Have you thought of others as necessary to the church?
6. What is one way that you need to change your behavior in light of what we discussed here?