

Series: Understanding the Body of Christ
Tonight's Lesson: How the Body of Christ Can Function Effectively

Introduction:

1. In time past, God worked on the earth through the nation of Israel, but now God is doing something different. He is working on the earth through a new and living organism called the church, the body of Christ.
2. The body of Christ is not a denomination, a religious system, or some organization.
3. The body of Christ is composed of believers in Christ who have been brought together into a spiritual union by God's Holy Spirit. Christ is our Head (**Colossians 1:18**) and Christ is our life (**Colossians 3:4**).
4. In this series, we have examined several different doctrinal issues concerning the body of Christ, but tonight we will examine an extremely practical portion of Scripture dealing with the functioning of the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12-31**
5. How can the body of Christ function effectively within the context of a local assembly of believers?

First, we must learn to appreciate the diversity of Christ's body. vs. 12-14

1. How many physical bodies do you have? Of course, just one. But how many various members do you have that make up your body? Many.
2. Verse 12 says, "...so also is Christ" speaking of the body of Christ. vs. 14, cf. vs. 27
3. **One** Spirit (God's Spirit) baptized all of us into **one** body (in Christ). vs. 13
 - Sin had left us all barren, dry, and thirsty. But all of us have tasted and partaken of the same fountain. The living Fountain of God's Spirit has refreshed and restored us. vs. 12; cf. **John 4:14, 7:37-39**
4. But notice the diversity in the body. Verse 12 speaks of Jews, Gentiles, bond, and free.
5. God is not in the cookie-cutter business. Verse 14 declares that there is **one** body, but **many** members. There is diversity in the body of Christ just as there is in your physical body and in your physical family.
6. Let me make it clear: to function within the body of Christ effectively you have to learn to get along with people who are **different** than you.
7. Many people sit at home and have no influence for Christ because they have never learned this principle. Somebody ticked them off, hurt their feelings, didn't pat them on the back, and they took their marbles and went home. What a shame.
8. Do you desire to be a servant of the Lord in the body of Christ? **2 Timothy 2:24** would be a great verse to commit to memory. Sometimes fellow Christians can make you scratch your head, but instead of being resentful, learn to appreciate the diversity.

Second, we must value our contribution to Christ's body. vs. 15-20

1. Every believer has a role to play in the functioning of Christ's body on earth. But all of us are built differently and have a different role to play.
2. Paul again uses the illustration of a physical body in verses 15-17. The idea is somebody who is unhappy and disappointed with his function in the body.

3. Do you know what will totally frustrate you in your walk with Christ? When you try to be something you are not. If I try to use my hands as I would my feet, imagine the frustration. Or, if I tried to use my feet as I would my hands, how upsetting it would be.
4. Don't try to be somebody else - you be who God made you in Christ. You cannot sit around wishing you were another member of the body. You have a function to perform and your passion should be to perform that function well and in harmony with the rest. God placed you into the body as it has pleased Him. vs. 18
5. Every member cannot fulfill the same function. If they did, the body of Christ would be greatly hindered in its work. vs. 19-20

Third, we must recognize our need for every member of Christ's body. vs. 21-27

1. Paul dealt with those in the body who feel **inferior** to other members and assured them that their contribution was vital (vs. 15-17). But now Paul deals with those who think they are **superior** to other members of the body. vs. 21-22
2. C.R. Stam writes, "The man with the inferiority complex questions whether he even belongs to the body, while the man with the superiority complex acts as if he thinks he is the whole body."
 - The first guy says, "I am not of the body."
 - The second guy says, "I have no need of you."
3. Remember this Christian, while you **are** a vital member of the body, you are just **one** of its many members. Paul said that every member is necessary (vs. 22).
4. **Illustration:** What is the most important member of your physical body? Probably your head. It gives direction to the rest of the body. But imagine if that was the **only** member you had. Your head is just sitting there on the pew (just a big brain). You couldn't do anything. It needs the other members to accomplish anything.
5. This passage (verse 23-27) gives us the picture of different members of the body valuing and esteeming one another highly. Those members who receive more limelight and recognition bestow more abundant honor on those members that are behind the scenes getting the job done (vs. 23).
6. Why do we do this? Because that is God's attitude and heart. vs. 24
7. God desires for us to recognize and appreciate diversity within the body, but maintain an attitude of oneness of heart and mind with one another. vs. 25-27
8. This passage reveals to us the attitudes of grace that we should possess as members of the body of Christ. We need each other and our actions and attitudes should reflect this.

In Conclusion:

1. God had given different gifts to different people within the church at Corinth. God lists the communication gifts first, and "*after that*" the confirmation sign gifts that He bestowed during the Acts time period. vs. 28
2. The Corinthians were caught up in the miraculous sign gifts and were not valuing other members of the body and their contribution to the body.
3. When Paul talks about "coveting the best gifts" in verse 31, he is not talking about individuals wishing they had somebody else's gift. He is saying that corporately, as

a church, they needed to value the communication gifts far more than the confirmation sign gifts. He will explain why in chapters 13 and 14.

4. Christian, you are a vital member of Christ's body. Fulfill your role and esteem highly others in their contribution to the body.