

One Body Many Gifts, Part 1

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12–28

Code: 1860

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 Paul has a very important and practical word for us on the subject of one body and many gifts. It is my prayer that the Spirit of God will use this subject not just as encouragement or instruction, but as a catalyst to alter your behavior as a believer in relation to Him and to His church during all the years to come.

A. The Church Is Not an Organization

Unfortunately, Christianity has become very organized. As one writer put it: "When Christians get organized, they get very un-Christian." It is clear from any study of church history that this is the time when the church has become most like the world's organization. Today, organization is more sophisticated than it has ever been. There is no question about the fact that the church, for the most part, has been turned into an organization.

1. It Is Not a Promotional Agency

The church was never designed to be ordered along the lines of the world's organizational principles. It was never designed to be a management outfit. It was never designed to follow business philosophy. It was never designed to be a selling agency in which people are motivated by Madison Avenue promotion, gimmicks, and moneymaking schemes. Unfortunately, it has become just that.

Two church ads illustrated this to me. The church uses amazing gimmicks to fulfill what they assume is their responsibility:

a. Gospel Birds

One ad said to attend a certain church because that coming Sunday they were featuring the Hanson Gospel Birds. The ad said, "These birds eat with a fork, fly backwards, open padlocks, ride airplanes, and swallow small swords." Those were the Hanson Gospel Birds.

b. Gospel Bottles

Another ad advertised a service on a Sunday night where a converted alcoholic was going to play gospel music on converted booze bottles to illustrate the transformation in his life. Instead of drinking out of the bottles, he was going to blow gospel music back into them.

You say, "That is ridiculous!" Of course it is, but it does illustrate the fact that the church has lost the concept of what it is supposed to be. The church is not a place to go to watch gospel birds. It is not a place to go to hear a man play the converted booze bottles. The church was never designed to be a gimmick to attract people.

2. It Is Not a Profit-Making Business

The church was never intended to be a business for profit-making. There are churches today that own money, property, businesses, and corporations, and they are turning a profit. At one of our elders meetings, one very kind and well-meaning organization wanted to give us a lot of stainless steel. This was tremendous because stainless steel is very valuable. However, it was all built to fit a certain kitchen and we would have to take it like it was. The question immediately came up: "Will it fit our kitchen?" "No." "Can we use it in our kitchen?" "No." "But it's very valuable. What are we going to do with it?" One idea that surfaced was to sell it for a profit. Well, it was a kind gesture, but our thinking was that we were not in the stainless steel business; we were a church. The church is not a profit-making brokerage for people who want to unload certain items as a charity write-off. That is not our business.

3. It Is Not Run by Paid Professionals

The church was never designed to be run by paid professionals who do all the work while everybody else watches. We live in a society like this. We are all watchers. We sit at home and watch the world happen on the tube. If we leave home, it is to go and watch something, such as people playing games, or people singing and making music. We have no involvement, no responsibility, and no commitment...but we watch. The church has also fallen into this category. If you look at the church page on Saturday night, you will have difficulty distinguishing it from the movie page. "Who is playing where? Where will we go this week? Over here they are showing a movie." "Yes, but in this church it's a double feature." "Over here they have Hanson's Gospel Birds." "But over here there is a converted man blowing booze bottles." Where do we go? In other words, the church has been turned into a spectator place -- the local religious production.

4. It Is Not a Community Social Center

I am also convinced that the church was never intended by God to be a community social center where everybody goes because it's a nice place to go. It is not like a country club -- you don't have to pay.

B. The Church Is an Organism

What is the church? The church is an organism, not an organization. This is the perspective at Grace Community Church.

1. An Organism Is Alive

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, is attempting to show that the church is an organism. And an organism is living. It is different than an organization. A corpse is organized, but it isn't alive. A corpse has all the limbs in the right place, the bone structure is flawless, all the organs are in the right spot and connected to the right things -- everything is there -- but it is not living. It is an organization at that point, but it has ceased to be an organism.

The difference between an organism and an organization can also be illustrated as the difference between you and your car. The dictionary says that an organization is a structured system. But an organism is a living system. Your car is structured. It has a frame, it has steel, it has everything it needs, and it works to perform a certain function when you carry out the things that are commensurate with its structure. But it isn't a living organism. You don't call your car and say, "Come

and get me, I'm stuck down here!" Your car cannot respond as a living thing.

2. The Church Is Alive

The church is also not like a car. The church is not a highly structured organization with all the right parts, with nice, comfortable seats, with many supertrained, tremendous technicians and mechanics, and driven by a hotshot preacher. No. The church is an organism. It is a living, breathing, vital life. I think that Paul wanted to get this truth across with great fervency. Every individual in the church is alive. Pulsing through all of us is the life of God -- eternal life (Gk. *aionios zoe*), God's life, and God's Spirit. We are living. Just as every cell and every member in your body is alive, so everyone in the church is alive. We are a body.

Now, when the New Testament wants to speak of the church in terms of analogies, it frequently uses analogies of living organisms. For example, the church is called...

a. A Bride

b. A Vine and Branches -- Christ is the vine and we are the branches.

c. A Flock -- We are sheep and Christ is the Shepherd. Sheep are living, breathing, and vital.

d. A Family -- This analogy comes from Ephesians 2:19 and Romans 8:14-17. The church is a family and we are sons who cry out, "Abba, Father." A family is living and organic.

So, when God the Holy Spirit wants to show us the church, He shows it to us in organic terms -- in terms that will say to us, "Everybody is a living part, nobody is a spectator." The church isn't a structured organization run by professionals; it is a living, breathing, vital organism.

But, the best metaphor that has ever been used to define the church -- the one never appearing in the Old Testament but unique to the church -- is that the church is a body. First Corinthians 12:12 says, "For as the body is one...so also is Christ." Christ's church is like a human body. We are an organism. We are not a structured system; we are a living system. We are not just organized; we are alive. The church is a plurality of living cells beating with eternal life (Gk. *aionios zoe*).

REVIEW

Paul's message to the Corinthians was directed to the fact that they were not functioning as a body. They were totally chaotic. Their particular manifestation of the body of Christ was definitely crippled, spastic, and out of control. They were not portraying the proper image of Christ in the world. They were carnal. They were immature. They were immoral. They were selfish. They were proud. They were heretical. They were divisive. They fostered parties of opposition. They were enamored with human philosophy. They identified in little cliques under certain spiritual teachers. They tolerated sin. They were suing each other. They had a Women's Lib movement. They were gluttonous. They were drunkards. They were sexually evil. They allowed pagan worship ritual to be brought into their own worship. They committed orgiastic sins at the love feast. They desecrated the Lord's Table. And they perverted and twisted the area of spiritual ministries. As a result of all of this, the body of Christ was distorted and the image of Christ in the world was lost.

As Paul reaches chapter 12, the indication he gives is that in no other area was there more discord or disunity evident than in the area of spiritual gifts. In an area where the body ought to have been

functioning, there was chaos. Why? For one thing, the Corinthians had counterfeited the true gifts. For another thing, Satan had moved in and was counterfeiting the gifts in the name of the Holy Spirit. In addition to that, everybody was seeking the showy gifts -- the public gifts, the speaking gifts. Terrible chaos was the result. People who didn't have the showy gifts felt inferior. People who did have them felt superior. There were people grumbling and griping because they couldn't get certain gifts, while others were lording it over the ones who couldn't get those gifts. So, instead of the body functioning in beautiful harmony, there was chaos. The Corinthians, in their self-seeking, selfish, attention-getting, ego-pandering efforts, were seeking the showy gifts.

Paul is saying to them, "You are a body. In a body the hand doesn't say, 'If I can't be the eye, I'm leaving,' or, 'I'm frustrated,' or, 'I've been cheated.'" His point is that you must be content with the design of God. You must allow God to put the body together the way He planned, accept the sense of divine dignity that God has placed in every member, and minister in the area God has gifted you in.

When the Corinthians began to seek for other gifts, they wouldn't minister the gifts they did have, and chaos resulted. In verse 11 Paul says, "All of the gifts are given by the same Spirit, who divides them out to every man as He wills." These are divine and sovereign gifts. There isn't anything to seek for or to chase after. To seek certain gifts shows discontent with one's own gifts and a selfish desire for the showy gifts. There are some people who do not have the gift of teaching. Other people have confirmed that they do not have the gift of teaching and yet they continue to seek the places of teaching. There are people today who believe that you haven't received a certain dimension of the spiritual life until you have received the gift of tongues. So they continually seek for it, but that is not what God intends. It is precisely this problem that Paul is confronting in 1 Corinthians 12.

Beloved, there is nothing to seek. You will find no such injunction or exhortation to seek spiritual gifts, but only to accept what God has given in humility and faithfulness, and then minister. But the Corinthians wanted the showy, self-seeking, glorifying gifts. I fear that many in the modern Charismatic movement have been caught in the same trap. God never intended all of us to have all the same gifts. That is the beauty of the body.

In this chapter, Paul wants to make the Corinthians face the truth that they are not to seek other gifts. They are not to feel inadequate because they don't have some showy gift and they are not to feel proud if they do. Paul presents an analogy of a human body and then draws out of it an application. He says that the body and the church are similar. Each is an organism with many parts, each is complete only when all those parts function, and each part is unique and yet dependent. When the parts don't cooperate, there is chaos. So, the church is like a human body. Paul's analogy begins in verse 12 and runs through verse 26. Then in verse 27 he shifts gears and makes the application. First, we begin with...

I. THE ANALOGY (vv. 12-26; 28a)

Paul develops his analogy along four lines: Unity, Diversity, Sovereignty, and Harmony. First of all...

A. Unity (vv. 12-13)

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink...one Spirit."

1. Spiritual Unity

The point is very simple: A body is one and yet has many members. The church is one and yet has many members. Our unity is emphasized because we have all been placed into one body by one Spirit and made to drink one Spirit -- we are born of one Spirit. We are placed into one body by the baptism with one Spirit. We are indwelt by one Spirit.

a. Ephesians 4:3 -- "...keep the unity of the Spirit...." We are all one. We have the common life of God in our souls. The Spirit of God lives in us. We have eternal life (Gk. *aionios zoe*). We have that eternal life pulsing through all of us.

b. Ephesians 2:15-16 -- "...to make in Himself [Christ] of two [Jew and Gentile] one new man..." (v. 15). He took Jew and Gentile and made them into one new man. The word "new" is not new in time (Gk. *neos*), but new in quality (Gk. *kainos*). He has made a new kind of man in a new kind of existence. Verse 16 says, "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body...."

c. Ephesians 4:4-6 -- "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

d. Galatians 3:28 -- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (cf. Rom. 10:12). Paul calls us fellow citizens, fellow partakers, fellow members, and fellow heirs (Eph. 2:19; 3:6; 4:25).

e. John 17:20-23 -- "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one...." Jesus wants us to be one. The Holy Spirit comes on Pentecost, makes us one, and Jesus' prayer is answered...positionally. Jesus wanted this unity and the Spirit of God brought about that unity -- we are one body.

2. Spiritual Necessity

There are no spiritual loners. There are no people on the outside. There are no drifters. There are no spectators. We are one. The life of God is pulsing through you and me. You are as vital to the organism as any limb of a human body is vital to that body. There are no degrees of importance or responsibility in terms of significance. Everyone is an equal, spiritual necessity. We are an organism, and an organism's entire life is dependent on every single part, no matter how minute it is.

So, the church is not an organization, a business, or a group of people who come to watch what happens while the paid professionals run the show. We are a living cell -- a community of people who live and breathe the same air. We are citizens of the same Kingdom, members of the same family, a bride for the same bridegroom, sheep of the same flock, branches on the same vine, and best of all, members of the same body. You are just as important as me, and I am just as important as you. There is no reason for you to say, "I don't matter. I can hang loose on the fringe. I'm not really a part." Oh yes you are! If the life of God lives in your soul, by the presence of the Spirit of God, you are vital. And if you are not an active and practical part of what is happening in the body, then the body is crippled. You say, "You mean I'm that important?" That is what God is trying to

make you understand. Maybe you don't understand how important you are because you have never tried to fulfill your importance and never saw what could be done.

B. Diversity (v. 14)

"For the body is not one member, but many."

1. Unity Demands Diversity

a. The Illustrations

1) An Auto Plant

What would happen if the following situation occurred in an auto assembly plant? Suppose that all the workers got together and had a big labor meeting and announced to the management, "We are united. We have solved our problems. We are of one mind, and there is such great unity in this plant, that we have all decided, without any dissent, that we are all going to screw on rear taillights." There would not be anything to screw the rear taillight on to! In order for one unit to come off that assembly line, there has to be diversity. The same thing is true of the body of Christ. God does not want a bunch of spiritual rubber ducks dropping out of some divine mold. There has to be distinctions. Paul gives us this concept in verse 14: "For the body is not one member, but many." There has to be different functions. Every Christian is a spiritual snowflake -- unique and essential to the body of Christ and to a local community of believers who are the representation of that greater body. You are absolutely essential. Unity and diversity form Paul's basic theme.

2) A Football Team

If all the members of a football team said to the coach, "We had a meeting, and are we united! We have all decided to play quarterback," they would not have a team. But as I look at movements today, I see forty-four quarterbacks. I see seven thousand people screwing on rear taillights. Many say, "If you don't have that gift, you haven't arrived." So everyone chases after the same gift. As a result, they don't do what they should do to make the body what God wants it to be. The body gets a case of spiritual hydrocephalus -- everyone is flowing to the head.

I remember in one "Flash Gordon" episode that there was a race of people who were all head and no body. And I see that in the church today. Everybody is running to be the head, or to get on the face, be an ear, an eye to be seen, or a mouth that can speak. Unity demands diversity. We all have to do different things.

b. The Implications

In the city of Corinth everyone wanted the same showy gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:29 Paul asks, "Is everyone supposed to be an apostle? Is everyone supposed to be a prophet? Is everyone supposed to be a teacher? Is everyone supposed to work miracles? Is everyone supposed to heal? Is everyone supposed to speak with languages? Is everyone supposed to interpret?" What is the implied answer? Of course not! But you will notice that he is talking about either showy offices or gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, and speaking in languages. And today I see the church doing the same thing all over again.

Paul's point is clear: A body is one because it has all the necessary, functioning parts. We had all better be operating or the body is not going to properly present the picture of Jesus Christ. I don't know what your gifts are, but you ought to know how the Spirit of God uses you, and you ought to be able to define your ministries and be useful to God.

c. The Improvement

When many of the living, breathing members of an organism are not ministering, they jam up the functioning of the body. Can you imagine a body in rebellion? It happens in the church. So we have to train a foot to do what the hand does because there aren't enough hands to do the job. We

compensate. One of the reasons that the church becomes organized is to do what the organism won't do. Unfortunately, organization takes place in order to bypass the carnal people. What really ought to be done is to deal with the carnality instead of organizing around it.

2. God Demands Diversity

Diversity is not accidental. God doesn't say, "Let's see...I will throw a few gifts down there and see where they land." No, gifts are the very essence of the body. The church works when every member begins to minister their gift.

a. Inspiring the Flock

The first time that I had ever said anything regarding this subject, it really revolutionized our church. One day I said, "If you're waiting for this organization to give you a ministry -- forget it. We are not going to give you one until you show us that you're a faithful minister of your gift. So you better take your gift and minister." One lady came up to me and said, "I have the gift of teaching, but I've checked and there are no openings in the primary department." And I said, "Are there any kids in your neighborhood that age?" "Oh, yes!" "Teach them." "You mean, just go right out and teach them?" "Go right out and teach them." Some people say to me, "I feel that I have the gift of teaching, but I don't have a class." I say, "Do you know somebody that knows less than you?" "Yes." "Then teach him." I will never forget what happened. Little by little people began to minister and then the body was functioning. Then you are saying to people, "Be faithful at this level and God will be faithful to put you in the place of a strategic service." Begin to minister -- you are a living part of this body.

b. Instructing the Flock

You say, "Well, why do you talk at us?" All I am doing is giving you the input so you can minister. I do the feeding. I am trying to pour in some fuel that you can thrive on. We provide a kind of spiritual smorgasbord. We don't expect everyone to come and do everything. We don't say, "If you don't have a Bible study, you're against the Bible." I have actually heard preachers say that. All we say is: "If you want to take advantage of what is here, we will try to feed you and give you what you need to develop a ministry within the body of Christ." A believer who doesn't have a ministry is a contradiction -- denying God the right to use him in the way He has gifted and prepared him to be used. So, diversity is no accident. There is unity, diversity, and third...

C. Sovereignty (vv. 18, 24b, 28a)

1. Harmonious Design (v. 18)

"But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased Him."

Here Paul turns to the One who created the body. By implication in this analogy you can prove that Paul was not an evolutionist. He believed God created the body as well as the church by virtue of the statement in reference to the analogy of sovereignty: "But now hath God set the members...." God designed every member. God did not put out a monotonous line of uniform Christians; He put out a group of people who were one and yet individually unique.

a. God's Placement

The word "set" in verse 18 refers to the act of divine appointment. Just as God planned the physical body with all of its parts, so He planned the church. You have the gifts you have because you are exactly what God wanted you to be, minus your sin. Does that give you a sense of divine dignity? Instead of saying, "Well, why didn't I get this gift?" or, "Why don't I have this gift?" or, "I'm going to seek for this gift," why not just be content with what God has given you and get into your mind the sense of divine dignity that God has granted you? Unparalleled dignity is given to every part of the

body.

b. God's People

How many of the members has God set in the body as it pleased Him? Every one of them. When you are not content with your gift, you are rebelling and acting selfishly against the sovereign and supreme will of God. You are like the imaginary antagonist in Romans 9:20 saying to the potter, "...Why hast thou made me thus?" instead of saying, "God, I just want to thank You for making me like this so I can minister in a way that is necessary for the body."

The dignity in the body of Christ does not belong to the people with the showy gifts. The dignity in the body does not belong to the people who are up front. The dignity in the body belongs to every member, because every member is what he or she is by the sovereign will of God. You are that spiritual snowflake; you are that marvelous one that God has made out of all the world of men to be what you are, and to be in His body for His glory and the blessing of all the other saints.

Sometimes we think that the only people who are important are the people up front. If the people up front really think about it, they know that the people who are important are the people behind the scenes creating the opportunity for the people up front to be there. With your gift you are God's masterpiece as it has pleased Him.

c. God's Pleasure

Notice that verse 18 also says, "...as it hath pleased Him." Please remember this: A Christian does not select his own gift. You don't have any part in it -- God does. Do you realize the chaos that would be created if everyone were selecting their own gift? Do you think that you can organize the entire body of Christ? God had to do that! For me to question God, feel inferior, or feel superior is ridiculous. There should be a sense of dignity in every individual believer. You have not only been created in Christ Jesus, but placed within you is a marvelous capacity to minister to the body of Christ and to God Himself. And you ought to understand that lofty dignity. I think that it is terrible when some Christians are not content with what God has given them as a ministry and, instead, are proudly pursuing something showy.

1) No Command to Seek a Gift

There is not a single command in the Bible to seek a spiritual gift. You say, "What about 1 Corinthians 14:39: 'Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy...?'" Is brethren singular or plural? Plural -- brethren, many of you, all of you. What is Paul saying? He is saying, "When you come together as a church, seek to have the gift of prophecy used. Don't forbid languages -- God may want to use that gift if there are some unbelieving Jews present -- but seek to prophesy." He is not saying to go seek the gift of prophecy. He is saying, "Brothers, when you come together collectively, seek that prophecy be exalted. Let's get some teaching started." That verse is not an individual command to a Christian to seek the gift of prophecy. You cannot seek a gift.

2) No Place for Discontent

There is no place for discontent. There is no place for selfishness. There is no place for conceit.

a) Hebrews 2:4 -- "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" The gifts are always given according to His own will.

b) 1 Corinthians 12:11 -- "...dividing to every man severally as He will."

c) 1 Corinthians 12:18 -- "But now hath God set the members...as it hath pleased Him." The bestowing of gifts is all up to the sovereign will of God.

d) Romans 12:3 -- "...according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

God saved us. God placed us in the body with certain gifts. So Paul says to the Corinthians, "Quit chasing the showy gifts." If you chase a gift that you don't have, will you get it? No. What will you get? A counterfeit. Unfortunately, we see a lot of that today.

2. Harmonious Blending (v. 24b)

"...but God hath tempered the body together..."

The word "tempered" in the Greek means "mixed together." It is a term used for mixing colors -- artistic terminology. It is harmonious blending. God not only chooses the gifts for you, but He mixes you in with the right people, so that the right combination will work in the right location.

a. Painting the Portrait

1) Blending the Gifts

You say, "Why am I at my church?" God mixed you in there for ministry. Imagine it this way: In a previous illustration we had an artist's palette that contained the primary colors. Those primary colors represented the gifts of the Spirit: the permanent edifying gifts such as giving, mercy, teaching, prophesying, and so on. We said that when the Spirit of God gives you your gift, He takes a certain amount from each of these different combinations and mixes up a color that is yours, and yours alone. You are a unique individual. You are a combination of many gifts (or areas of giftedness).

2) Blending the Members

But this analogy goes a step further. Once the Spirit has made you the color He wants you to be, then He transfers you to the canvas of the church exactly in the spot He wants you to be right next to the other colors. So, when the body is put together, everybody is in the right spot. When the picture is finished, it is a picture of Christ. You are not only the right color, but you are the right color in the right place. Isn't that a beautiful concept? God not only gifts you, but He mixes you into the body in just the right place.

b. Preventing the Portrayal

Can you imagine some color saying, "I'm going to fade. I'm going to run. I'm going to drip all over the color next to me," or, "I refuse to be a color"? When that happens and the portrait is held up before the world, what do they see? It is hard to tell. I'm not sure they really know. You need to think of the body with that perspective. You are a combination of the primary colors designed to be a gifted individual like no other. You are strategic because if you are gone, part of the portrait is gone. If parts of the portrait are missing from different places, the world looks at the canvas of the church and cannot really see what it is supposed to be. It is sad, selfish, and inconsistent when we rebel and the portrait of Christ is lost.

3. Harmonious Leadership (v. 28a)

"And God hath set some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..."

In this verse, Paul uses a similar phrase as in verse 18: "God hath set." This is divine appointment. In addition to the gifts, and in addition to the blending of the gifts, He gives gifted men who lead and direct the church.

a. The Spirit's Helpers

Many of the famous artists, such as da Vinci and Michelangelo, had other artists that worked for them. The artist would paint his basic work, and then the other artists would fill in and touch up any gaps under the direction of the artist. The Holy Spirit is the artist, and He puts us on the canvas in the right place, but He also has some helpers -- the gifted men.

b. The Spirit's Perfecters

Ephesians 4:11 says, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Their job is to perfect the saints -- to make those colors as vivid, as bright, and as beautiful as they can so that the portrait of Christ is clear. That is God's calling. God chooses the men and women to have the responsibility in different areas of leadership.

1) The Twelve

One of the first things the Lord Jesus did when He came to earth was to choose out twelve men. When one of them defected, through the selection process in Acts 1:24-26, He chose Matthias.

2) Paul

After His resurrection, Jesus chose Paul. And Paul even says he had nothing to do with it: "I was going to Damascus. The next thing I knew, I was in the ministry" (Ac. 26:12-18).

3) The First Missionaries

When God wanted two missionaries to go to the Gentile world, the Holy Spirit stopped off in Antioch and said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them" (Ac. 13:2b). So it is that God's sovereignty chooses the leadership. His sovereignty selects those who shall be the gifted men to assist the Holy Spirit in making the portrait of Christ all that it should be.

Beloved, we have to recognize that we are in a body and that the body is one. We are a part of that oneness. We must sense that. We have the life of the Spirit in us just like everyone else. "...he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17), so we are all in it together. Yet there is diversity, and every one of us is unique and exactly as God made us. There is a tremendous dignity in that. You are not an accident. You were planned before the foundation of the world to be you (Eph. 1:4). And you are to use what you have been given. Realize that this is God's plan, and don't chase something you don't have, don't be something you can't be, but say, "God, if this is what I am, then I sense that You wanted it so. I sense the dignity in that, and I will minister for You."

You Ain't Nothin' Till He Calls It!

We should never have movements. They always seem to be about the showy gifts. Have you ever heard of a giving movement, where everyone is seeking the gift of giving? Have you ever heard of a helps movement? In the history of the church there has never been a helps movement. Has there ever been a showing mercy movement? No. But there have been movements involving tongues and healing. All the movements do is create chaos. God has put the body together in the way He wants. And when God says it, that's the way it ought to be.

There was a baseball umpire in the major leagues by the name of Bill Clem. One day he was umpiring an important game. There was a runner on third base. The batter hit a deep fly to left field. The left fielder went way back, caught the ball, and rifled the ball home with his shotgun arm as the runner on third broke for the plate. It was a perfect throw on one hop to the catcher. The ball, the catcher, and the runner all hit the plate at the same time as dust flew everywhere. The umpire hesitated in his decision until the dust cleared. One bench screamed, "He's out! He's out!" The other bench screamed, "Safe! He's safe!" Bill Clem turned around and looked at both benches and said, "He ain't nothin' till I call it!" God looks at us and says, "You ain't nothin' till I call it." But when He has called it, then you are something. And the something that you are is the something He wanted you to be, and it is desperately needed by the rest of us.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What things was the church never designed to be? Explain each one.
2. If the church is not an organization, what is it?

3. How is the church different from an organization? Give some examples.
4. What is it that pulses through the life of every believer?
5. What are the different analogies that the New Testament uses to describe the church? Why does the Holy Spirit use these particular analogies?
6. In what ways were the Corinthians not functioning as a body should? What was the result of their behavior?
7. Why was there chaos in the Corinthian church in the particular area of spiritual gifts?
8. How are the human body and the church similar?
9. Along what four lines does Paul develop his analogy?
10. Why does Paul emphasize the unity of the body of Christ?
11. Why are there no spiritual loners in the body of Christ?
12. What does unity demand? Explain.
13. What were the kinds of gifts the Corinthians were seeking for?
14. What is one reason for the church becoming organized? What should the church do instead of organizing?
15. Why is a believer without a ministry a contradiction?
16. What does the word "set" refer to in 1 Corinthians 12:18? Explain.
17. Why should every Christian possess a sense of divine dignity? What is the result when a Christian is not content with his gift?
18. Why does dignity belong to every member of the body of Christ?
19. Why can't 1 Corinthians 14:39 be used as proof that Christians should seek for spiritual gifts?
20. Why should a Christian have no discontent over his spiritual gift?
21. What does the word "tempered" mean in 1 Corinthians 12:24? What significance does this word have for believers in the body of Christ?

22. Explain the concept of the believer as a color that the Holy Spirit uses to paint the portrait of Christ for the world. What is the result when some of the colors are missing?

23. Who are the people who help the Spirit as He paints the portrait of Christ? What is their job?

Pondering the Principles

1. Does your church operate primarily as an organization or as an organism? What are some of the characteristics that are revealed in your church that make you view it as an organization? What are some of the characteristics that are revealed that make you view it as an organism? What do you think a church should do in order to stop being run as an organization? Read Ephesians 4:11-16. What responsibility should the leaders have? What responsibility should the congregation have? According to verses 13-15, what are the results when the body is built up? Please be in prayer for your church and its leaders. Take this moment to pray.

2. Do you realize that you are essential to the body of Christ? Do you experience the fact of your necessity to your brothers and sisters in Christ, or do you feel unnecessary? Read John 17:20-23. Who do you suppose Jesus is praying for? If two thousand years ago Jesus prayed for all the future believers, don't you think He prayed for you as well? If on the night before His crucifixion Jesus prayed that you might be one with all the other believers, how important do you think Jesus Christ feels you are to His body? How does that change your perspective on your importance?

3. Are you presently ministering your spiritual gift? If not, why? Are you waiting for your church to give you a ministry? Read Matthew 25:14-30. God has entrusted some of His possessions to you. What are you doing with them? Are you helping the body to grow by the use of what God has given you, or have you hidden what God has given you? If you want to experience a greater ministry, be faithful right now. Memorize Matthew 25:21: "...Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master" (NASB). Pray that this might be true of you.

4. Take this moment to reflect on your position within the body of Christ. Based on your practical unity with other believers, what kind of portrait of Christ does the world see? How is your attitude affecting that portrait? Do you have a sense of divine dignity with your position in the body of Christ, or are you discontented with your position? Why? Take this time to allow God to search your heart and reveal to you what may be causing any discontent (Ps. 139:23-24). Remember that God, by His sovereign will, has placed you in the perfect spot within the body of Christ. Confess any of those thoughts and attitudes that are questioning God's sovereignty in your life. Turn from those attitudes and seek to develop a trusting heart in God.

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