

We Aspire To Be A United and Diverse Church
1 Corinthians 12: 12-31

In this powerful image, the Apostle Paul helps us to understand that every member of the church is vital to its health. We are a body made of many parts, we exist for the good of one another and we need one another to be healthy. Paul explains that we are...

I) One in Spirit

Verses 12-13 are crystal clear that each of us belongs to the church not by some fluke, not because we casually walked into a building one-day but because the Holy Spirit added us, we have been 'baptized' into the body, something that happens the moment we receive faith. This is so important to understand in order that we wouldn't see our belonging to the church as some casual thing, as one would perhaps belong to a gym, but that we have been joined to one another in the same way arms and legs are joined to the body.

Q. Does the Bible know of such a thing as a Christian that doesn't belong to the church?

Q. Is there a general notion 'out there' that one can live a healthy Christian life without belonging to a local church? if so, then why?

Q. Why is it so important for every Christian to belong to a church?

In John 17, shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed for his disciples (present and future) that they/we would be one as He and the Father are one.

Q. Why is unity in the church so important?

II) One in Body

Verses 14-16 identify what seems to be an 'inferiority complex' that existed amongst some in the Corinthian church. This occurs when certain members either consider themselves not to be very valuable or not very valued. Paul makes the brilliant point that we have all been formed and positioned by God in the body, each with a crucial role to play. We can often laud those who have 'visible' roles as somehow more important, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Not many of us have ever seen our heart before but we are certainly grateful to have one!! We must encourage one another to fulfill the ministry God has called each of us to not striving to be someone else or do something we may not have been called to do.

Verses 21-24 conversely identify a 'superiority complex' where certain members considered themselves to be more important than others! Such thinking is totally alien to the message of unity that we receive in the gospel.

Q. What should motivate us when we think of our role in the body?

Q. How can we help encourage one another to perform our best function in the body?

Q. Why can this often be a humbling process? How does our western culture influence our thinking here?

Q. Why is verse 26 so radical! Do you find it easy to 'rejoice with those who rejoice'?

III) One in Purpose

You and I are a gift from God to the church! He has placed things in each of us that are given not primarily for our private benefit but for the good of the body! In verses 27-31 Paul mentions a number of such gifts, this isn't an exhaustive list but helpfully identifies a number that we need in the church: healing, helping, administrating, gifts of prophecy, teaching and of other languages. Whilst Paul makes the point that not all possess each of these gifts, he does urge us to 'earnestly desire' them, that the church may be enriched. The gift of tongues for instance is a wonderful one to help us pray and worship God. The gift of prophecy similarly is given to help us grasp hold of the truth of God's word as someone brings an encouragement to another.

Q. Why does God give people particular gifts?

Q. Are there any gifts people in the group 'earnestly desire'?

Q. Does anyone in the group have an encouraging testimony regarding these gifts?

Conclude – it would be great to pray for one another that we would know we each belong to the body and are equally valuable. It would also be a great opportunity to pray for people to receive new gifts such as tongues, prophecy and healing.