

# THE CHURCH AS BODY: UNITY AND DIVERSITY

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31 · JULY 28, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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*"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12)*

## The Metaphor of the Body of Christ and Spirit-Gifts (12:12-14)

- Paul's purpose with this metaphor
- Baptism and the Spirit
- The unity and diversity, the diversity and the unity

## The Body of Christ and Those Who Feel Inferior or Weaker (12:15-20)

- The foot and the hand, the ear and the eye playing comparison games and feeling "lesser"
- Replacing the body with one part defeats the point of the body
- God is the source of the whole and the parts, assembling as God sees fit

## The Body of Christ and Those Who Feel Superior or More Powerful (12:21-26)

- The eye and the hand, the head and the feet playing comparison games and feeling "greater"
- The parts that are less powerful or weaker or less presentable are treated with more care
- The parts that are more presentable receive no special treatment
- The point: God places the parts together to form a body for God's purposes
- There should be no division or tearing (schisma)
- The parts suffer together and are honored together – because they are a body

## Living as the Body of Christ and Parts of It (12:27-31)

- Knowing who we are
- Knowing that we need one another
- Desiring the "greater" gifts but leaning toward the greater way

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to you that the church is "the body of Christ?"
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by studying 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. Paul continues his exploration of Spirit-gifts by describing the local community of believers through a metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. In 12:12-14 what stands out to you from these verses?
4. Why might Paul emphasize here that all are part of one body, "whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free"?
5. With verses 15-20, Paul addresses the reality in the Corinthian church that some fell less than others. What does Paul say to those who may feel inferior in these verses?
6. With verses 21-26, Paul addresses those who may feel superior to others. What does he say in these verses about feeling superior?
7. When have you seen these feelings of inferiority or superiority rise up in the local church based around Spirit-gifts, roles, or abilities? How do you think Paul's words address these feelings and what should be done about it?
8. What does Paul say is God's point in the diversity of the body according to verses 24-25?
9. Take special note of verse 26. What is the nature of the body of Christ in relation to each other's suffering and honor?
10. With verse 27 (and the rest of the chapter), Paul makes a decisive statement about each person within the church. What is striking to you about these verses and the final section of the chapter?
11. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone this week.

## DIG DEEPER

### This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 12:12
- Explore some of the following resources:
  - John R. W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*
  - Marva J. Dawn, *Truly the Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church*