

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 9: One Body, Many Members -- 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

The church at Corinth was plagued by division. Members were competing with one another, elevating certain abilities over others, and treating parts of the body as if they were expendable. Paul addresses this by using one of the most powerful metaphors in Scripture: the church is a body, and Christ is its head.

Just as a human body is made up of many different parts—each with a distinct function—so the church is made up of many different members, each with a role to play. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” The head cannot say to the feet, “I have no need of you.” Every member is essential. Every contribution matters. And the parts that seem weakest or least honorable are often the most necessary.

Paul’s point is not merely organizational. It is deeply theological. God Himself arranged the members of the body as He chose. The diversity of the church is not an accident; it is God’s design. And the purpose of that design is mutual care. When one member suffers, all suffer together. When one is honored, all rejoice. This passage calls the church away from competition and toward the kind of humble, interdependent love that reflects the character of Christ.

Group Discussion: Why do you think the early church struggled with the temptation to value certain members over others? Is this still a problem in congregations today? What forms does it take?

Personal Reflection: Do you ever feel that your role in the church is insignificant compared to others? How does this passage speak to that feeling? Conversely, have you ever looked down on the contributions of others?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Study Questions

1. In verse 12, Paul says the body is one and has many members, and “all the members of the body, though many, are one body.” How does this analogy describe the church’s unity and diversity?
2. Verse 13 says, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” What does this teach about how a person enters the body of Christ, and why is baptism central to this picture?
3. In verses 14–17, Paul uses the example of the foot, hand, ear, and eye. What is Paul’s point about members who feel they do not belong or are not important?

4. Verse 18 says, “God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.” What does this teach about God’s intentional design for the church?
5. In verses 21–22, Paul says the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” and that the “parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” How does this challenge attitudes of superiority in the church?
6. Verses 23–24 describe God giving “greater honor to the part that lacked it.” What does this mean in the life of a congregation? How should the church treat its less visible members?
7. According to verse 25, God’s design is “that there may be no division in the body.” Why is division so contrary to God’s purpose for the church?
8. Verse 26 says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” What does this look like in a healthy, functioning congregation?
9. In verse 27, Paul declares, “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” How does this identity—belonging to Christ’s body—shape the way Christians view themselves and one another?
10. Looking at 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 as a whole, how does this passage challenge individualism and call the church to the kind of mutual care and interdependence God designed?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: **Romans 12:3–8** — Different gifts, one body, humble service; **Ephesians 4:15–16** — The whole body growing and building itself up in love; **Colossians 3:12–17** — Putting on love, which binds everything together