

The Body of Christ Series

Lesson Four: Perfectly Functioning Body

Biblical Text(s): Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:1-8

Introduction

As we continue our study of the Body of Christ, this lesson focuses on some practical aspects of what it means to be a member of the Body. More specifically, we will examine how the Body of the Christ is intended to function on a day to day basis. There are three New Testament passages which provide insight into the practical functioning of the Body of the Christ –

- Romans 12:3-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
- Ephesians 4:1-8

Our study so far has taught us Jesus is the head of the body. We have also learned the body is the church (baptized believers). Our focus for this lesson is on the baptized spirit-filled believers who have accepted God's invitation to live their lives in subjection to his will and purpose for their lives.

There are three key teaching points we will cover in today's lesson:

- God has Arranged the Body of Christ to Accomplish his purposes.
- God has Provided Gifts to Every Member of the Body to Fulfill the Ministry of the Church
- Members of the Body of Christ are Closely Connected to Each Other

Key Teaching Point 1: God has Arranged the Body of Christ to Accomplish his purposes.

1 Corinthians 12 ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

The Body of Christ is not some haphazard illogical gathering of individuals. The infinite wisdom of God is manifested in the life of the Body (church) and every individual member. In Christ, the barriers which have separated us from God and from each other to create one new humanity (Ephesians 2:14-16). We have been called to live as new creations in the sight of God and to model for the world Jesus' power and authority over all things.

Key Teaching Point 2: God has Provided Gifts to Every Member of the Body to Fulfill the Ministry of the Church

1 Corinthians 12 ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

One of the challenges in the Body (church) which has existed from the beginning has been the issue of some folks feeling their gifts are more important than others or on the opposite extreme some members feeling their gift(s) are so small they are insignificant.

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The Apostle Paul addressed this very issue in the Corinthian church in which some members felt they were superior to other members because they believed they possessed *higher* gifts. Paul debunked this notion by teaching three key points:

1. We should approach the use of our gifts with deep humility.

Romans 12 ³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

There is absolutely no place in the Body of Christ for super members because they believe God has provided them with greater gifts. This is a human view of giftedness not God's view. It is God who gives the gifts as needed for the Body to every member and therefore we should use our gifts to honor him not as weapons of superiority.

2. Every member is required for the health of the Body.

1 Corinthians 12 ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

It is not possible for the church to become all it is capable of becoming unless every member contributes their gifts to the growth and wellbeing of the Body of Christ. It is inconceivable for a child of God who has received gifts from the Father. To refuse to use them to his honor and glory. God's vision for his church is to have every member contributing their gift(s) working for the good to grow the Kingdom of God.

3. We Do Not All have the Same Function. Every Function is Critical.

One of the key teachings of Paul on the issue of *higher* gifts is the acknowledgement that not everyone has been given the same gifts while clearly arguing all gifts given by God are crucial to the success of the Body. By advancing this teaching he clearly helps us to understand there will be some who are gifted to minister to the entire body daily while some have the marvelous gift of being able to serve others in the quiet of their home.

Romans 12 ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Allow me to use a Hillcrest example here. Odies Wright is a gifted Worship Leader. I personally look forward to our time together on Sunday mornings in large part because he has been gifted to plan and lead uplifting and spiritual worship time for the saints. Now how would Christ view

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Odie's service and use of his gifts to set himself above the greeters who welcome and encourage the church as we gather for a time of praise and worship to our God?

There are no higher gifts. The gifts given by God are to build up, equip, encourage and spur the people of God to greater actions in the Kingdom.

Key Teaching Point 3: Members of the Body of Christ are Closely Connected to Each Other

Romans 12⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Paul teaches us, as the body of Christ, we are all connected to each other under the headship of Jesus. Spiritual gifts are for the body, the church, and are not to be exercised individualistically.

The principle here is the interdependence of the parts of the body dependent on Christ and one another. Members of the Body of Christ are mutually dependent on each other as they exercise their distinctive gifts and functions. All Christians are dependent one upon another; each is to expect and receive help from the rest.

We Should be So Connected to Each Other, We Feel Each Other's Needs and Wants

In the Body of Christ, we should be connected and aware of each other's needs, we rejoice when there is cause for joy. When our brothers grieve we grieve. When one of our number is honored we share in the honor. If one of our number suffers we are all affected.

1 Corinthians 12²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

It is somewhat interesting, the Apostle would include this teaching concerning our need to be so connected with our fellow co-laborers in the Kingdom here. When taken in context of his teaching on unity (one Body many members) use of our gifts to honor God irrespective to the level of importance of the gift, placing an emphasis on our independence and connectedness is a further expansion of his teaching on unity of the Body. Nothing is outside the scope and purpose God has for his church and his people.

Conclusion

So how should the Body of Christ function on a daily basis? Every member of the Body of Christ is gifted and needs to use their gifts to the building of the Body. Every member needs to contribute their gifts, service and ministries to ensure the Body is healthy and functioning. Members of the Body are interdependent on each other. Our dependence on Christ and fellow members promotes unity and strength.