

SERIES: "I am a Church Member"

"I Will Be a Functioning Church Member" – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Summary: The body of Christ has many parts but it is still one body. All parts of the body must function in order to have a healthy church body. Sermon series based on the chapters of "I Am a Church Member" by Tom Rainer

Introduction: Have you ever considered how amazing the human body really is? Truthfully, how could anyone ever believe that it is the product of chance plus time? The stomach's digestive acids are strong enough to dissolve zinc. Fortunately for us, the cells in the stomach lining renew so quickly that the acids don't have time to dissolve it. The lungs contain over 300,000 million capillaries (tiny blood vessels). If they were laid end to end, they would stretch 2400km (1500 miles). Human bone is as strong as granite in supporting weight. A block of bone the size of a matchbox can support 9 tonnes – that is four times as much as concrete can support. Each kidney contains 1 million individual filters. They filter an average of around 1.3 liters (2.2 pints) of blood per minute, and expel up to 1.4 liters (2.5 pints) a day of urine. The focusing muscles of the eyes move around 100,000 times a day. To give your leg muscles the same workout, you would need to walk 80km (50 miles) every day. Everything in our body seems to work together by design...

(<http://listverse.com/2008/06/10/top-15-amazing-facts-about-the-human-body/?vm=r&s=1>)

It is no wonder why Paul chose to use the Human body as an illustration of how the church - the Body of Christ - ought to function. Today, we are looking at how God designed the church to function much like a human body - it is comprised of many different parts yet those parts are united into one body.

I. THE CHURCH BODY IS A DIVERSITY IN UNITY (vv. 12-13)

a. Paul uses the illustration of the human body to give us a picture of how the church body is composed. (v. 12)

i. The universal church (catholic) - the body of Christ - is made up of many different parts, just like a human body yet those parts are unified into one whole body.

ii. So it is with the local assembly - the body is made of many diverse parts united together into a whole.

b. Even though the parts of the human body are different, they must be united to one another so that the body functions properly. The church is no different than our bodies. If a part is missing we are handicapped.

c. The work of assembling the body together is a work of the Spirit of God (v. 13)

i. The Baptism of the Spirit occurs at conversion (baptize = to place into)

ii. We all drink of the same Spirit (Indwelling of the Holy Spirit) (John 7:38-39)

II. EVERY BODY IN THE CHURCH BODY HAS A FUNCTION (vv. 14-20)

a. Each part of our bodies is designed with a different function - Paul mentions our hands, feet, ears, eyes and our sense of smell (our nose). Each member performs a specific function in

cooperation with the other members of the body. (Illus. Arrange a demonstration - Help the mouth get water.)

b. Every member of the body must be a functioning member in order for the body to operate at optimum efficiency. (So it is with the church body! There should be no inactive members.)

c. One of the problems we have in our culture is an incorrect understanding of what it means to be a church member - many people treat church membership like they would membership in a local country club. I pay my dues and therefore I expect to receive benefits for my dues. (Entitlement vs. Servanthood)

d. Illus. "One of the ongoing questions you should ask yourself and God in prayer is: "How can I best serve my church? You should never ask yourself if you should be serving your church."
Thom Rainer - I Am a Church Member

e. In other words, Biblical church membership means that I should expect to serve, rather than to be served. (Mark 10:45)(illus. Former Hells Angel joins the knitting ministry)

III. THERE ARE NO NOBODIES IN THE CHURCH BODY (vv. 21-26)

a. Just as every member of the body is interdependent on the other, so it is with the body of Christ - we need one another in order to do the work of ministry. (v. 21)

i. Illus. Imagine how foolish I would be if I said to the choir, our pianist and the AV team that I didn't need them on Sunday Morning?

ii. Illus. Illustration - the one man band - Marc Dobson at the NC State Fair.

b. No one can say that your gift - your function in the church - is less important than theirs. For instance, the eye can see what needs to be done, but it depends on the arms and hands to complete the job. The head may know where it needs to go, but depends on the feet to get it there.

c. Furthermore, there are parts of our body that are indispensable even though they might seem weak. For instance, try living without your kidneys. You could live without your arms and your feet, but not your vital organs which are hidden from plain view.

d. The most indispensable people in the church are usually the ones that do their work for the Lord quietly behind the scenes without fanfare or need for recognition.

IV. EVERYBODY NEEDS TO LOVE EVERYBODY TO BE A HEALTHY CHURCH BODY (vv. 27-31, 3:1-13)

a. One of the biggest problems in the Corinthian church was gift envy - there were many who were envious of those who possessed certain spiritual gifts and many who possessed those gifts looked down on the ones who didn't have certain gifts. Paul's argument against gift envy:

i. Everyone was a part of the body of Christ - (v. 27)

ii. (v. 28-30) God is the one who distributed these gifts to His church - therefore His sovereignty overruled their jealousy

iii. While having spiritual gifts is necessary to the function of the body of Christ, and the church should desire to have those gifts - there is something better - a more excellent way that will enable them to serve the body of Christ

b. That way is love! Everything we do to serve the body of Christ must be done in love or it is worthless (Read 1 Cor. 13)

i. Exercising the gifts without love is vanity (vv 13:1-3)

ii. This is what our love for one another in the body should look like (vv 13:3-7)

iii. Many of these gifts that they are fighting over will one day fade away, but not love (vv. 13:8-13)

c. The only way to be a healthy, fully functioning church body is to love the body unconditionally.

Illus. Miles McPherson in the book *God in the mirror* tells the story of meeting a former Hells' Angel as he got off of the elevator at his church one morning. He was about six foot four, at least 250 pounds, and he wore cut-off jeans and a sweatshirt. His body was all tatted up We talked down the hall together, and he told me he was going to his first ministry meeting, and he was really nervous. Pastor Miles asked, "Nervous? How come you're nervous?" He replied, "Pastor Miles, you always encourage us to do something, so I figured I got to do something. I want to serve the Lord."

Since our church has over a hundred outreach ministries, Miles asked him, "What's the ministry you're joining?" "The knitting ministry," he said. He added, "Well, actually, I don't knit, I crochet." Here's this huge guy who looks like he could be an NFL tackle, and he's nervous about joining a ministry that makes blankets and hats for hospitalized children. Curious, Miles asked him where he learned how to crochet.

"I was in the Hell's Angels for 12 years," he told me. "I learned to crochet in prison. I know it's the one thing I can do for the Lord." Just then the lady who heads up the knitting ministry walked toward us, said a quick hi to me, then asked the former Hell's Angels, "Are you Jim?" She gave him a big grin and took his hand. I watched them go down the hall together. It may not seem like a unique ability to crochet, but when you package that with his life, the ripple effect can push countless others out of their comfort zone to step up and stand out the way God designed them to. Imagine if Jim was worrying about what others would think about him crocheting for Jesus!