

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

One Body, One Direction

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Years ago, when I was a broadcast journalist, an elected official told me a joke that has stuck with me. It goes like this: “Do you know the origin of the camel? It’s a horse designed by committee.” In my retelling of the joke I would, at times, insert the word “church” before committee. The implication, of course, is that divergent opinions often lead to incongruous results. In reality, organizational “camels” are often the result of lack of a common goal.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul writes *“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts **form** one body, so it is with Christ.”* The emphasis on “form” is mine. Paul is calling us to understand that we have all received spiritual gifts that allow us to serve as parts of the body (the local church). To make this point, he compares us with the individual parts of the human body and the unique roles each has in making the body work. But what is often lost is the **unity** portion of Paul’s message. The eyes, the ears, the heart and the feet of the church all must be headed in one direction, or, more specifically, toward one stated purpose to truly fulfill the obligation Paul states.

At a recent Oakbrook Church meeting, a member of each of our ministries was asked to talk about how the ministry worked toward the church’s mission of: Meet God, Grow in Faith and Follow Jesus. It then occurred to me that other churches (and other organizations) I’ve been involved with often have had working parts that don’t form a single body. At Oakbrook we are blessed to have an environment where each ministry, from hospitality to nursery, to those who take part in Sunday services, to those who clean the bathrooms or maintain the grounds, perform all those duties with that core purpose in mind; to help people: Meet God, Grow in Faith and Follow Jesus.

Paul’s call to be part of the body is often heard. But equally important is to answer that call with the goal of **forming** a single body, made up of many parts but united in purpose. At our meeting, we were asked how the functions we perform serve Oakbrook’s three-pronged goal. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26: *“so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”*

What does this mean for us? A friendly smile at the door, a well-manicured lawn, a clean bathroom and a friendly welcome to service are likely far more important parts to accomplishing the church’s mission than we consider them to be. Especially when we keep the goal in mind in every action we take on behalf of the church, to help people: Meet God, Grow in Faith and Follow Jesus. Then all parts of the body will walk in the same direction: each moving closer to God.