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A WORD FROM THE EDITORS

“The God Who Sends”—This is the God we love, the God we serve, the God we worship, the God we obey. But why? Why should we give our lives to a sending God? Why should sending matter? Because God the Father sent His Son to save people from their sins. Apart from the Savior sent on our behalf to die in our place for our sins and to rise again for our eternal life, we would have no hope in this world and certainly none beyond it.

But the sending doesn’t end there. God the Father and God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit to give guidance and strength to His people, to confirm in their hearts that they belong to Him. The Spirit gathers those who believe in Jesus into churches as the body of Christ that they may be one as God is one. The unifying work of the Spirit helps the members of the body become more like their Head—Jesus Christ.

If the Father sent the Son, and they sent the Spirit, then the one God is by nature a sending God. And if the church is to reflect her Head, then the body also will be sent, and indeed she is. Jesus said to His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). The church has been sent on a mission to “announce the gospel of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). This is what we do because it reflects who we are, and who we are reflects the One who made us—“The God Who Sends.”

—Ed Stetzer



ED STETZER,
General Editor
THE GOSPEL PROJECT
PRESIDENT, LIFEWAY RESEARCH

One of the things I like to say often is this: The Spirit of God uses the gospel of God to motivate the people of God to be on mission with God. If I could sum up this volume of *The Gospel Project*, it would be with those words. We’re about to begin a study of “the people of God,” but there’s no way to talk about the people of God unless we also talk about the gospel, since it’s God’s grace to us in Christ that creates and constitutes this people to begin with. And there’s no way to talk about the gospel of God and the people of God without talking about the mission of God, since the gospel is good news about a missionary God who sent His Son to be the Savior of the world and who now empowers His people to spread the fame of His name to the ends of the earth. And, of course, the way He empowers us is through His Spirit.

So, get ready to be challenged. In the first half of this study, we’ll look at who we are—what the church is according to the New Testament and the various metaphors and descriptions the apostles used when speaking of God’s people. The second half of this study shows us what we do—how we live in accordance with our newfound identity as a grace-shaped people who reach out to the world just like our Savior did to us.

—Trevin Wax



TREVIN WAX,
Managing Editor
The Gospel Project
Author of *Gospel-Centered Teaching*, *Counterfeit Gospels*, and *Clear Winter Nights: A Young Man’s Journey into Truth, Doubt, and What Comes After*

THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

1. GET STARTED.

Begin by reviewing and getting familiar with the Teaching Plan in order to get an overview of the lesson. The Teaching Plan is divided into three parts: Connect, Convey, and Collide.

Connect: The Connect section is designed to provide for you, the leader, different options in helping you connect your students with the lesson for that day. For instance, you will be given different ways to grab your students' attention, whether by story, video, activity, discussion, etc., before getting to the heart of the lesson. In addition, this section will also provide a transition section that will help you bridge the intro option to the heart of the lesson.

Convey: The Convey section is the heart of that day's gospel lesson—the biblical worldview and theology for students to build their life upon. The goal of this section is simply to convey these gospel-centered truths to students, impressing upon them the reality that God has spoken and revealed Himself to us and what He says speaks directly to each of their lives. (The Teaching Plan will contain the Convey section in outline only, while the Expanded Lesson Content will contain all of the Convey Material.)

Collide: The Collide section is intended to show how and where gospel-centered theology collides with life, both now and in the future. It explores how these truths being conveyed are not simply to be stored away in the memory, or shown off to others in pride, etc. Instead, it explores how they impact and change the way Christians think differently, act differently, and relate differently to others. It explores how the gospel creates lasting heart change once these things take root deep within us.

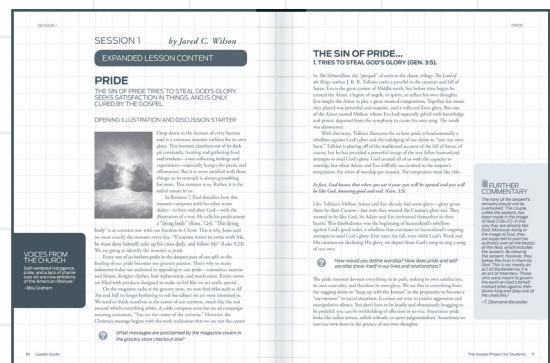
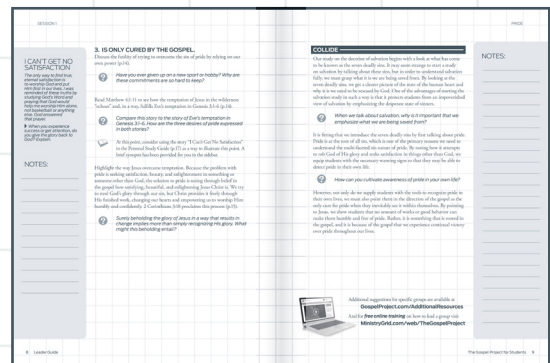
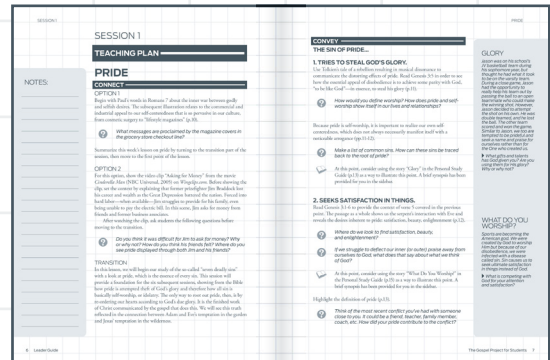
As you study the lesson during the week, make notes on these four pages as you can use these pages to teach from during your group time. Since each lesson is intended to provide more than enough material to teach in a reasonable amount of time, decide beforehand which points to cover and emphasize based upon the goal for that day's class.

2. BE PREPARED.

Use the Expanded Lesson Content to prepare yourself for the group time. You will find that these pages support the Convey outline in the Teaching Plan, providing more information and insights for each point.

3. FURTHER STUDY.

Additional Resources are provided online as a way of allowing you multiple ways to prepare. Use as many of these resources as you have time for. Just remember, you can only lead your students as far as you have gone yourself.



Visit **GospelProject.com** for more resources (podcasts, devotionals, and other articles) related to this material.

SESSION 1

THE BODY OF CHRIST

IN THIS SESSION, we will look at one of the most common images for the church. The New Testament teaches that God's people are the body of Christ—united by the Spirit, united in suffering and rejoicing, and united in service. When we repent and believe in Jesus, we are not simply individuals who are Christians. We are incorporated into the body of Christ, and we represent Jesus Christ in the way we love and serve one another.

STEPS TO PREPARE

1. Read the main passage for this lesson, recording your insights and questions:
▷ 1 Corinthians 12:12-30
2. Review the Teaching Plan (pp. 6-9).
▷ Refine the lesson plan based on your group's particular needs.
▷ Adjust the plan if necessary.
3. Study the Expanded Lesson Content (pp. 10-15).
▷ Determine what elements of this lesson are most applicable to your particular group.
▷ Consider ways to personalize the lesson content for you and your class.
4. Pray for the Lord's guidance as you lead your group through this material.

LESSON OUTLINE

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS UNITED...

1. **In the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-20).**
2. **In suffering and rejoicing (1 Cor. 12:21-26).**
3. **In service (1 Cor. 12:27-30).**

SESSION 1

TEACHING PLAN

THE BODY OF CHRIST

CONNECT

OPTION 1

Set the stage for the next few sessions by highlighting some of the images the Bible uses to describe the church. Then emphasize that “the body” is perhaps the most dominant image and our focus for this lesson (p.10). Use the scenario of brothers playing “Stop hitting yourself” to communicate that a body normally tries to protect itself, and this should be true of the church (p.10). Then summarize this lesson on the body of Christ (p.10).



Why is the analogy of the body helpful to our understanding of the church?

OPTION 2

For this option, show students the video “The Body of Christ” from SermonSpice, located at www.sermonspice.com/product/33854/the-body-of-christ

After watching the video, ask students the following questions before moving to the transition portion of the lesson.



Have you ever heard the expression “the body of Christ”? How did this video communicate what it means to be the body of Christ? What other meanings do you think the analogy communicates?

TRANSITION

In the next few sessions, we will examine different images in the Bible that describe the people of God, but first, we begin with perhaps the most dominant image of the church—the body. As the body of Christ, we are unified in our common salvation and mission. Though our relationship with God is personal, it is never private.

NOTES:

CONVEY

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS UNITED...

1. IN THE SPIRIT.

As you read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, guide students to mark the references to “body” and “part.” Describe the intricacies of form and function of a cuckoo clock (*consider bringing in such a clock or a picture of one’s inner workings*), yet a living body is even more complex, as is the body of Christ (p.11).



At this point, consider using the story “A Simple-Complex Machine” in the Personal Study Guide (p.13) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



Think about all of the necessary movements that take place for a clock to operate. What would happen if one of the weights were missing or just one of the gears were broken? How might this perspective help us understand the importance of individual members contributing to the mission Christ has given us as a body?

Lay a foundation for the concept of membership in the body of Christ by calling to mind membership in other groups (p.12).



What groups or organizations have you participated in? Choosing one of these, what are some ways it was similar to or different from membership in the body of Christ?

Emphasize two differences: time commitment and sense of identity (p.12). Then show how our unity is found in the Holy Spirit, who enables us to adorn the person and work of Jesus Christ (p.12).



What are some ways you can practically pursue more faithful participation in the larger body of the church?



What are some potential areas of division in a local church body? How can we guard against unnecessary division?

A SIMPLE-COMPLEX MACHINE

The body of Christ is much like a top-notch racing bicycle. At first glance it's a simple group of people that God has united by the gospel. On closer inspection, however, it is a complex work of craftsmanship where we see millions of parts that are bonded together. And while it is amazing to think how engineers could weave millions of carbon fibers together, it is even more amazing to think about how God has woven an even greater amount of believers together as one body.

► *Where do you think you fit in the body of Christ?*

NOTES:

[illegible]

HOBBLING ON CRUTCHES

It's not the easiest thing to deal with when a body part doesn't work. The body of Christ is the same way. We all are part of the body. Every part of Christ's body is important. For instance, we all need to work together in order for the whole to function properly. This is important in two ways. One, we must make sure that we are serving the role that God has given us. Secondly, we must value the other parts of the body of Christ as well. For the body to work, we must work together.

► *How can you help make sure there is unity in the body of Christ?*

TEAM TENNIS

As the body of Christ, we are called to be united in our service to God. Think about it: the body of Christ is made up of all sorts of people who are gifted differently to serve the body in different ways. The good news is that God has a role for you in the body of Christ and that role is for the talents and gifts He has given you.

► *How can you use the gifts God has given you to serve the body of Christ?*

2. IN SUFFERING AND REJOICING.

Guide a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26. Challenge students to come up with some movies that show how our culture idolizes loners (p.13), but this passage shows that we were made for community and Christians need the church—we need each other to survive and thrive as God intended.



At this point, consider using the story “Hobbling on Crutches” in the Personal Study Guide (p.15) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



List as many parts of the body as you can in one minute. Which would you consider expendable? What functions would be hindered if these parts were absent?

Just as it is difficult to imagine expendable body parts, so too the body of Christ knows nothing of expendable members. Explain that we are interconnected, and in this we suffer and rejoice with one another (pp.13-14).



What does our suffering and rejoicing together as the body of Christ communicate to those outside the church?

3. IN SERVICE.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-30. Use the Dream Team or another unit to illustrate that good teams are composed of individuals with complementary skills. The Spirit also has composed the body of Christ to function as a cohesive unit (p.15).



At this point, consider using the story “Team Tennis” in the Personal Study Guide (p.16) as a way to illustrate this point. A brief synopsis has been provided for you in the sidebar.



How can you better use the various gifts and talents you have been given for the good of your church?

Communicate that service is an essential implication of the gospel. We have complementary gifts distributed by the Spirit for the common good of the body and the glory of Christ (p.15).



What are some practical ways you might live the life of a servant in your family, among your friends, and in your school/community?

COLLIDE

Our study on the doctrine of the church begins by exploring one of the many metaphors Scripture uses in describing the new identity of Christians, both individually and corporately. And like all scriptural metaphors, the use of the word *body* to describe believers creates a word picture that is really helpful for all age groups to understand.

Given that there aren't many studies out there dedicated to helping students understand their role within the body of Christ, it is little wonder why so many students have a apathetic attitude toward church life as a whole. Many students have never been shown the beautiful and biblical portrait of living out life in Christ with other believers. Perhaps that is why they value time within their peer group and only attend youth activities that interest them.



What does the metaphor of “body” communicate about the identity of Christians. If you are a Christian, what does that mean for you?



How does this metaphor challenge you to know the entire church, not just those in your youth group?

The value of helping students catch a glimpse of the biblical view of the church couldn't be overstated. This lesson helps students understand that maturity in the Christian life doesn't happen alone; that being a part of the body includes suffering and rejoicing with others; and that being part of the body of Christ means serving others with their gifts and talents for God's glory and the good of others.

How have you typically viewed the church up to this point? Do you see it more as a club or as a living body that you are a part of? Explain.

Because this topic is often neglected within student ministry, take this opportunity to discuss the importance of community in your own life. By hearing the importance in your life, they will be more inclined to realize the importance of Christian community in their lives as well.



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
 **MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject**

NOTES:

SESSION 1

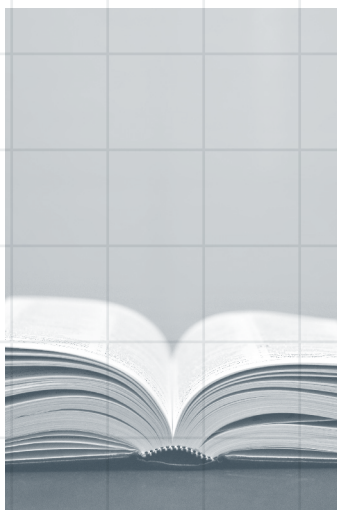
by Geoff Ashley

EXPANDED LESSON CONTENT

THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS UNITED IN THE SPIRIT, IN SUFFERING AND REJOICING, AND IN SERVICE.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION AND DISCUSSION STARTER



The Word of God is filled with vivid words that describe the people of God: the temple in which God's Spirit dwells, the vine planted and nourished for the glory of God, the flock that Christ shepherds, the bride of Christ, the family of God, etc. Each image provides insight into our individual and corporate identity as the ransomed, rescued, and redeemed people of God. Each of these pictures is amazing when taken by themselves, but the cumulative effect of them together is astounding. It is as if our perception of the church changes from two dimensions to three, from black and white to

color. Together they paint a robust and multifaceted picture of not only who we are but also how we are to function in fulfilling the calling of the gospel.

Anyone who grew up with an older brother knows what it is like to hear the phrase "Stop hitting yourself." Your brother pins you down, typically by sitting on your chest, overpowers you, and uses your own hand to slap your face. It usually isn't physically painful, but the ego takes a bit of a beating. The "game" may be cruel, but the idea itself is humorous. After all, you don't normally attack yourself. A body tries to protect its various parts rather than do itself harm.



Why is the analogy of the body helpful to our understanding of the church?

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS UNITED...

1. IN THE SPIRIT (1 COR. 12:12-20).

For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. So the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, “Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” in spite of this it still belongs to the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” in spite of this it still belongs to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? Now there are many parts, yet one body. (1 Cor. 12:12-20)

On a recent trip to Europe for our honeymoon, my wife and I purchased an authentic Black Forest cuckoo clock. Sometimes I find myself staring at it in awe, mesmerized by the craftsmanship, both in function and form. Without the benefit of battery or electricity, it keeps accurate time through an intricate and delicate process. Its pendulum, weights, and gears all work together to accomplish a shared goal of timekeeping.

But for all of its sophisticated complexity, a clock is nowhere near as intricate as a living body. Imagine the degree of care and concern that must go into the creation of a person! This truth also speaks to our identity as the body of Christ. If a clockmaker invests so much time in creating this complex mechanism, how much more should we be amazed at the creation of the living organism that is the body of Christ!



Think about all of the necessary movements that take place for a clock to operate. What would happen if one of the weights were missing or just one of the gears were broken? How might this perspective help us understand the importance of individual members contributing to the mission Christ has given us as a body?

Every step out of something is a step into something else. The moment we are called out of sin and death, we are called into the church. When we are born again into a new and living hope, we are given a new identity that carries with it membership in the body of Christ. How absurd would it be to find a hand or foot and not assume that it belonged to somebody? The idea that a Christian could find fullness and life and fulfill their calling outside of the body of Christ is just as silly as the thought that a hand or foot could originate or exist independent of a body.

FURTHER COMMENTARY

To illustrate that individual believers become identified as 'one body' of Christ (i.e., as the unified church), Paul borrowed imagery from the practice of dyeing various cloths by immersing them in the same dye vat. All believers are baptized into one body and are made to drink of one Spirit...Paul personified body parts as speakers to express the absurdity of envy and self-deprecation among members of the physical human body... The dispersion and diversification of gifts is no accident. God Himself has given them just as He wanted.¹

—F. Alan Tomlinson

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

The unity of the body consists in the fact that its many members supply the things which the other parts lack.²

—Ambrosiaster

As the individual parts of the body are called “members,” so the individual persons of the church are called members. Membership is an interesting thing. Many, if not most of us, are or have been members before in various groups or organizations. Maybe a middle or high school sports team or the band, boy scouts or girl scouts, honor society or key club, FCA, or YMCA.



What groups or organizations have you participated in? Choosing one of these, what are some ways it was similar to or different from membership in the body of Christ?

Membership in various organizations differs from membership in the living organism that is the body of Christ. Most organizations require an hour here or there, whereas the body of Christ makes demands on the entirety of our lives—24/7. Most organizations describe you in partial terms, such as a quarterback or drummer, but only the body of Christ can truly provide a holistic sense of your identity.

Ultimately, the bond experienced in the body of Christ is wholly unlike any other, for it is forged by the personal, living, and active Spirit of God: “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

Those who are called the body of Christ share the same breath—the Holy Spirit—who enables and empowers His people for the mission of God. His personal presence is like the blood that pulses through the body and supplies oxygen to live and move. If the Spirit has united us through one faith into one body, then we can assume it is for a purpose. After all, God is never whimsical. His intentions and plans do not drift aimlessly but are eternal and steadfast. And what purpose can we find in our participation in the body of Christ? For starters, we were created to adorn the person and work of Jesus Christ. As people formed by the gospel, we are united to show forth the beauties of the gospel in the way that we love each other (John 17:20-23). Accordingly, the Spirit has composed the body of Christ in order to facilitate our working together to accomplish the mission of the kingdom of God. The more we understand and appreciate the glory of the body of Christ, the more we will look forward to contribute to its common good.



What are some ways you can practically pursue more faithful participation in the larger body of the church?



What are some potential areas of division in a local church body? How can we guard against unnecessary division?

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

This is no polite and formal fellowship. It's a body, bound together by our individual decisions but also bound together by far more than human decision—the person and work of Christ.³

—Mark Dever

2. IN SUFFERING AND REJOICING (1 COR. 12:21-26).

So the eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” Or again, the head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” But even more, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary. And those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have a better presentation. But our presentable parts have no need of clothing. Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Cor. 12:21-26)

Some of the best movies involve loners. There’s something in the Western psyche that loves the story of one man against the world. Whether it’s Clint Eastwood riding away into a sunset, Bruce Willis taking down terrorists, Tom Hanks beating the elements on an isolated island, Sylvester Stallone stalking hunters in the woods, Macaulay Culkin defending his home from the Wet Bandits, or Will Smith surviving a zombie apocalypse, we are enthralled by the image of a lone ranger.

As interesting and entertaining as such stories might be, they often miss the truth that we were created for community. Only in life together can we experience the fullness and joy for which we were created. In fact, of everything that existed in the garden, only one thing was not good—solitude. *It is not good for man to be alone.* Isolation and rugged individualism may be Western ideals, but from a biblical perspective, they fall short. As God Himself is a holy community of three distinct persons, so we were created to dwell in sacred unity in the church. For this reason, we need to embrace the biblical truth that a member cannot survive without a body. Cut off an ear and see how well it survives, much less hears. Though the body might survive the loss of a hand or foot, the appendage itself won’t last long once amputated.

This is true of the body of Christ as well. Take a member of the church and disconnect him or her from the body, and it won’t be long before disease and disorder begin to set in. Isolation is an enemy in our pursuit of sanctification. Those who honestly think that they don’t need the body of Christ are delirious and in great danger: “One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgment” (Prov. 18:1).

In this passage, Paul wrote that the entire body suffers when any individual member suffers, and the whole body rejoices when a member rejoices. In doing so, he pointed to the interconnected togetherness that marks the body of Jesus Christ.



List as many parts of the body as you can in one minute. Which would you consider expendable? What functions would be hindered if these parts were absent?

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

Far be it from us to refuse to hear what is bitter and sad to those whom we love. It is not possible for one member to suffer without the other members suffering with it.⁴

—Augustine

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

That which we would do for Christ if He were here among us we should do for [each] other who are members of the body of Christ.⁵

—Peter Walpot

FURTHER COMMENTARY

The purpose of the gifts is to build one another up and to care for one another, not to flaunt one's own spirituality... 'First'... 'second'... 'third'... 'then' seems to be a ranking of importance or benefit to the church, with apostles being primary and then prophecy and teaching also contributing greatly to building others up. 'Teachers,' 'helping,' and 'administering' do not appear in the list in vv. 8-10, and helping and administering do not show up in the rhetorical questions in vv. 29-30, indicating that the different lists are representative rather than exhaustive.⁶

—Frank S. Thielman

It is amazing how an injury to one part of the body will cause pain to another. A misaligned back can cause shoulder or leg pain. Compensating for a blister on one foot can cause difficulty in the other. Pretty soon, walking itself becomes a struggle.

But the same interconnectedness is required for healing as well. A laceration will not heal without coagulants in the blood, and an infection will not clear up without white blood cells. When the body is functioning properly, it experiences both the pain of injury and the joy of healing.

If we are members of the same body, then surely we shall suffer together. There is no way around it unless we isolate ourselves, but the isolation strategy for avoiding pain only leads to the disease and disorder we have already discussed. There is a profound interconnectedness in the body of Christ such that both pain and pleasure extend beyond individual members to be felt by the collective church. When one member suffers, all suffer. When one is honored, all rejoice. Individual rights and privileges and pride are laid down in the light of the gospel.

As Christ's physical body was marked by suffering, followed by the glory of resurrection, so is His spiritual body—the church—marked by suffering in this age, only to be followed by the glory of consummation in the age to come. If our Master suffered and now rejoices, so shall we.



What does our suffering and rejoicing together as the body of Christ communicate to those outside the church?

3. IN SERVICE (1 COR. 12:27-30).

Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has placed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, managing, various kinds of languages. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other languages? Do all interpret? (1 Cor. 12:27-30)

The original 1992 Dream Team of Olympic basketball was probably the greatest basketball team of all time. Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Karl Malone, and Charles Barkley not only wowed the world with their art but absolutely dominated the competition, winning by an average of nearly 44 points a game. In fact, the closest game was decided by 32 points!

The individual talent on the Dream Team was astounding. But what was even more impressive was the way they were able to come together as a solitary unit. Good teams are composed of individuals with complementary skills. What if the 1992 USA team had been composed of five traditional centers or five power forwards? Who would have taken the ball up the court? Or who would have protected the lane and contested shots with a team of point guards?

The body of Christ is similarly made up, with various persons having varying gifts, skills, and abilities. These were given not to pad individual stats in some heavenly league but to contribute to the overall success of the team—the body of Christ. The Spirit has so composed the church that it is intended to function as a cohesive unit.



How can you better use the various gifts and talents you have been given for the good of your church?

In I Corinthians 12–14, Paul writes about the person of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that He has distributed for the edification and encouragement of the body. Paul wrote that the gifts vary (12:4-5) but that it is the same Spirit who empowers them (12:6) and has distributed them according to His will (12:11).

With love and service being central, the Scriptures specify a number of graces that can and should be stewarded for the sake of the growth of the body. These include miracles, tongues, prophecy, administration, healing, helping, interpretation, and teaching. The concept of complementary gifts distributed by the Spirit for the common good of the body and the glory of Christ saturates the biblical text. Consider a few of the places where Paul expounded upon this reality (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:4-7; 4:15-16), or examine Peter's words in his first letter: "Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10).

Service is an essential implication of the gospel. After all, Christ Himself spoke of His mission as summarized by the idea of service: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).



What are some practical ways you might live the life of a servant in your family, among your friends, and in your school/community?

CONCLUSION

Often admonitions to pursue unity are really just subtle admonishments to uniformity. But the clear biblical charge to pursue unity is not a call toward uniformity. God doesn't desire a church of clones but a gloriously diverse body that highlights the creativity of God Himself.

As the triune God is three distinct and diverse Persons dwelling in perfect unity, so the church is intended to be composed of varied and assorted members pursuing a similar unity. What a beautiful picture of the gospel to begin to pursue even now—a picture that will one day be fully realized in the age to come with a multitude from every nation, tribe, and tongue as the kings of the earth all bring their own unique glory into the city to come (Rev. 7:9; 21:24).

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

As the body of Christ, the church is the extension of His ministry.⁷

—Millard J. Erickson

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