

The Unity of the Body in Divisive Days

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Intro

- *A Fateful Christmas Eve*
- We are living in days in which the fellowship of the body is under strain. These are times marked by physical separation, social distance, sharp disagreements, tragic experiences, and polarizing responses.
- This isn't the first time that the people of God have had trouble pulling off unity!

All Members are Interdependent

"Many parts, yet one body"

- *LCC Kids coloring sheet*
- A body cannot function without both unity and diversity.

"If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body." (v. 19-20)

- *The Toaster Project: Or a Heroic Attempt to Build a Simple Electric Appliance from Scratch* by Thomas Thwaites
- We don't know all of the parts and members we will need in order to do life. But God does:

"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose." (v. 18)

- God has intended for us to experience variety—and by definition, variety doesn't just look like you!

“Unity is not uniformity. It is an intentional merging of *diverse yet equally valuable* characters and characteristics for a common purpose under a banner *greater than* each part. It is an ambitious and seemingly unattainable goal at times, yet it is worth the effort to attain.” –**Benjamin Watson**, Facebook Update

- A church with just one emphasis... one personality type... one spiritual gift... is not healthy.

“All suffer together”

- *How pain works in the body*
- As a church, we suffer together. We feel the burdens of others. We don't get to be unaffected!
- We must not be quick to move on from someone else's pain.

“When people are lodged in our hearts, we remember them. Think of a time when someone checked in with you long after you spoke of a particular grief. That is love. So we hold victims of injustice in our hearts, and we keep holding them. This kind of love will be seen in prayer, conversations, grief, and creative ways to *do something*, while we invite the world to meet the King who rules with gentleness and judges with righteousness.” –**Ed Welch**, “Say Something,” *CCEF Blog*

- We need the benefit of this. The joys and sufferings of other believers can rescue us from our myopic perspective.

All Members are Indispensable

“...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16)

- *“Essential workers”*
- Our growth and health cannot be accomplished by leaving any member behind.

“I have no need of you”

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’” (v. 21)

- Corinthian *pride & partisanship*: There was a self-confidence and a loyalty to certain things that caused them to find some of their fellow believers to be *dispensable*.
- Relationally
- Ideologically / Politically
- Generationally

Bestowing honor

- Whom do you see as *weaker or unrepresentable*? The Corinthians had their list; we have ours.

“On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more representable parts do not require.” (v. 22-24)

Culture of mutual care

“that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” (v. 26)

- Affection, serving, real relationships, embodied fellowship...

“It is difficult to imagine the world in the year A.D. 2000, by which time versatile micro-processors are likely to be as common as simple calculators are today. We should certainly welcome the fact that the silicon chip will transcend human brain-power, as the machine has transcended human muscle-power. Much less welcome will be the probable reduction of human contact as the new electronic network renders personal relationships ever less necessary. In such a dehumanized society the fellowship of the local church will become increasingly important, whose members meet one another, and talk and listen to one another in person rather than on screen. In this human context of mutual love the speaking and hearing of the Word of God is also likely to become more necessary for the preservation of our humanness, not less.” –**John Stott**, *Between Two Worlds*, 45 (written in 1982!)

- The church is to be a diverse group of people serving one another in tangible ways, as a compelling witness to the world of the power of the gospel to produce what no activism or social media post by itself ultimately can.

Jesus became dispensable for us, to make us indispensable

- “The Body of Christ.”

“The imagery of the body is not generic; it is specific. it is the body of Christ. The health, well-being, and future of the body are in the hands of the head—Christ. Individual sinners have been incorporated into his body by grace. No one has earned his way in. ...The most presentable part—the head—was willingly dishonored so that the least presentable parts—you and I—might receive honor. The strongest member was made weak and dispensable in order that the weaker members—you and I—might be considered indispensable. ...We mutually care for one another because we have experienced his care. Christ completely eschewed self-protection and self-care in order to care for us.” –**Stephen Um**, *1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross*, 227

- Your participation is indispensable!
- We are incomplete without *your* gifts.