

Romans 12 - The Department of Health and Human Services recently reported that, Loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, researchers warned in a recent webcast, and the problem is particularly acute among seniors, especially during holidays.

- Two in five Americans (40%) report that they sometimes or always feel their social relationships are not meaningful, and one in five say they feel lonely or socially isolated. The lack of connection can have life threatening consequences, said Brigham Young University professor Julianne Holt-Lunstad, who testified before the U.S. Senate in April, 2017 that the problem is structural as well as psychological.
- God had it right when He said in the very beginning, "It is not good that man should be alone..." **Gen. 2:18**
- King Solomon wrote in **Eccl. 4:9-10** - Two *are* better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who* is alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up.

As we continue our Unstoppable Force Series

- We are examining how the church is to be a people of hope for the world in darkness
- We have looked at Our Salvation – Our Statements - Our Structure: We examined the Two Offices & Two Ordinances
- Last week we began diving into our Values – Foundational Beliefs / guiding principles that drive culture and behavior
- This Series is not only **Foundational** and to who we are as a church family, but it is **Fundamental** to who we will become moving forward.
- If you have missed any of the last three sermons in this series, I would encourage you to watch those on-line.

WE VALUE THE WORD OF GOD: **ABIDE** - "It is impossible to follow Jesus without abiding in Him."

- Collectively – Every Service, Group, Environment, we want to bath it in the Word
- Personally –
 - We Get a Game Plan(Plan, Place, Pen, & Prayer)
 - We Get a Grip – Hear, Read, Study, Memorize & Meditate

***Last week – John 15:5 If Jesus Valued time with the Father, we should as well
Lead to the Second Value – Jesus valued People, so should we!***

- ***John 15:12-13 – Love one another as I have loved you***

We Value People - **CONNECT** (Rom. 12:5) "God has designed His Church as a body. In order to follow Jesus, I must be engaged in His family."

So far in this series, we have talked about the church. We are citizens in God's Kingdom, Members in God's Family, and Stones in God's Building.

Romans 12:4-5 Paul teaches that we are a Member in Christ's Body

- The Christian life was never meant to lived alone – This is not a solo mission – There is no such thing as a lone Ranger Christian
- We see from the very beginning that God, a Relational Being, created mankind to be relational
 - That is lived out best in the context of the church

- If you look back to Jesus' life, we see the value of Relationships
 - Mark 3:14 - Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

Before we dive into Romans 12, let me share a bit of research I discovered this week...

There was an article in Gospel Coalition by Steve Bateman dated Feb. 12, 2023

The Headlines reads as follows: **9 Benefits of Faithful Church Attendance**

- He says First of all Church Attendance Pleases and Glorifies God, it is an act of love to your neighbor,
- Among the benefits he lists are these: It makes you smarter, healthier, generous. It can protect your marriage, and your family
- Bateman claims it can even make you ... happier...That's right! Happier
- He quotes an article from USA today entitled "Religion may be a miracle drug:
 - If one could conceive of a single elixir to improve the physical and mental health of millions of Americans — at no personal cost — what value would our society place on it?
 - Going a step further, if research quite conclusively showed that when consumed just once a week, this concoction would reduce mortality by 20% to 30% over a 15-year period, how urgently would we want to make it publicly available?
 - The good news is that this miracle drug — religion, and more specifically regular church attendance — is already in reach of most Americans. In fact, there's a good chance it's just a short drive away.
 - Indeed, health and religion are very much connected.
 - ***Harvard researchers*** (USA today [link](#)) ***concluded weekly church attendance effectively improved the physical and mental health of millions of Americans and reduced mortality by "20 to 30 percent over a 15-year period." Other studies assert faithful church attendance helps prevent the despair that leads to early deaths by suicide and alcohol abuse. Weekly interaction with hopeful people is good for your mental health.*** (Gospel Coalition [Link](#))

Not only are there great benefits to Faithful Church Attendance, but there are spiritual benefits to connecting in a small group for mutual encouragement and edification as well.

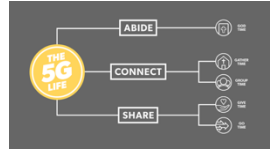
You may remember something we talked about last week – The Power of Four

- When a believer who spends time with the Lord (God Time) at least 4 times a week, there is significant improvement in one's spiritual and emotional wellbeing
- The same can be said of Connection to a Small Group

In their book **Transformational Groups**, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, discovered that people who participated in a group 4 or more times a month, the affects were very positive

- 67% of regular group attenders read their Bible regularly versus only 27% among non-group members.
- 64% of regular group attenders pray for their church and/or church leaders regularly. Only 30% of non-group attenders do.

- 82% of group attenders pray for fellow Christians versus 54% of non-group attenders. 79% of group attenders confess sins to God and ask forgiveness. 54% of non-group attenders do this.



The differences are striking, and the conclusion is clear. People actively involved in groups exhibit more spiritual growth than those who are not. Active participation in groups matters to the people in your church.

It is impossible to grow as a Christian apart from the community of faith.

- I have heard it said that believers need three things to help them grow as a follower of Jesus: the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the People of God.
- Proverbs 27:17 – Iron Sharpens iron...
- The Word of God and People of God has tremendous impact on our Spiritual life, We cannot grow on our own.

There are several ways the Bible describes the Church – Bride, God’s Temple, but I want us to look at Romans 12

Romans 12:4-5 - For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- I love the imagery here...Just as we have a natural human body, by God’s sovereignty He has given a spiritual body that has been described as having “unified diversity” “...one body, many member”

There is unity (one body) ...

Romans 12:4-5 - For as we have many members in **one body**, but all the members do not have the same function,

Unity among brothers and sisters in Christ is a beautiful thing.

Psalms 133:1-2 - Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

- What is the Psalmist Saying – Unity is a beautiful thing –
- By contrast, fighting, disagreement, division stinks!

Jesus prayed for Unity – John 17:20-21

- Jesus Prayed for it - **John 17:20-21** - “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Paul commanded it - Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

I love how Tony Merida breaks this passage down...Believers are...

United by a Divine Calling – vs. 1

- **Ephesians 4:1** - I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
- **Paul says *walk worthy of your calling***
- **This is a privilege for every believer – This is not for the spiritual elite, professionals. Every believe has this divine calling on his life.**
- **Pursue Christlike conduct**

United by Christlike Conduct – vv. 2-3

- **Ephesians 4:2-3** - ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Notice these Christlike Conduct – This is God's design – Image a church whole heartedly pursuing these character traits.
 - This is Counter-Cultural – the World says pursue yourself, get yours, fight for your rights
 - For unity to exist, humble, selfless people must be living for the good of others.
 - In order to pursue these qualities, we must be willing to renounce the opposite of each (Snodgrass, Ephesians, 218). We must renounce self-centeredness in order to walk in humility. We must renounce harshness in order to walk with gentleness. We must renounce the tyranny of our own agendas in order to walk with patience. We must renounce idealistic expectations in order to walk in forbearing love. We must renounce indifference and passivity in order to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The church is unified and God is glorified when we live with such Christlike conduct. (Merida, *Exalting Jesus: Ephesians*, p. 96)
- **Philippians 2:1-5** - Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
- **Philippians 2:5** - ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

United by Gospel Confession – vv. 4-6

Ephesians 4:4-6 ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

One body. We share a common existence in Christ's church. We are diverse in background and gifting, but we are united as one.

- **One Spirit.** We share a common origin in the Holy Spirit's work.
- **One hope.** We share a common hope in Christ. Formerly, we were "without hope" (2:12) until we were called to Christ.
- **One Lord.** Believers confess and proclaim, "Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). When the early Christians said, "Jesus is Lord," they were saying, "Caesar is not lord."

- **One faith.** The creed reminds us that we embrace the essential truths together, for “faith” here seems to refer to the body of truth we believe.
- **One baptism.** We share a common experience of being spiritually baptized into Christ. We are united with Him.
- **One God and Father.** As His adopted children, we share the same Father (cf. Eph 1:5). He is the God over all and the Father of all His children—regardless of their ethnicities. We are one big, adopted family.

A healthy church is characterized by such unity, and it is a marvelous testimony to the watching world. (Merida, *Exalting Jesus: Ephesians*, p. 96-97)

There is diversity (many) ... “but all the members do not have the same function,”

Romans 12:4 - For as we have many members in one body, but all the members **do not have the same function**,

- We are One Body, but We have many members
- In both Ephesians 4 and Romans 12, as well as I Cor. 12 Paul shows us how the church, with all of its **glorious diversity**, functions in a healthy way. Unity does not mean sameness. Our diverse roles and abilities enrich and bless the church.
- Paul uses this analogy in... hands, feet, ears, mouth –
- Later in Romans 12, Paul talks about diversity of Gifts
 - We’ll look at that in the days to come

Imagine standing in awe of the human body—complex, coordinated, and alive. Every heartbeat, every breath, every movement depends on countless systems working together in harmony. Paul saw the same miracle in the church when he called us “the body of Christ.”

- Just as the ****nervous system**** carries messages from the brain, Christ—the Head—directs His people through the Holy Spirit. When a body part stops listening to the head, confusion follows; when believers stop listening to Christ, chaos begins.
- The ****circulatory system**** pumps life through our veins. In the church, that lifeblood is ***love***. It nourishes every relationship and keeps the body healthy. Without love, ministry turns cold and lifeless.
- Our ****skeletal system**** gives structure and shape. Sound doctrine and biblical truth do the same for the church, holding everything upright amid pressure and challenge.
- Then there’s the ****muscular system****, producing motion and strength. God gives each believer spiritual gifts—unique muscles that make the body move. When one muscle refuses to work, the whole body suffers. When each believer serves, the church becomes powerful and alive.
- The ****immune system**** defends the body from infection. In the church, holiness and accountability guard us from sin and false teaching. A healthy church knows how to fight off what doesn’t belong.
- And the ****respiratory system****—the very breath of life—reminds us of the Holy Spirit. Just as our lungs fill us with oxygen, the Spirit fills the church with the life and presence of God. Without His breath, we wither.

So when Paul calls us “the body of Christ,” he isn’t speaking poetically—he’s describing divine design.

- Every believer is a vital organ. Every gift has purpose.

- And when the whole body listens to its Head, loves deeply, and breathes in the Spirit of God, the church becomes what it was made to be—**fully alive in Christ.**

***There is interdependency* (members of one another).**

Romans 12:5 - "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

- Paul repeats the 1 body – many members and then adds the phrase, "*and individually members one of another.*"
- This truth of **One body in Christ** is emphasized several times throughout the NT. (Ro 12:4, 1Cor 12:13, 20, Eph 2:16-note, Eph 4:4-note, Col 3:15-note).
 - It is diversity working in unity and in harmony that enables Christ's Body to be and to do what He directs it to be and to do.
- ***"...and individually members one of another – lit. means[mutually dependent on one another]***
- Ephesians 4:16 - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

1 Corinthians 12:12 - For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

Every one of us has been given a unique set of talents and abilities along with a spiritual gift that have been given by God to use to build up the body of Christ.

- The Body of Christ will only be as strong as each of us performs our gifts
- **The basic idea is that each believer is a living part of Christ's body, and each one has a spiritual function to perform. Each believer has a gift (or gifts) to be used for the building up of the body and the perfecting of the other members of the body. In short, we belong to each other, we minister to each other, and we need each other.**
- **Every ministry is intertwined with all the others.** No ministry is independent of the others. Since no single ministry can accomplish all the church is called to do, we must depend on and cooperate with the other. Like a jigsaw puzzle, each piece is required to complete the picture. You always notice the missing piece first.
- When one part of your body malfunctions, the other parts don't work as well. One of the missing components in the contemporary church is this understanding of interdependence. We **must** work together. Our culture preoccupation with individualism and independence must be replaced with the biblical concepts of interdependence and mutuality.

Evaluate Your Connection to the Church

If I were to ask you how connected to TFBC, or how committed you are to TFBC, what would you say? How would you rate your commitment.

Rick Warren, Founding Pastor of Saddleback Church in Orange County CA, wrote a book in 1995 that I found very helpful early on in Ministry – Do not agree with everything he has done – Helpful Circles of Commitment

Community – People living in your area 33,000 live within 20 min. drive of TFBC

Crowd

- Show up to Events – Participated in some way –
- VBS, Fall Festival, Attended occasionally

Congregation

- Official Members of the Church – They have been through the Process of Membership
- We have heard their story – They have heard ours
- They understand what is expected of them – They know what they can expect from us.

Committed

- They are active in every aspect of the Church
- Part of a Group – They Serve in a Ministry – They Give, not only of their money, but their time and the talents.

Core

- Key Volunteers and Leaders – Without these people, the church would not function.
- Look up deeper dive into Core – Rick Warren PDC, chapter 7

You see these same levels in the ministry of Jesus

Crowds – Feed 5,000 & 4,000 – Many people gathered to hear him

Congregation – 120 Gathered after his Resurrection and Ascension in Upper Room

Committed – 12 Disciples who carried His message to the Ends of the Earth.

Core – Inner Circle – Peter, James, and John

Where are you?

Elevate Your Participation with the Church

The Older I get the more I realize how independent God has made our Physical Bodies

- When one thing is out of balance, the whole body suffers
- Hear of someone not doing well...find out they were Hydrated? Infection of some sort

Colossians 1:15-18 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ **And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

Consider what happens when the **nervous system** malfunctions.

- The brain might send the right signals, but if the nerves fail to carry them, the body can't respond. Muscles don't move, reflexes slow, and even the simplest tasks become a struggle. The head knows what to do—but the body won't cooperate.

That's what happens when **believers stop listening to Christ**, the Head of the church. The commands are clear in Scripture, the Spirit is speaking—but if we're disconnected, the body becomes uncoordinated. Some parts overwork to compensate, others grow numb, and the whole body stumbles.

A church out of touch with its Head loses direction and strength. But when we stay in step with Christ—hearing His Word and obeying His voice—the body moves in perfect rhythm again, strong, responsive, and alive to its purpose.

How do you walk into Church? Tony Payne, in his book *How to Walk into Church*, wrote...

- But most importantly, how you walk into church will be determined by what you think church is, and what you think you're doing there.
- If you think church is a bit like going to the movies, you might walk in expecting to be entertained or inspired.
- If you think church is an opportunity for personal devotion and worship, you'll probably walk in not wanting to interact too much with anyone else.
- If you think church is something you have to do in order to 'do the right thing' or stay on God's good side, you'll walk in with a determination to do what needs to be done (and then leave as soon as possible).
- But if you were to understand what the Bible says about church—about what church is, and why we go there, and what we're supposed to do while we're there—then there is one particular way of walking into church that you would want to master.
- This way of walking into church beautifully expresses what church is and what it's meant to be, and why we're all there. It is this: we should walk into church praying about where to sit.
(Payne, *How to Walk into Church*, KL 56)

When you think of the word *church* what do you think of?

- Maybe a little country church, or a great gothic Cathedral?
- Maybe when you think of the word *church*, you may think of TFBC – This building
- The New Testament does not describe any of these as being a church?
 - J.D. Greear *Jesus Cont.* writes, "The apostles understood the church to be a movement birthed by the mighty, rushing wind of the Spirit of God. Is that how you see your church? Most people today see the church as an institution, a place to go to, or something to sit through."
- Greear goes on to explain that the church is an *assembly*, not a *place*.
 - The word "church" in our English Bibles is the Greek term *ekklesia*. The term literally means "an assembly" or "a gathering" of people, called out for something. The first believers were an assembly called out to engage in mission. The idea of church changed over the years.
 - By the Middle Ages, believers began to think of a "church" as a **place** that people went to for religious services, **rather than a movement built around a mission.**
 - Interestingly, our English word "church" comes from the German *kirche*, which means literally "a sacred place," rather than *ekklesia*. By the time we English speakers conceptualized "church," we were already thinking of it as a place, not a movement.
 - People began to go to church rather than be the church.
 - We often refer to the church as an organization

In every age, the church faces the danger of degrading itself from a movement to a place, from a conduit of God's mighty, rushing wind to a sacred place where we seek serene, spiritual moments; from a rescue station to a spiritual country club. This is certainly true in our day.

- Greear says, I've heard the average church in our day described like a football game: twenty-two people in desperate need of rest surrounded by 22,000 in desperate need of exercise.
- The Spirit is a mighty, rushing wind, however, and those filled with the Spirit move.
- They move to those within their community in need of the gospel,
- They move to those outside of their communities who are broken and in need of hope.
- They move to the ends of the earth in places that do not share their language or culture.
- Movements (by definition) move, and that means if you're not moving, then you're not really part of the movement. Where there is no movement, there is no Spirit.

Let me give you another foundational truth...Difference between visible church / invisible church...

Big "C" Church – redeemed from every nation in every generation.

Little "c" church – local assembly – local body of baptized believers