

BETTER TOGETHER
The Body of Christ
1 Corinthians 12

My love for the Church: Psalm 84 – How lovely is your dwelling place . . .

Series: Better Together – Being CH. This series is all about understanding the purpose and mission of the Church, and to remember what God has called us to . . . together!

Why do we need this series?

*To remind us of who we are as a church. **WE FORGET . . . or just grow complacent!**

*To create a proper biblical perspective of church life **[To correct wrong thinking]**

*To understand our structure as a Family of Churches **[Multi-Church]**

*To develop a proper VISION of how we fulfill our mission of helping people find and follow Jesus Christ!

We are the BODY of CHRIST: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NIV

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body--whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

The BODY of Christ: Why does Jesus call us his body? **[BIG C and little c Church.]**

I have loved seeing how God works through all kinds of churches over the years. I have loved going on MISSIONS to see this, and I have loved seeing it in our OWN CITY with other SISTER churches around us. They are all a part of the BIG C of church over the centuries with those who have gone before us. **But the LITTLE C is where the ACTION is – The LOCAL CHURCH serves with a FOCUSED, CONCENTRATED PURPOSE.**

THE CHURCH IS A BODY MADE UP OF RECONDITIONED PARTS!

The body is only made up of those that are SAVED from their sins! **Luke 5:31-32 NLT**
³¹ Jesus answered them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. ³² I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.”

The church is not a SOCIAL CLUB. It is not a place to make business connections or to hook up with someone. It is not a self-help center. It is a HOSPITAL for sinners and a REHAB for those who are broken. And it is a place of HEALING and HELP.

THE CHURCH = THE “CALLED OUT” ONES.

-What was your life like before you met Christ? **(What DUMB idols did you serve?)**

Recalls – We have been CALLED OUT and UN-CULLED by the work of grace!

[Friends who love Auto Bodies: The beauty of RESTORATION!]

We are all EQUALLY loved and valued by Christ: Rich-Poor-Slave-Free! [Vs. 13]

There is to be NO “pecking order” in the church. Christ died for us all, and no one is to be given preferential treatment because of their power or wealth or beauty. The CROSS puts us all on LEVEL GROUND, and enables us to love and serve and work with people of all types. And it is MARVELOUS!

THE CHURCH IS A COMPLEX, UNIFIED BODY. 1 Corinthians 12:14-25 NIV

14 **Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.** 15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 **But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.** 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 **so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.**

We have been called out into new RELATIONSHIPS as part of the Body of Christ! When Christ calls us to himself, he also calls us to EACH OTHER as FAMILY! No cell exists for itself except for a single-celled AMOEBA. If you are part of a BODY, then you cannot simply live for yourself. You learn to live with and for the Body! Dr. Paul Brand, along with Phillip Yancey, describes this beautifully in their powerful book.

[Paul Brand Quotes – Fearfully and Wonderfully Made, P. 31-33]

*What kind of “Cell” are you?

Both “Pauls” are here describing how the church as a body FUNCTIONS. It is a MARVEL of ENGINEERING. **Have you ever watched a BABY learn to CRAWL and then WALK?** It is amazing to see. The body was DESIGNED by God to work together in HARMONY. For the body to accomplish ANYTHING, it must work together. No part of the body was designed to work INDEPENDENT of the other parts. Each part must obey the HEAD without hesitation. My FOOT has never told my head, “NO!” Now, as I get older, it may take a bit more TIME to do what the head asks, but it is not from a heart of disobedience! And my ear has never told my hand that it was dumb. In fact, my hands protected my ears just yesterday when some loud noises threatened to

deafen me! Thank God! **This reveals the fact that the body is not just COMPLEX, but that her complexity must be GUIDED by her UNITY.**

UNITY is God's COMMAND for his body! Ephesians 4:2-4 NLT

² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

We got together with all of our children yesterday. **One of my greatest blessings as a father is to see that my children LOVE and actually ENJOY one another!** They like getting together and they find ways to connect in spite of BUSY schedules. Their unity was a FOCUS for Lisa and I as parents. We worked to help them create strong relationships as brothers and sisters. But they had to CHOOSE it.

Unity never comes without humility and patience. We have to MAKE ALLOWANCE for each other's faults and failures, and we have to put forth great EFFORT to protect and preserve our unity as a church family. You know this more than most! Jesus made it clear that his followers were to be ONE. This is really a term of INTIMACY. It is a call to LOVE one another and to be COMMITTED to one another. This is no easy task, but it is essential for the church. In fact, it is what sets us apart in this world. It is also that which allows us to WORK in HARMONY with each other.

We have been GIFTED by God to work together as a body. Romans 12:6-8 NIV

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,^[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Do you know your GIFTS? I remember when we used to teach the concept of S.H.A.P.E. [Spiritual gifts – Heart – Attitude – Personality – Experience]. It is so valuable to know how God has SHAPED you! My primary gift is EXHORTATION. I love encouraging and teaching people about Christ in their lives.

***We are a COMPLETE body that is made up of all necessary parts!**

Every one of you are NEEDED in this body. You are not just here to watch things happen, you are a part of God's design for HOW and WHY they happen. There are no "tonsils" in this body! **This is one of the things I LOVE about being at our current stage at OB: We all feel needed.**

***We are a MOBILE body that needs to stay poised for action. Our Southaven Campus is experiencing this in a very practical way right now. Like us, they have to be FLEXIBLE about where they meet. Our identity is not found in our LOCATION.**

-We cannot get in any RUTS! We are a mobile army that is on the move!

THE CHURCH IS A BODY WITH A MAGNIFICENT PURPOSE.

Each one of us has a unique purpose and calling in this body! **1 Corinthians 12:27 TLB**

27 Now here is what I am trying to say: All of you together are the one body of Christ, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

Oftentimes, we see our VALUE only in regard to where we EXCEL. We think we have to be powerful or super-skilled or extremely intelligent or breathtakingly beautiful to be of any real importance. But God sees (and does) things DIFFERENTLY. I remember once preaching a message entitled, “**Beautiful scars**” – How God uses our broken past to create a beautiful future! Do you have any beautiful scars? Those scars are evidence that God has RECLAIMED you and now has put you on display as one of his MASTERPIECES OF GRACE. This sets the stage for people being a proper vessel for WHAT LIES WITHIN US: The glorious GOSPEL.

We have the greatest message: The Gospel reveals that there is MORE. **This broken world and the harsh realities around us are not all that there is to this life.** God is longing for them to know what he has DONE for them, and what he WILL DO for them if they trust in Christ. And we get to live this out for them, and share this freely with them as the Body of Christ. Jesus said it to Paul this way, and I think that it fits us perfectly today. **Acts 26:16-18 NIV**

16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. **17** I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them **18** to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

This command to “get up and stand on your feet” is not just directed at one man, it is directed to the Body of Christ assembled in Olive Branch today.

Let’s pray.