

“The Unity & Diversity of Christ’s Body”
1 Corinthians 12:12-19
Sept 14, 2025

Introduction

“1 Corinthians 12:12-19.”

Growing up, we would visit my Oma & Opa in Southern California a couple of times a year. And as a kid, one of the best things about this visit was getting to go play with my cousins, all 25 or so of them (I have a lot of cousins). And one of the games that we would play was this special version of dodgeball. This game was like regular dodgeball, except that whenever you got hit, you lost the body part that got hit. If you got hit in the face or torso, you were out. So, if you got hit in the arm, you would have to put it behind your back & throw with only the other hand. If you got hit in the leg, you would have to hop around on the other leg. So, by the end of the game, you'd often find yourself crawling around on your knees, throwing with your off hand, and waiting to be taken out by a nice throw to the face or chest...

And it was through this special version of dodgeball that I became quickly aware of how important each body part was. See, it's pretty hard to throw a dodgeball with your non-dominant hand. It's pretty challenging to hop around on one leg for a long period of time. It's pretty tough to dodge a ball being thrown at you when you are crawling around on your knees. Each body part is vitally important...

And this truth applies in a spiritual sense as well. In the same way that each member of my body played a vital role in those dodgeball games with my cousins, so too does each member of the body of Christ play a vital role in the life of the church.

This is exactly what we see here in this morning's passage. 1 Corinthians 12:12-19 explains two spiritual truths about the members of Christ's body. First, we'll see the spiritual truth about The Unity of Christ's Body (12:12-13). Paul gives us this analogy that the Church is like a body. And while there are many members, all of the members have unity because they are a part of one body. Second, we'll see the spiritual truth about The Diversity of Christ's Body (12:14-19). While there is one, unified body, the fact remains that there are many different members, and each plays a unique and important role. And it is my prayer this morning that through this portion of God's Word, we would all be led to really embrace our place within

the body of Christ and be inspired to go and live out our unique roles within the church for the good of others and the glory of Christ, our Head.

So, let us begin by looking at the first spiritual truth contained in this passage.
“12:12”

I. The Unity of Christ's Body (12:12-13)

Notice how v. 12 begins with: “For even as.” Here, in vs. 12-13, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, makes an analogy/illustration. Paul begins by saying that the human body is one thing, but has many different parts. And then he simply reverses the order, saying that the human body has many different parts, but it is one thing. And then the Spirit inspires Paul to take this concept about the human body and then say, “so also is Christ.” And by saying “Christ,” Paul is really just using the shorthand for saying “so also this is with the body of Christ—the Church.” This point is explicitly made later on in 12:27-28, when he writes “now you are Christ's body,” and then in the next verse he refers to “the church.”

So, Paul here is simply using an analogy of the human body to describe how the Church also is a singular body (*the* body of Christ) and that within this one body are many different members. And it is from this truth that I got the title of this morning's sermon. It is this analogy that gives us the understanding that there is both unity & diversity within Christ's Body. This is the concept that Paul is going to be laying out throughout this passage...

But, here in vs. 12-13, the emphasis is not on the diversity of Christ's body, but on the unity. Look at the end of v.12. He ends on the point that, though there are many members, there is one body.

Then the Apostle explains the means by which this spiritual reality has taken place in v. 13. He writes, “12:13.”

How is it that there are many members of the singular body of Christ? It is because of what is called “Spirit baptism.”

Now, Spirit baptism is an amazing reality for the church, so I'd like to briefly walk with through the unfolding through the New Testament so that we have a better

understanding of it so that we may better appreciate it. Turn back in your Bibles to Mark 1. See, this reality of Spirit baptism was prophesied of by John the Baptist all the way back in the Gospels. Each Gospel accounts this and we have Mark's here in Mark 1. "Mark 1:4-8." Here, Mark records how John the Baptist prophesied that while he baptized with water as a symbol of repentance, he said that "After me One is coming who is mightier than I... [and] He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." So, John the Baptist baptized with what? Water. And Jesus will baptize with what? The Holy Spirit. And when is this Spirit baptism going to take place: past, present, or future? Future. Right, so in the beginning of the Gospels, it is predicted that some in the future Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

Now, please turn in your Bibles to Acts 1. Here we have Christ Himself in His post-resurrection state speaking to His disciples about this very topic before His ascension. "Acts 1:4-5." So, again, we see here that John the Baptist baptized with water in the past, but Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit in the future. More specifically, we get further information here that it will happen in "not many days." After this, in Acts 1, Jesus ascends to heaven, the disciples are gathered together in the Upper Room to wait for this promise to unfold and then... Acts 2 happens. And this prediction becomes reality. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is poured, and the Church is baptized with and filled with the Holy Spirit and the Church is born. Spirit baptism finally takes place. And from then on, as members of the Church, this has been the reality for all believers.

This is what Paul is referring to here in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Look at it again. It says, "For by [or with] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and we were all made to drink one Spirit." So here is the picture. As was predicted, Jesus takes those who have come to Him and baptizes them with the Holy Spirit into His Body. Christ is the baptizer and with the Holy Spirit, He takes us and spiritually baptizes and plunges us into Himself. We have been unified with Christ. Through faith, we are now "in" Christ. We are a part of His body. We have become members of the universal church.

Additionally, we have received the blessing to "drink" of the Holy Spirit, which I believe symbolizes how we have been filled and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We have been *made* (meaning this is ultimately a sovereign work of God) to drink in the living water that springs up to eternal life. We have received into ourselves the very Holy Spirit of God. God the Holy Spirit now resides within us...

And this is true for *all* Christians, regardless of who you are or your background. He writes, "whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free." These categories

were strong ethnic and social divisions, but despite these, Paul says that no matter what background a Christian is from, they are one with Christ and His Church. The Apostle can speak to the church and say, “we were *all* baptized into one body” and “we were *all* made to drink of one Spirit.” And, if you do a word study in the Greek, this word translated “all” means... all! This Spirit baptism and Spirit indwelling is something that *all* Christians have experienced, not just some. Paul proclaims this same truth when he writes in Galatians 3:26-27: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” All Christians have experienced this because this is something that happened at conversion. Spirit baptism is not something that happens later down the line, that only some Christians get to experience, which makes them super holy. No, this is fundamental to being a Christian. We have all received Spirit baptism and Spirit indwelling...

So, what should we do with this knowledge? How should we respond to this revelation of our unity with Christ’s Body?

Well, first, on a vertical level, the proper response to this theological reality is simply this: praise. We may think of these things as just a given. It is something that we kinda take for granted. We can grow cold to them. But let this not be the case this morning. Brothers and sisters, let your heart be warmed by these truths. Think of the significance behind these verses! There is such an oneness and unification between us and our Lord that Paul refers to Christ *as* the Church. The Church as a whole, and you as a unique member of it, have been completely united to Christ. We have been so united to Christ that Jesus says in Acts 9:4-5 that when something happens to the Church, it happens to Him. In the same way that a husband and a wife become one in marriage, so also does Christ and His Bride, the Church, spiritually become united as one. Brothers and sisters, God Almighty and sovereignly moved to do this on your behalf. The Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Savior of the world, has baptized you by the Holy Spirit and made one with Himself. And God Himself has taken up residence in you. What a truth...

But there is also a horizontal application of these verses. All of us who are believers have been brought into the body of Christ, and therefore, we must strive to foster and promote this unity that we have. So, let me ask you: Do you have a conflict with anybody else here within the church that is festering and has been left unresolved? Have you gossiped or slandered others? Have you done anything, through your words or actions, that has driven the church apart? If so, I exhort you: Do not separate this body that Christ has brought together. What God has joined

together, let no man separate. Now, all of us, including myself, fall short of this. I'm sure all of us have intentionally or unintentionally done things that did not encourage unity but encouraged disunity. But with these truths of 1 Corinthians 12 fresh in our minds, let us resolve not to do what the Corinthians were doing, who broke up into cliques (Paul, Apollos, or Cephas) and only cared about themselves and not others. Instead, let us resolve to do nothing that tears the Body apart, because to do so would be to directly work against God Himself, since it is He who brought us all together. Instead, as much as it depends on you, seek to promote peace with all and to maintain a spirit of unity here at Cornerstone. In the words of Ephesians 4:1-3, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being *diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*." That, my brothers and sisters, is what we are called to do...

But there is also an application for you, or those of you who do not have a saving relationship with Christ, as well. To make this point, I'd like us to turn to one more passage. Please turn to Matthew 3. Another one of those Gospel accounts where Spirit baptism is prophesied of... "Matthew 3:1-12." The way in which you must apply this truth about the glory of being in Christ's body is to do what God calls you to do in order to join it! You must heed what John says here: repent and flee from the wrath to come! If you do, I want you to know that you can become one with Christ today. You can receive the Holy Spirit and eternal life today.

So, here in vs. 12-13, we have seen some amazing truths regarding the Church. But Christ's Body—the Church, like the human body, is also diverse. And this is the second spiritual truth that we see here in our passage this morning. In vs. 14-19, we now come to our second point: The Diversity of Christ's Body.

II. **The Diversity of Christ's Body (12:14-19)**

The Apostle writes starting in v. 14, "12:14." In vs. 12-13, the emphasis was on the unity of Christ's body, but here the emphasis is going to be on the diversity of Christ's body. Paul says that the body of Christ doesn't just have one body part, but rather, it has many.

In this section, Paul further develops his analogy of the body, providing us with great illustrations that help us grasp his overall point about the Church. And these upcoming verses are quite comical if you think about it.

He writes, “12:15-16.” Here, Paul takes this analogy of the body and then personifies different parts of the body. He wants us to imagine these different body parts talking, and they are lamenting the fact that they are not another part of the body. Imagine if a foot (which can’t speak because a different body part is necessary for that) says that since it isn’t a foot, it isn’t actually a part of the body because it is not a hand. Or imagine that an ear (which also can’t speak because a different body part is necessary for that) says to the body that it is not a part of the body because it isn’t an eye.

What should our response be to these imagery statements from different body parts? Our response should be what Paul says at the end of both vs. 15 and 16. He says, even if a body part were to say this, that “it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.”

Now, let us remember, this entire thing is an analogy that Paul is making. The things he is saying about the human body are teaching us the truth about the spiritual body of Christ. So, substitute the foot or the ear for a member of the church. And imagine someone in the church saying, “I am not a part of the body because I’m like so and so...” Have you ever said or thought this before? Have you ever felt like you don’t have a place in the church, or you have no purpose, or that the church would be just fine without you, because you aren’t like certain other people?

If you have, you need to see what God is telling you here. Look at the end of vs. 15 and 16 again. If you have ever felt that way, the Spirit says to you this morning: “You are not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.” Meaning, you *are* a part of the body, whether you think you are important or not. God says you are a part of the body of Christ! That’s a fact. Your thoughts and feelings may try to convince you that you are unimportant because you aren’t like him or you aren’t like her. But, brother or sister, here is the question: Are you going to believe yourself or God? Because God, through His inspired Word, is telling you this morning that, unequivocally and undeniably, a true and important part of Christ’s body. And that’s not some motivational self-love nonsense. No. This is biblical truth. If you are a Christian, this morning God is telling you this: You are a part of the church. You have an important role to play. You were made and placed into the body for a purpose.

And Paul is going to continue to keep drilling this point. Look at v. 17. “12:17.” Continuing with this body analogy, the Apostle makes the point that if the whole body were only one particular body part, it would no longer have the different

functions it currently has. If the body were only an eye sitting on the ground, it wouldn't be able to hear anything. If the body were just a giant ear, great, you'd be able to hear, but you wouldn't be able to smell. The point is that each body part has a purpose behind it. And the body was made to have all of these different body parts. This is the blessing of the diversity of the body. The human body was designed to function with all of these different body parts, each with its specific capabilities. It was designed to function with all its various parts doing what they were made to do, and thus, the body as a whole has the blessing of having all these other capabilities.

And the same is true with the church. And this is by design. Look at v. 18. "12:18." The fact of the matter is that this is not by accident that things are this way. It is not an accident that the human body is this way, and it is not an accident that the body of Christ is this way. No. This is the intentional design of God. Brothers and sisters, I can look at all of you today who are Christians and say, God took every single one of you, each one of you, and set you into the body to be what you were designed to be. This is all according to the wisdom and good pleasure of God...

It is this way for a reason. Look at v. 19. "12:19." This is the verse that we will end on this morning, and it is a question that is worth us pondering. God is asking each believer here today: "If there were only one member, where would the body be?" Or to put it another way: Why are there different members within the body? Or, to put it another way, why are you different? The answer is that, actually, without all the different members, there wouldn't be a body. There would be no body without the diversity of parts. It is absolutely necessary that there is a diversity of parts within the Body of Christ. And God designed and desired it to be this way. He designed and desired this unity and diversity. He designed and desired this mutual dependence under the headship of Christ. This is the good design of God and has taken place by the grace of God...

So, moving forward, I want this to be our picture when we think about the Church. But not just the universal Church but the local church as well.

This morning, we officially recognized new people as "members" of our local church. But what do we mean when we say somebody is a member of the church? Many of us think of membership as like a Costco membership or something like that. Some cold, non-relational sort of thing. Just being a name on a list. But that is not really the picture of what it means to be a church "member." The picture we should have of a membership is what we see here in 1 Corinthians 12.

The local church is the visible expression of the universal church. And in fact, the NT actually emphasizes the local church. Yes, there is a universal body of Christ, but in a very real way, the fellowship here at Cornerstone can be referred to as the body of Christ as well. And this is what we are talking about when we speak about church “membership.” When we “become members,” we are simply officially stating that we are committing to being a part of this local body and that we are a “member” of it. We are a place within the body. We are a hand, foot, eye, ear, or whatever it may be. We have a purpose and a function within the Church.

So, for those of you who are not members here yet at Cornerstone but come here on a regular basis, let me encourage you: Please consider officially becoming a member. But remember, this isn’t some cold impersonal thing. This isn’t just adding a name to a roster. This isn’t about numbers. This isn’t just a Costco membership. No, by officially committing to this local church, all that you are officially saying is that this is the local body of Christ that you are a member of. Yes, we are all a part of the universal church, but where the Christian life is lived is the local church. So, I encourage you to become a member. And I’d say this to any Christian anywhere, not just one considering joining Cornerstone. Become a member. I’m not just talking about pushing the paperwork and technically checking the box, but I’m talking about being a healthy, contributing part of this local body.

And for those of you who are already members, let us remember what that means. If you went through the official paperwork of becoming a member, but aren’t functioning as one, I encourage you to try and change that moving forward. We are hurt as a body if you are not playing your part. Now, there are times when certain body parts are hurting and need care and attention, and they are not doing what they are normally doing. That is true within the church. But generally, we should be functioning in the way God designed us to. I don’t mean what I’m about to say in a harsh way, but don’t be dead weight. You know the old saying that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Let that not be the case here at Cornerstone. Don’t make the rest of the church drag you along. Rather, by God's grace, strive to be a healthy, active, and helpful member of the body...

Because this of many members all playing their part within the body is how the church is supposed to be. That is God’s glorious design for the church. So, let us all embrace this.

What a magnificent thing that the Body of Christ is. There is a beautiful unity that exists in Christ’s Body. Christ has baptized us by the Holy Spirit into His Body.

Cornerstone Community Church of Atascadero
Steven Schouten

We have been united to Christ and united to one another. We have unity in that we are all members of one body and all have been indwelt with the same Holy Spirit. We are one with Christ and one with one another.

But there is also a glorious diversity in Christ's Body. We are all one, but we all have our unique place. God has wonderfully fashioned and formed each one of us in a special way and has given us each particular spiritual gifts in order to play a unique role within the church.

And God has done this according to His good pleasure. So, praise God for the unity and diversity we have within the Body of Christ. And let Him help us to faithfully live out His design and purposes for us as a body...