

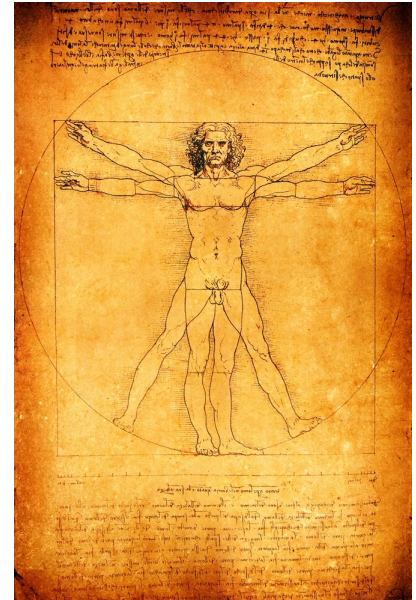
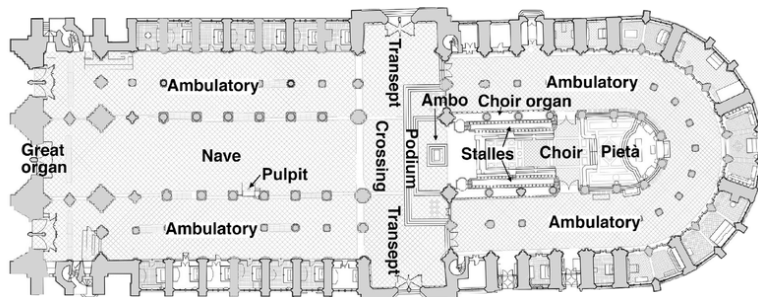
Members of the Body

Romans 12:3–8 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: The biblical word for Church is *ekklesiā* (ἐκκλησία), which refers to a group of people called out to a gathering. Thinking of this group as a body was distinctly organic. The word conveyed an organic organism rather than a legal organization. From the 4th Century to the 8th century, the Greek and Latin *ekklesiā* began to be replaced by the Germanic word *Kirke*, or Church, which referred more to a building or structure - the place rather than the people.

ILLUSTRATION: In fact, the concept of the building as a body was so central to the understanding that by the Renaissance period, architects used the ancient theories of **Vitruvius** in the design of cathedrals. Vitruvius's theory was captured by Leonardo DeVince in his famous sketch of the **Vitruvian Man**.

This is why many ancient architects sought to mirror the harmony, symmetry, and proportions of the human body in cathedral design.



Our Baptist forefathers didn't follow this model - they opted for rather mundane houses of worship that were not highly ornate, but something more akin to a big box, or as we call it around here, a glorified Sheep Shed. Why? Because we want to remember that one may destroy the building and the Ecclesia remains - for the essence of the church does not consist in the organization of the structure we inhabit, but rather the organism of the body we exhibit.

CONTEXT: Last week, we began by recognizing that Paul introduces this turning point in Romans by moving from the doctrinal to the practical through a series of metaphors.

- Last week we said that the essence of the Christian life may be demonstrated as a **Living Sacrifice** - that is, our personal body, on the altar, living for the Glory of God.
- Now, as Paul often does, one metaphor reminds him of another, and he expands upon it. He moves now from speaking of our **individual bodies** to our **corporate body**, the church - the body of Christ.

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TEXT: Romans 12:4–5 (ESV) ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

**Paul echoes this idea in his letter to the church at Corinth -
 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 (ESV)**

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

We find this metaphor throughout 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians as well as in the Romans text before us today.

NOW - the health of our particular congregation will depend in large part on how well we function as a body.

ILLUSTRATION: Before the great preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a Pastor, he trained as a Physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Here is how he defined health: ***"Health is that state and condition in which a man forgets that he has a body."***

If you are healthy today, you likely haven't considered that your body is made up of many members, each faithfully doing its part. If, however, one of your members becomes unhealthy, you are well aware of it.

If arthritis sets in your pinky toe, every other part of your body focuses on that one member. Otherwise, you are hardly aware you have a pinky toe. The same is true of the church body; we are only as healthy as our least healthy member.

What does a healthy church body look like? First, Paul speaks of...

1. The Attitude of the Healthy Body

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Immediately Paul warns against two extremes - Self-Exaltation and Self-Deprecation.

a. The Members Avoids Self-Exaltation -

That is, we avoid thinking that our contribution to the body is somehow superior to that of all the other members. When we develop an attitude of Self-Exaltation, we begin to demand greater attention and greater liberties than everyone else in the body. This is diametrically opposed to the attitude Paul describes in **Philippians 2**.

Philippians 2:3–4 (ESV)

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

He puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:21–25 (ESV)

²¹ 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.” ²² 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 unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

The Healthy Member Avoids Self-Exaltation...Secondly...

b. The Members Avoids Self-Deprecation -

3b. everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, **but to think with sober judgment**, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Sober judgment as opposed to being drunk on our own self-worth.

ILLUSTRATION: We've all met the drunken man who thinks he is 10ft tall and bulletproof. He can whip anybody around. He speaks to issues he knows nothing about. Why? The liquor has distorted his sober judgment. Well, that happens when we are drunk on our own self-worth.

But the goal is not Self-Deprecation, but rather sober judgment.

- **Arrogance says:** “My gift makes me more important than you.”
- **False humility says:** “My gift isn't important at all.”
- **Sober judgment says:** “God gave me this gift, and He gave you yours; therefore I should faithfully do what He assigned me to do.”

Your gift isn't evidence of your superiority; it is evidence of God's generosity.

Therefore, boasting about a spiritual gift makes no sense, and acting as if you have no gift makes no sense.

Tim Keller put it this way - humility isn't thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.

The Attitude of the Healthy Member is humility - avoiding self-exaltation and self-deprecation...Notice secondly...

2. The Association of the Healthy Body

Romans 12:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

The Healthy Church finds Unity amid Diversity.

a. Diversity -

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function.

ILLUSTRATION: A normal adult gallbladder is usually about 3–4 inches long and about 1–1.5 inches wide. It weighs 1 to 2 ounces. Yet I met a man this week who looked radically different from how he did a year ago. It was as if he had aged a decade in a year. Why? He lost his gallbladder.

Now most of us have given very little thought to our gallbladder. We focus on our face, the part everyone sees. We put creams on it, we shoot it full of Botox, some stretch the skin to eliminate wrinkles. Yet, when a man loses his gallbladder, guess where it shows up? On his face.

There is no unimportant member - every part is valuable.

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose the church begins to exalt the music ministry and everyone joins the choir, and no one serves in the nursery. What would happen? Young families would go elsewhere so that their kids can be cared for, and the music ministry would suffer for lack of attendance. Within a generation, it would cease to exist because the kids' ministry wasn't there to train the next generation.

We need each other. Not only is there Diversity in a healthy body... there is also...

b. Unity -

⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Did you get that? Your gift is not primarily for you - it is for me, and him, and her.

God placed gifts and abilities in you that I need. And God placed gifts and abilities in me that you need.

Unity does not mean Uniformity - we don't need a church full of one gift. Can you imagine if everyone was exactly like you or me? We wouldn't last a week.

The Attitude of the Healthy Body is one of humility.

The Association of the Healthy Body is one of unity in diversity.

3. The Activity of the Healthy Body

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:

Let me repeat - **LET US USE THEM**. If you are only attending, you are robbing this church.

Adrian Rogers said, *Spiritual Gifts are not toys to play with, but tools to build with.*

Someone said, *What we are is God's gift to us; what we make of our lives is our gift to God.*

Gifts can be neglected, abused, misused.

Spiritual Gifts are just that - they are gifts graciously given. ***They are not necessarily a sign of Spiritual Maturity.*** The Church at Corinth, for example, was a ***VERY gifted*** church and ***VERY immature.*** Some of the most immature people I have known have gifts I can only dream of. That's the danger: gifted people can fall into - their gifts take them places that their character cannot keep them.

I Peter 4

¹⁰As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Notice the phrase – Each one of you...

Here in Romans, Paul will list SEVEN Spiritual Gifts. This is one of several listings of gifts. They seem to fall into two categories - Motivational Gifts and Manifestation Gifts.

- **Manifestation Gifts** are miraculous enablements that are meant to give credibility to the message of the Gospel.
- **Motivational Gifts** are divine enablements that cause us to focus on a particular area of ministry.

Here, in Romans, Paul lists 7 such Motivational Gifts.

Motivational Gifts:

- Help each believer focus on an area of particular concern.
- Every believer has at least one and possibly more.
- They differ from natural talents, such as singing or playing an instrument.
- They are received at salvation and developed through sanctification.
- They give you maximum fulfillment.
- They serve as a lens through which you view circumstances and situations.
- They work with your talents and natural abilities
- They work with your natural make-up and personality type

a. Prophecy - if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;

The person with the gift of prophecy has a unique ability to cut through the smoke and see hypocrisy, inconsistency, and sin.

The teacher wishes to explain truth; the prophet wishes to enforce truth.

- This was **Nathan** coming to David and saying, "You are the man"
- **John the Baptist** going to Herod and saying, "It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife"

These guys are great in the counseling ministry; they can cut through all of the smoke screens and say, *"Here's the issue - let's deal with it."*

BTW, typically there are fewer prophets in the church than any other gift. If you know a prophet, you thank God there aren't many.

NOW LISTEN - it has been my observation that a person with this gift doesn't typically realize it. Things seem obvious to them that aren't obvious to everyone else. Some people are just mean and judgmental, and they say, "Well, I'm just a prophet." No, you are just a jerk.

Very often the gift of prophecy will be given to a person who naturally finds it difficult to be confrontational.

b. Service - ⁷ if service, in our serving:

This is the word **diakonia**, from which we get the word Deacon. Servants make the best Deacons BTW. When someone is nominated to serve as a Deacon, the first question we ask is, "Where is he serving?"

This is one who is fulfilled in seeing and meeting the practical needs of others. This is the person who is most fulfilled working behind the scenes. If I say, "After the service we need some of you men to stay around and help us move some chairs... all the servants show up".

c. Teaching - the one who teaches, in his teaching:

This is my gift. The teacher finds his fullest joy in explaining truth to others in a way they can comprehend. Teachers are motivated to see you UNDERSTAND the truth. The prophet is motivated to see you OBEY the truth.

I tend to think you don't obey because you don't understand. I've found that isn't always the case.

Lloyd-Jones put it this way: prophecy is immediate, teaching is prepared. The teacher is the man of 2 Timothy 2:15, the worker who studies, reads, meditates, and arranges, and whose real gift is not what he knows but his ability to hand it to you so that you can carry it home.

d. Exhortation/Encouragement - ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation:

The word is **parakaleō**, to call someone alongside, to come alongside and urge them on. Teaching aims at the mind; exhortation aims at the heart and the will. It is the gift that says, "Get up. Keep going. You can do this."

Barnabas was called the "Son of Encouragement" in the New Testament. Paul wanted to leave John Mark; Barnabas wanted to give him another shot.

ILLUSTRATION: In the churches of colonial New England, and in the Welsh revivals of the eighteenth century, there was an actual recognized role called the exhorter. The preacher would preach, and when he sat down, the service was not over. The exhorter stood up. His job was to take what had just been preached and drive it into people's lives, sometimes by name. "Mr. Smith, that means you are going to keep more honest books at the shop. Deacon Jones, that means you are going to discipline your children. Sister So-and-so, that means you are going to dress more modestly."

e. Contribution/Giving - the one who contributes, in generosity:

Every Christian is commanded to give. But some believers have a special ability to acquire resources and a special joy in pouring them into the kingdom. If that is you, surround yourself with prophets and teachers, because frauds can smell your gift from a mile away.

Did you know that the NT is filled with wealthy people who funded the ministries of the Apostles? In fact, throughout church history, every great preacher had patrons who made it possible for them to reach the masses.

BTW, if you are a giver, surround yourself with prophets and teachers, because frauds are out to identify and manipulate your gift.

f. Leadership/Organization - the one who leads, with zeal:

This person can visualize the process of a major undertaking. This person enjoys coordinating the efforts of many to reach a common goal.

This is Pastor Dan's gift. One of the reasons that our church has been successful is that I don't try to do Pastor Dan's job. I don't micromanage him. I let him use his gifts.

g. Mercy - the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

This is the person who gets into another's heart and feels what they feel. They have the Ability to match emotions. People gravitate to them, not prophets.

However, the gift of Mercy can really harm a church if not matched with Prophecy. The Mercy gift would defend Judas in court; the Prophet would sentence him to Hell.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine someone spilling their dessert at a dinner.

PROPHET: "That's what happens when you're not careful!"

Motivation: To correct the problem

SERVER: "Oh, let me help you clean it up."

Motivation: To fulfill a need

TEACHER: "The reason that it fell is that it was too heavy on one side."

Motivation: To discover why it happened

EXHORTER: "Next time, let's serve the dessert with the meal."

Motivation: To correct the future.

GIVER: "I'll be happy to buy a new dessert."

Motivation: To give a tangible need.

RULER: "Jim, would you get the mop? Sue, please pick it up, and Mary, help me fix another dessert."

Motivation: To achieve the immediate goal of the group.

MERCY: "Don't feel badly. It could have happened to anyone."

Motivation: To relieve embarrassment.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: When each gift is represented, the Church makes it seem as though Jesus Himself dwells in a city.

BUT LISTEN:

- Studies tell us that about 20% of the members of a Church do 80% of the work.
- 20% of the members give 80% of the budget.
- Therefore, only about 20% of the gifts are actually being employed.

If you aren't serving, you are sinning.

You are cheating all these people and me out of a gift God gave for our spiritual benefit.