

Title: You Matter: Discovering Your Unique Role in Our Church Family

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–24

Have you ever just sat back and contemplated the complexity of the human body. From the macro level (like we see on the screen) to the micro level (cells and the like). All of it!

Frankly, the human body is a walking, talking miracle.

The human body is so complex in its functionality and the interdependence of its parts.

The human body is made up of interconnected yet individual parts.

So is the spiritual body of Christ, it too is a walking, talking miracle!

And just as the human body is made up of interconnected yet individual parts, so is the Body of Christ – the church. And you, follower of Christ bring significance to this local body.

Main Idea: As a Christian, You Play a Vital Role In Christ's Church

Do you realize how much you matter to God? His love for you is everlasting, and He's filled you with His Spirit, equipping you with a unique gift for a specific role in our church. This gift, meant not for personal praise but for God's glory, serves to strengthen our church body.

Whether you're working behind the scenes, teaching passionately, or offering support, it's all to make God known. You are vital to our church and to God's plan. Embrace this truth, and watch how God works through you. You are important to God, our church, and to me.

So, listen up! You matter!!

This is what Paul is driving at in this passage of Scripture.

He is dealing with a church that is not only divided, but a church that is divided over Spiritual Gifts of all things.

In order to address this head on, Paul takes the tact of encouragement rather than rebuke.

And His way of encouragement starts in verse 12...

1. Christ's Body has Many Parts (Verses 12-14)

1 Corinthians 12:12–14 ESV

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. 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. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

Why do you suppose the Apostle Paul would talk to the church at Corinth about this imagery of the church as a body and all her parts?

Because this church was struggling to get along. There was much strife and division among them, and so Paul wanted to give them a powerful visual illustration on how a local church is supposed to function.

There is the global church (The Global Body of Christ)

There is the local church (The Local Body of Christ)

There are the individuals that make up both - Who are they? They are born-again, followers of Jesus Christ.

And each of these born-again, followers of Jesus Christ are gifted by God with a special gift enabling them to be a valuable part of the local body of Christ.

The local church is the main outlet for the Christian to exercise and grow their gift for the glory of the Lord.

The body is one - Let's think of this in the local context. This local body has many members. We also have regular attenders, and we have those who are visiting and checking us out.

But notice in the text the expectation of the one body is membership.

“Member” - μέλος, ουσ, τό

a part of the human body, member, part, limb lit., of parts of the human body (cp. Did., Gen. 8 A, 7) A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. μέλος

How can I say this? Because of the imagery that Paul uses of a body. There is no question that my pinky is part of my body. It is connected and belongs to my body.

When you have surgery nowadays, you must mark the member of your body that will be worked on! Because it's your body, and they want to make sure they get it right.

Paul says in this passage that my pinky and *“all the members of the body, though many, are one body.”*

There is no question that my pinky is part of my body because my pinky is attached to my body, and I can unequivocally demonstrate it belongs to my body because it is attached.

For the local church, there is a process that we go through to connect people officially to this body. They go through a process, membership class, application, and believer's baptism (if necessary) testimony before the congregation to submit themselves to this particular body.

And what membership means is very important. Through a formal process, they promise to be a fully attached body part, using their gifts and talents within this local congregation to ensure her growth and furtherance as the local body of Christ.

Now, perhaps you might say, well, I should be able to have all of this without officially submitting myself to this body.

And I would say that is very similar to someone saying, that I didn't need to be formally adopted into the Green family to be raised as Joe and Shirley's son, but it sure helped me not only know I was officially their son, but I was able to act accordingly as their son. I was part of family meetings and, even as an adult son, making challenging decisions for the betterment of my parents because I could! Decisions I couldn't make if I were not legally their child. I was all in as a member of the family and I could do things that those outside my family could not do or participate in. This is just as true in a local church. Membership in a local church enables service at the greatest levels of leadership.

Church membership is important because this text says it is. Paul calls them **members** of the local body in Corinth.

Certainly, this starts on a global scale before a local one. This is what Paul means when he says...

1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV

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.

But the church body is not limited to the global scale - there is the local body as well. After all, what church is Paul writing to in this letter? The local church of Corinth.

And the point we mustn't forget is that when we are born-again, the Spirit of God baptizes us INTO the family of God on a global scale - meaning I become a family member of Christ's church at the point of my salvation.

So those people Nathan Muse, our missionary to Australia, has led to Jesus are now brothers or sisters with us even though they are literally on the other side of the world.

We are all drinking from the same spiritual well.

But then, where do global members go to express their gifts and function together in the Spirit?

They find and join a local congregation.

We are global members of the church.

We must become local members of the church.

There is no such thing in the New Testament for long-term regular attenders in a local church.

Paul's point here is that we are all part of the Body of Christ globally and must be locally.

And because of this truth, we each play a vital role in the body of Christ. God gifted you to use that gift to build His church. He entrusted you with this gift to glorify Him in His body.

This is why Paul says, **"For the body does not consist of one member but of many."**

Paul's point? Membership in the body is important to Paul so that members can perform God's intended function within the body.

What does a spleen do? I bet you it's pretty important.

The spleen is vital for immune defense and blood cell management. As part of the lymphatic system, it fights infections with lymphocytes (B and T cells) that target pathogens. It filters blood by removing old red blood cells through phagocytosis and stores platelets for clotting. The spleen recycles hemoglobin from old red blood cells into bilirubin and iron, reusing the iron for new blood cells and excreting bilirubin for fat digestion. While primarily active before birth in producing blood cells, it can resume this role in adults under specific conditions like anemia.

Who knew the spleen was so important?

You are important, too! We need you so we can function at our full capacity. We need your spiritual gift that God has entrusted to you. He gave it to you so you could use it in the local church. If not this local church, some local church.

What are you doing with your gift?

I don't know what my gift is.

Do you know the best way to discover your spiritual gift? Start serving, and it will become clear to you how God has gifted you.

Review: As a Christian You Play a Vital Role In Christ's Church

- Christ's Body has Many Parts

2. Every Body Part Matters (Verses 15-20)

1 Corinthians 12:15-20 ESV

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

No member of the body can say they are not needed, just as no part of the human body is without purpose. Do you see what Paul is doing in these verses? He is doing two things. First, he is shutting down the sin of comparison.

Second, he is showing them the foolishness of the argument that a particular member is not necessary.

The foot comparing itself to the hand and then dismissing the necessity of the foot because it doesn't compare to the hand. This is ridiculous.

The foot is a crucial part of the body just as much as the hand.

The same is true of the ear saying it is not useful nor necessary because it is not an eye!

And please notice the foolishness of the argument. *"I am an ear, but if I can't be an eye, there is no point for me to be a part of the body."* That is a huge swing of position and pointless.

The argument becomes even more strange.

Imagine that I am an eyeball up on the stage right now. Just looking at you. I couldn't even blink because I'm just an eye, and I don't have an eyelid. Weird and creepy!

Imagine that I am a giant ear up here? Flopped on the stage. Gross. I couldn't see, I couldn't smell, I couldn't communicate. It is ridiculous.

Do you know what is just as ridiculous? You comparing yourself to someone else and saying because I am not gifted like they are gifted; I shouldn't be a part of this body. That is absolute nonsense.

And it is an attack on God's sovereignty.

Look back at the text...

1 Corinthians 12:18-20 ESV

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

Do you see what I mean about an attack on the sovereignty of God?

God arranges the members in the body, each one of them, AS HE CHOSE!

Think about this for a minute. God brought you to this body. God desires for you to be used in this body. You may think you chose this church, but GOD CHOSE YOU FOR THIS CHURCH to accomplish HIS will in this church and community.

So, stop downplaying your role and your responsibility.

God did not put all the same gifts here at ABC. He gifted you in a particular way to accomplish a particular thing. Or many things.

So, when you refuse to do anything, and you sit on your gift. If you refuse to exercise your gift you are acting like a very immature believer, and it is not pleasing to the Lord.

In addition, if you are too busy to use your gift in the body of Christ again, your priorities are out of whack, and you need to repent and get at it for Christ.

"As it is, there are many parts, yet one body."

“80% of the work around a church is done by 20% of the people.”

Are you a fan of Christ or a follower of Christ?

“The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.”

— **Kyle Idleman**, *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*

Do you understand Paul’s point in these verses? Diversity in our gifting within the church is to be celebrated. We are not and should not be all the same. God has sovereignly placed you in this local body to use your gift for His glory and your good.

What does a pancreas do?

I want you to know, celebrate, and use your spiritual gift.

I want you to remember that you are vital to this church’s life.

I want you to get to work exercising your gift so you will grow, and so will this church!

Review: As a Christian, You Play a Vital Role In Christ’s Church

- Christ’s Body has Many Parts
- Every Body Part Matters

3. Each Body Part Depends On the Other (Verses 21-26)

1 Corinthians 12:21-26 ESV

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.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 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, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Each body part matters, so no Christian in the church is unimportant or does not matter. Each believer plays a vital role.

But we do not play these roles apart from one another. The raw fact of the matter is we are dependent upon one another. We NEED each other to make this local church function correctly.

This is Paul’s point in his continued metaphor of the human body.

How ridiculous would it be for the eye to tell the hand, or the head tell the feet that they don't need them? It would be ludicrous.

They are actually dependent on one another.

I mean, how could the eye grab something if there was no hand, and how could the head get anywhere without feet?

Maybe they could figure ways out, but those ways would be awkward and not natural at all.

But when the body parts appreciate the other parts and not take them for granted, well, now we can get some things accomplished for the glory of God,

Paul goes on to say that there may be some body parts that SEEM or APPEAR less significant but rest assured, they are not.

Paul's answer to the pride of the more visibly gifted was to engage his analogy again and remind them that the more fragile and less lovely, in fact, ugly parts of the body which are not publicly "presentable" (v. 24) are given the greater respect for their necessity. He spoke of the internal organs.

God has designed visible, public gifts to have a crucial place, but equally designed and more vital to life are the hidden gifts, thus maintaining the perspective of unity—all are essential to the working of the body of Christ. The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 12

Whatever role you play in this body, you are vital and crucial. You make our body whole. You make us function better than we would without you.

But be warned, division comes when one body part thinks they are more important than other body parts.

Thank the Lord, Jesus didn't think like this.

Philippians 2:3-8 ESV

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Wow! This is our God! He was not interested in status, but instead, that the will of the Father was achieved.

John 6:38 ESV

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

What an amazing model our Savior is. He came to accomplish the will of His Father at great personal cost to Him.

Luke 22:42 ESV

saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

We, as followers of Jesus Christ, have the same privilege and opportunity to follow the will of the Father.

The Father saved you and gifted you by His Holy Spirit. It was His will to gift you the way He did because He had a purpose for you in His church. Your gifting is by His sovereign will for HIS plans and purposes.

So, how should you view your gifting? Three ways...

With gratitude – it is a gift from God!

With joyful anticipation - In other words, be excited to use and grow in your gift.

With dogged determination – become excellent in your gift.

How shouldn't we view our gifting?

With jealousy and contempt for other gifts in the church - We should be content with how we are gifted even if others are more gifted than we are. We should support one another in the areas of our gifting, building one another up in our most holy faith!

We should genuinely love one another as we serve the Lord together in this body.

This is what Paul is saying in verse 26...

1 Corinthians 12:26 ESV

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Have you ever smashed your toe into an end table? I'm not talking about stubbing your toe, I mean smash your toe!

It is not pleasant.

When I did this, it wasn't just my little pinky toe that hurt; my entire body languished in pain. Even my hair hurt on the top of my head!

This is the church - we suffer together, we rejoice together. We serve the Lord together.

We all do this together with our respective gifting. And we honor one another as we serve together.

Thank the Lord that the parts of the human body are not in competition with one another. That would be terrible.

So, it should be with the body of Christ in a local church. We are, each one of us, to understand How God has gifted us, and we are to use that gift to better the church

We must foster a culture of honor and mutual care.

We must look out for one another, especially those who are vulnerable or feel undervalued.

We must show empathy, compassion, and practical support within the church family.

We must understand and celebrate how much we need one another!

Review: As a Christian, You Play a Vital Role In Christ's Church

- Christ's Body has Many Parts
- Every Body Part Matters
- Each Body Part Depends On the Other

4. Your Part is Indispensable (Verse 27)

1 Corinthians 12:27 ESV

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Every believer is a critical part of Christ's body, with a unique role that no one else can fill.

Think about this for a minute.

You have a unique personality crafted by God's creative genius.

Just like no two snowflakes are the same, there has never been another you.

In addition to this, as a follower of Jesus, you have been gifted by God when you were born again.

Where do we see the gifts of the Spirit?

Paul and Peter highlight spiritual gifts across key passages, underscoring their diversity and purpose for the church's benefit.

In **1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31**, Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, spirit discernment, tongues, and their interpretation, emphasizing their origin from the same Spirit for the common good.

Romans 12:6-8 adds prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and mercy, advocating for their use in faith's proportion.

Ephesians 4:11-13 focuses on gifts for church edification, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

1 Peter 4:10-11 urges using one's gifts to serve others, highlighting speaking and serving as means of administering God's grace.

Connected: Finding Your Place in Our Journey of Faith

So, you are uniquely created by God, to begin with, and then, after you are saved, God gives you a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Now, prepare to have your mind blown.

As Christians, no two of us are the same, even if we have the same gifts. Why? Because our unique personalities augment our spiritual gift, which makes that gift uniquely yours.

If you have the gift of teaching, no one will ever teach like you. God made you and remade you into something different than anyone else.

This is true with every other gift mentioned. Wow!

Now, take it a step further.

God brought each of us to this church and has uniquely gifted each of us so that this church, because of her unique personalities and spiritual gifting, is unlike any other church that has ever existed. Woah!

This means God has sovereignly planted this church in Allendale, MI, for such a time as this to accomplish things that only we can accomplish because God has uniquely gifted us to do so.

We often look at other churches and think, wow! We should do things like they do.

And there may be things we can learn from them. But they are not here - they are where they are at. And we are not there.

We should celebrate what they do in their context and be passionate about following the Lord's will in ours.

If they are bible preaching, gospel-focused churches, we don't need to compete with them; we simply need to follow the Lord in our context.

What is my point? Look again at what Paul says in verse 27...

1 Corinthians 12:27 ESV

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Dear Allendale Baptist Church - God has sovereignly brought you here as an individual to be a MEMBER so you might accomplish His will.

He has uniquely made you and uniquely remade you by imbuing you with His Spirit and also gifting you with His Spirit so we can be the church that this community needs to accurately see Jesus as their only hope.

My pastor to me - "Mark, stop trying to be me. God made you to be you not me. You make a lousy me but a wonderful you."

I challenge you to embrace your identity and role in this church, Christ's body.

Review: As a Christian, You Play a Vital Role In Christ's Church

- Christ's Body has Many Parts
- Every Body Part Matters
- Each Body Part Depends On the Other
- Your Part is Indispensable

Conclusion:

So, my friends, if God has saved you and blessed you with gifts through the power of His Holy Spirit, and if He has intentionally brought you to this unique local church to employ your distinctive spiritual gifts if He has shaped you to contribute in your own beautiful and unparalleled way, then what is holding you back from diving in wholeheartedly?

For those of you who are eager to get involved, know that Pastor Larry and I are in the process of developing opportunities for engagement so that every member of ABC Church can find and flourish in their gifting.

But, it requires you to take that first step and say, 'I am ready to use my unique spiritual gifts to help our church grow.'

Once you do, be prepared to witness the amazing things God will accomplish in and through you for years to come.

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. What did we learn about God from the text or Sunday's message?
2. What did we learn about the importance of the individual Christian from the text or Sunday's message?
3. What can you do to improve in the area of understanding our gifting?
4. What does God desire from us at ABC, or you personally as an individual?
5. If you or we as a church were to practically apply what we learned from this passage or message, what would that look like? What changes will we or you make this week?
6. Summarize what you learned in one sentence, and how does God want you to respond in obedience?
7. This week, who would benefit from this truth, and who will you share it with?