



## ReSync: Finding Your Place in the Body

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20; 25-27

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1. When each member of a church is using his/her gifts towards the same goal, it is like an elite sports team firing on all cylinders. However, many Christians are tempted to resist playing as part of a team.
  - a. How have you seen this to be true of you in your life? What were the results of the disunity that you have witnessed?
  - b. When in your journey of discipleship did God change your heart towards serving?
  - c. How have you seen God work through your obedience and faithfulness in serving as part of the body of Christ?
  
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.
  - a. What is the significance of Paul using the 2nd person plural pronoun (y'all) in the statement "you all are the body of Christ"?
  - b. One of the problems Paul is addressing is our attitude, particularly when one body part says they don't need the others. What are the ways we do this in the church? What are ways that we send the message that we don't really need other people in the church?
  - c. Conversely, another problem is of people undervaluing themselves and their contribution to the body. How have you personally struggled with appreciating the value you bring to the body of Christ because your gifts may be different than someone else's?
  - d. What are the gifts you've been given that God might be calling you to use to serve as a member of the body of Christ?
  
3. We can be tempted to think that because we can read the Scriptures for ourselves and because technology allows us unprecedented access to the greatest worship leaders and preachers, that we don't need other Christians in our local church. However, what are the things that cannot be replicated through technology? What would a church/group committed to those things look like?

4. Read Galatians 5:13-14. As believers, we received great freedom through Christ death on the cross. Often, we can be tempted to use this freedom to indulge in our own pleasures and desires. Paul turns this idea of freedom on its head.
  - a. What does Paul instruct us to do with our freedom?
  - b. What is the underlying motivator for us to serve one another and the body of Christ? Out of what motivation should we serve one another?

Challenge: How are you serving the body of Christ? What is your motivation? If you aren't currently serving, spend some time this week asking God to show you where He is calling you to serve in love.

Prayer: Father, Allow me to serve others with a joyful heart; Never keeping score; Always giving; Never expecting to receive. Allow me to give of myself, To give of my talents and of my goods, To give of my time and of my energy, To give of my heart and of my soul. Help me understand the needs of others, Never criticizing, Never demeaning, Never scolding, Never condemning. You have been so gracious to me, Always Loving, Always forgiving, Always restoring; Never gloating over my defeats, Even when I have been so wrong. Father, keep a condemning spirit Far from my heart and further from my lips. Allow me to serve others as You serve, With gentleness, compassion, and tenderness, Never diminishing the worth of another, Choosing to extend mercy to the brokenhearted, Like You have repeatedly shown it to me, Amen. —Jack Watts

## STUDY DEEPER

### **The Best Way to Find God's Will for Your Gifts**

Let's imagine, for the sake of illustration, that you're not very familiar with fish (perhaps you don't have to imagine). And you've agreed to participate in an experiment where you're asked to identify whatever is placed before you. You don't know it, but you're about to view anatomical parts of a largemouth bass.

First comes the translucent green pectoral fin in a petri dish. You look at it and answer, "Is it some kind of leaf?" Next comes the slimy swim bladder. "Gross! I'm guessing it's some small animal's intestine or something." Next comes a red piece of gill tissue. "I have no idea what that is!"

Now, had you viewed these parts in the context of the fish's body, you'd grasp to some degree their importance in helping the fish function properly. But taken out of the context of the body, the parts make little sense. It takes the fish's body to understand the function of a part and it takes all the parts to make a fish function.

“So it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). Each of us is a part of the body of Christ and has a particular function. But it takes the body of Christ to understand the function of a part and it takes all the parts to make the body function.

## Designed to Depend

If you’re struggling to figure out how God wants to use you, one possibility is that you’re examining yourself out of context, isolated in a petri dish, so to speak.

This is essentially the way we in the West (especially in the United States) are trained to see ourselves. Perhaps more than at any other time in history, our culture understands individuals as autonomous units rather than interdependent parts of a larger social organism.

Today, we largely view interdependence on others as optional, not necessary – partly due to our nearly sacred cultural value of individual liberty, and partly due to all the technological advancements that enable us to pursue it in unprecedented ways. We’re free to voluntarily associate, and free to go it alone. Interdependence on others is only really necessary on the meta-scale, where we need large-scale systems to distribute things like food, clothing, and energy, or facilitate things like mass communication, mass transportation, government, and finance.

As a result, when it comes to determining how each of us should use our time, abilities, resources, and relationships, we primarily assess them based on how these things will advance our individual goals and dreams or cater to our individual preferences. In the abstract, we think working toward the common good is a good thing. But in the concrete world of day-to-day life, we see ourselves as independent, autonomous bodies, and so the individual good is the best thing.

But there’s a problem: we aren’t designed to be billions of independent, autonomous bodies primarily doing our own thing. God designed us to be interdependent body parts that contribute to the healthy functioning of a larger social body.

So if we conceive of the purpose of our lives as primarily an individual pursuit of happiness, it’s no wonder we can find discerning where God wants us to invest our lives illusive and perplexing. It’s like a pectoral fin or swim bladder or gill tissue trying to figure out in the petri dish what it should do. Body parts don’t make sense, much less function right, apart from the body.

## Where Your Life Is Meant to Make Sense

That’s what 1 Corinthians 12 (and 13 and 14) is all about. Paul writes,

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. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

We aren’t each individual bodies of Christ. We collectively “are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Our lives are meant to make sense in the context of the body of

Christ because each of us has a God-given function to perform – a function that is interdependent on other functioning parts.

Christ's body is the primary context in which God intends for our unique gifts and kingdom callings to be revealed, confirmed, and engaged. And what Paul primarily has in mind by "Christ's body" in 1 Corinthians 12 is our local church.

Millennia before there were tests for profiling our personalities, finding our strengths, or identifying our spiritual gifts, there was the local church, where each member was "given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). That's what the spiritual gifts – both more supernatural gifts (like miracles and healing) and more constitutional gifts (like administrating and helps) – are for: the common good of the expression of Christ's body we belong to.

God eventually calls a few of us to serve broader portions of Christ's body in various ways. And he calls some of us to isolated situations, like remote church planting, frontier missions, and imprisonment – where "body life," at least for a while, doesn't look or feel typical. But like Paul and the church in Antioch, such callings are meant to be confirmed in, commissioned by, and accountable to our local church body, if at all possible.

Like every thing else in our defective world, there are exceptions – diseased local churches that aren't facilitating a healthy body made up of interdependent members. Sometimes God calls us to be agents of improved health for such a body, and sometimes he directs us to find a healthier body.

And, of course, no church does "body life" perfectly because they're all comprised of imperfect people, like us. But nonetheless, the local church is God's bodily provision for us, the context where our lives are meant to make sense.

Where Do You Look for God's Direction?

Understanding ourselves and each other as interdependent members of a corporate body is very different from what we've learned from our culture. And even though we might be very familiar with 1 Corinthians 12, and abstractly admire Paul's "body" analogy as a theological concept, it does not mean we've internalized it and that it's shaping and governing us.

We can tell what understanding of ourselves and others shapes and governs us by how we answer this question: Where do we look for God's direction on how we should use our giftings? Do we see this as primarily an individual quest for self-actualization, or are we looking for it in the context of Christ's body as we seek to meet the needs of others? Most of us Americans naturally gravitate to the former, and we must relearn to seek for it in the latter.

And there is no neat-and-clean formula. It's not fast, like a test. It happens in the messiness of the life of the body. But if we fixate less on our particular part and more on the good of others and the common good of the larger body, God will faithfully show us what members we are. That's God's design. Pursue love (1 Corinthians 14:1), and we will discover his will for us. Seek first the kingdom, and all we need will be provided (Matthew 6:33).

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<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-best-way-to-find-gods-will-for-your-gifts>