

Many Members, One Body

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. The scripture reading today comes from 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-31. Please follow along on the screen on your bulletin or in your own Bible.

Starting in verse 12, we read, 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. 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.

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?

[1 : 06] 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. 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 unrepresentable 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. And 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.

[2 : 12] If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing?

Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret, but earnestly desire the higher gifts? And I will show you a still more excellent way.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Iris. Let's keep that passage open. On your bulletin or in your Bible.

Because we'll be looking at it. And so this is our second week in this series about spiritual gifts.

Though actually it's not really about spiritual gifts. As you've heard it, it's actually about the church.

[3 : 20] As we heard earlier, it is the loveliest place on earth, right? This welcoming, inclusive, loving community. That's the church. Except was that the case in Corinth?

It wasn't. Maybe it wasn't the problem with spiritual gifts that they didn't know how to use them or didn't have them. What was the problem? Well, we heard it in the reading, right? There were some people who said, well, I don't belong to the body.

I don't belong here. And there were other people who said, well, that's right. We don't need you. I have no need of you. Verse 20. What was the problem? Well, there were some gifts that they really liked.

As you heard last week, speaking in tongues, speaking in this kind of strange language. That was like the cool, fleshy gift that made you like a really great Christian. You know, there were people who could do that.

And yeah, we are great. And the guys who couldn't do it, well, we don't need you, right? That was basically what was going on. So it's not much about gifts.

[4 : 23] It's addressing a sinful attitude in the church, right? Here are people who don't really understand the church. They don't understand our hearts and how they go wrong.

And that is actually what Paul will be speaking about, what I'll be speaking about, which makes it really relevant, right? Because as a church, we are not really in danger of idolizing tongues like the Corinthians are.

That's a good thing. But, I mean, we all have sinful hearts, right? There are other things that we put our value in, that we hang all our identity on the kind of who we are and our gifts.

In other ways. And actually, it will be really great to listen to this passage. And not just for us as a church. Actually, the picture of the church here, I hope you see it's very different from the world. Maybe you're here, you're not a Christian, you're looking into Christianity. I don't know, maybe you're working and you have your team at work. What is that like? And how is that different from the church as we see it here?

[5 : 23] I think you're going to see that it's hopefully very different, ideally. And that is something attractive. It's something beautiful. The picture we see here of the church as a body. That's the word you've heard, right?

The body, the body, the body. It's a beautiful picture. And it's so helpful for us to understand who we are and how we are to relate and what we are to do. So that's what we're going to look at.

It's not a very long passage, but it's longer than last week. In the first verses, he introduces this idea that we're one body. And then he just riffs off this metaphor for like most of the passage.

And then at the end, okay, so this is you. This is the church, the body. So that's what we're going to do. And so, well, the big point that we all want to, we need to know, right?

God made the church one body. If you're a church, all the Christians who believe in Jesus, who have the Holy Spirit, we are one body.

[6 : 22] You heard the word one all the time, right? Verse 12 and 13 again. 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. Right?

One, one, one. A body is one. It has lots of different parts. The hands and the feet and the eyes and the ears. But it is one. And it's the same with the church.

You know, Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, young and old, men and women. But we are one.

How did we become one? Well, it mentions here baptism. Last week, we had a baptism, right?

And we celebrated that she was dead to the world, and now she was part of our family. She became one of us. She's one with us, right? Of course, it's just a ritual, but that's the spiritual reality that we were celebrating.

[7 : 23] But actually, the underlying thing is that how does a body work? What holds a body together? However, it is your spirit, right? It's like, this is my body, but what is the thing that animates it?

What is the thing that makes it work together? It's my spirit, right? The spirit in my body is making it move. It's kind of, it's everywhere. So where my spirit is, that's where my body is.

That is what guides it and controls it. And in a way, well, that is then what the church is, right? So in the church, lots of different Christians, but they all have the same spirit.

The one Holy Spirit of Jesus is everywhere, and so we are like a body. We are all these different parts that are held together by the spirit of Jesus to become the body of Jesus.

How is Jesus working in the world? Well, through the church. We are in his body here in the world.

And that's the whole idea. Even though we're all different, we're all united by the spirit.

[8 : 23] So this is a slightly different metaphor from other books where you have Christ the head and we are the body. That talks more about his loving rule over us. No, this is about us as, you know, different parts of one body.

And so let's think about the body. Let's think about the metaphor here. What is the thing about the body? Well, it has different parts, right? A body needs lots of different things.

Verse 15 to 17. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body, that wouldn't make it any less a part of the body. If the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that wouldn't make it any less a part of the body.

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? What? Here's the feet and the feet think, okay, the hands. The hands are so important, right? The hands can do so many things. And your feet, they're just stuck in sandals on the mucky streets and getting dirty. You know, the hands are really important. No.

[9 : 29] A body needs hands and feet, right? That's what he says. And not just hands. You know what's like behind it, right? It's a church where, you know, people just speak in tongues and nothing else.

But that's not how bodies work, right? Verse 19. If all were a single member, where would the body be? Picture just one giant hand. That's your body, right?

One giant hand. It's not very useful, right? It can pick up things really well, but it can't actually go anywhere. It can't see what it needs to pick up, right? It doesn't work.

A body needs not just a hand. It needs all these different parts. And so what's the equivalent? Think of a church. And the only thing they do is speak in this strange language, right?

There's no preacher, no music, no sound team, no greeting, no welcoming, nothing. Just a bunch of people speaking in a strange language. That's not a church, right?

[10 : 24] So that's what Paul says. Look, a body has all these different parts. And that is not an accident. It's God's design. Verse 18.

As it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose. God gave you two feet and two hands and two ears and two eyes, one nose, two nostrils, all those things.

God designed you. He made you exactly with what you needed. And that is the church. He made you exactly, he made watermark exactly as he needs watermark to be with the different gifts, different people.

Why do we need so many different people? Well, because we're interdependent, right? We're interdependent parts. There's people, verse 21. One, 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. Right? You need all the different parts of your body. Right? It can't, we can't do without each other.

[11 : 26] Even the things that we might think we, that are, that don't look very good. Verse 22. 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 we have some very presentable and good looking parts. We have other parts that no matter how hot it gets in Hong Kong, we always keep covered.

Because they don't look very good. But they're very essential, right? Your body can't work without them. Or even worse, you know, my intestines. You know, no one wants to see my intestines.

I don't want to see my intestines. They are really important, right? I couldn't live without them. But that's the idea. You know, in the church, we're all needed. And there might be some people who are not very presentable, right?

If you put them here on stage, they're not a public speaker. It would be embarrassing. And maybe they have like this really important role behind the scenes, right?

[12 : 23] They're really indispensable in the church. Even though it's not up here. That's what the body is like. We're indispensable. Everyone needs each other, right? How can my body survive?

You know, I need my feet to walk to the fridge. And I need my hands to open the fridge. And I need my eyes to see where the food is. And I need to take it. And I need my mouth to open. And, you know, it needs to go to my stomach to digest it.

And then my blood vessels. That's how a body works. It only works if every part does its job, right? So how can we do our job as a human being?

Well, if our whole body works together. Right now, my hands are gesturing. My feet are walking to my Bible. My mouth is talking. My brain is trying to remember what I wanted to say. You know, that's how bodies work.

That's how the church works. That's God's design. If we all work together. And so, well, if that is who we really are. If that is what your body is like.

[13 : 23] You need caring parts. Verse 25. What does God want? 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. Right? You know, your body is one thing. If my feet get hurt and I need to go to hospital. It's not just my feet that end up in hospital. And the rest of my body can still go to work. Right? My whole body ends up in hospital. Because we're one. We work together. If my feet decide to take a day off.

My body doesn't work. And we all need to do our part. And so we need to care for each other. And my eyes look out that I don't stomp my toes. And if I do stomp my toes. My hands will try and rub it. Right? You know, it's a very simple metaphor that Paul uses. But I hope you can see the power. We are one body. And bodies have all these different parts that need each other.

[14:20] And that therefore care for each other. And work together to do what it's supposed to do. To fulfill its mission. And so Paul comes back to the church.

That is you. Verse 27. Now you are the body of Christ. And individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church. First apostles.

Second prophets. Third teachers. Then miracles. Then gifts of healing. Helping. Administrating. Various kind of tongues. We are all different. We have all these different roles and gifts.

And that's great. That is God's design. Now you may wonder why it says. You know. First apostles. And second prophets. Doesn't he just say that. We need everything.

I think that's because the apostles and prophets. They are the. They're the foundation of the church. He says that in some other places. Like here in Ephesians. And he talks about the gospel.

[15:18] The mystery of Christ. Which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations. And it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit.

When Jesus came. The truth about the gospel. Yeah. He revealed it to his apostles. And some other people. By the spirit. They're the guys who wrote the New Testament. They're like the foundation.

That's why they are mentioned like first and second. Or later. The church. The household of God. But built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ himself. Being the cornerstone.

And that's why. They're more foundational. It's not like they're superior Christians. They're just. They have this foundational role. But. It's all different. And. You know. Not everyone is the same. Verse 29. Are all apostles? Well no. Are all the prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Do all work miracles? No. Do all possess gifts of healing? No.

[16:15] Do all speak with tongues? No. No. Not everyone. Has the same gift. We all are different. There's not a kind of gift that everyone needs to have. That is the church.

And that's God's perfect design. So just be yourself. Just care for each other. As you are. With the gifts God has given you. That's. What he's saying. Work together as you are.

We're all different. We're not all the same. Now before I apply that. When I say that. Spiritual gifts. Sometimes this kind of idea that well.

You know. Not everyone does this. Gets confused with some other things. So I just want to address two little misunderstandings. Because yeah. We think of gifts as a kind of special ability.

And if I have that ability. I need to use it. But if I don't have it. I. Well I shouldn't use it. Right. I can't use it. Like. Again. Speaking in tongues. If you can speak in tongues.

[17:10] Great. If you can't speak in tongues. It's not expected of you. But that is not the same as. Christian activity. Right. Even though some people are gifted.

There are some things we all should do. Right. Hospitality. There is a gift of hospitality. Some people are great at hospitality. But the Bible says. All Christians should be hospitable.

Right. You can't really say. Well I'm an introvert. Therefore I don't need to welcome people. Or evangelism. Some people are a great evangelist. Just because you maybe are not a great evangelist.

Doesn't mean that the Bible doesn't say. All Christians should share the gospel. Right. So. Don't say. Well it's not my gift. Therefore. I don't need to do this. I don't need to try and share the gospel. Just. Do it as you are though. Right. Some people are great at talking to strangers. Maybe you're not. But you can talk to people you know. Maybe. You know. Some people are great at answering questions.

[18:08] Maybe you can't do that. You can still bring people to church. Right. You know. But Christian activity is still. It's for all. And also. Just to say. The fruit of the spirit.

Is for all. This is about the gifts of the spirit. But there's also the fruit of the spirit. And that's for all. Right. All Christians are supposed to grow. In. You know. Faith. And love. And holiness. And that's not a gift. It's not kind of. Well yeah. That person is holy. But I'm not holy. No. So you see a great music leader. Okay. I will never be a music leader. And that's fine. But you see a mature Christian. Who really trusts God. And who really. Walks with Christ. You know. You should aspire to be like that person. That's a good thing. And. And you get that by. You know. Reading the words. And walking with Christ. And going through suffering. That's the fruit of the spirit. Which is not the gifts of the spirit. But.

[19:03] Coming back to gifts. Coming back to what we've said. Yeah. This is the body. And so. What are we supposed to do? Well. A few applications. I guess. The ones in the passage. Don't. First. Don't feel inferior. Don't feel inferior. That's. Oh. I don't have those gifts. I'm nothing. I don't really belong here. I've got nothing to do here. I'm not a very good Christian. Because I'm not like this. I'm an introvert. I can't talk to people. I'm not good at music. No. Right. We're all different. We're all needed. God made each one of you. Exactly as he wanted to make you. Your personality. He gave you the gifts. Exactly the gifts. That he thought Watermark needed. And he brought you here to Watermark. To play your part. You're not inferior. To anyone. You. The church needs you. You may not think so.

[19:59] But the church needs you. Something that you have to contribute. And this idea that. Actually. You're just an appendix. It's. It's a lie. It's not true.

And that there are some churches like that. Sometimes. Especially with some of these miraculous gifts. That you know. If you don't speak in tongues. Then well. You're your second class Christians. Or something like that. If you don't have miraculous things. Again. That's wrong. Right. The passage here clearly says. Does everyone speak in tongues? No. It's not. I mean. Some churches. It's even worse. That you're not even a Christian. If you don't speak in tongues. I don't know. Maybe you go to another church. You hear that. That's not a. You know. That's wrong. Right. That Christians. That all Christians. Have to speak in tongues. We all have the spirit. When we believe. Ephesians 1.13. In him you also. When you heard the word of truth. The gospel of your salvation. And believed in him. Were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

[20:54] Or. If you believe in Jesus. You have the Holy Spirit. Whether you speak in tongues or not. Very clear. But. Yeah. Don't feel inferior. Don't feel. You don't belong. You have something to contribute. Otherwise. Yeah. Can do a lot of damage. It kind of stops you doing things. The flip side of course. Don't feel superior. Right. Don't feel that. Okay. Well I can do this. And I'm so great. And Watermark is so. Blessed to have me. Right. I don't know what it is. For you. That's a good question. Right. What is it here at Watermark? What is the. What are the gifts we look up to? It's not speaking in tongues. I don't know. Is it music? Yeah. Because we have such a great music team. Is it. CG leaders? Is it people who teach the Bible? Is it. Who do you really aspire to be? And not. Not because they were. Mature Christian. But because of their gifts. It's a good question.

[21:50] Right. But. Yeah. You don't need to. You're not superior. Right. You're no more important than anyone else. Maybe you have a more public role. Maybe you have a more. Visible. Role. I love these kind of movies. And yeah. There's. Yesterday. We watched a Marvel movie. And of course. There's the kind of the big names at the start. Right. Like Chris Evans. And Scarlett Johansson. But then you have this. Long list of all the. Thousands of people who worked on this movie. And without them. The movie wouldn't have happened. They're all important. Even though some are more public. Right. Don't feel superior. After all. One thing to remember. They are gifts. What is the thing about a gift? Is that. You didn't do it yourself. It was given to you. And we often get that wrong. We say. Oh. This person is really gifted. And we think. Oh. That person is really amazing. But they are gifts.

[22 : 45] It's not something with them. Maybe. We think. Oh. Kevin is so gifted. And you think. Kevin is amazing. He's not. It means. God was extremely generous to Kevin.

Right. That is what we should think. Kevin. Gifted means. God has been so generous to this person. Right. We get that wrong. Gifted is their gift. So you can't be proud of them. You can't feel superior. Just because you have a certain gift. Because it's a gift. Right. Does it make sense? Kevin is great. But you know what. That's the thing.

Their gifts. Don't feel superior. And. Those two come together in. Don't compete. Because. In Corinth.

I think that's what people were doing. They. You know. Because tongues is the big thing. That's almost what people cared about. Right. If I don't speak in tongues. The only thing I care about. Is the next course.

[23 : 41] On how to speak in tongues. And the people. Who do speak in tongues. Well. How can I do it better. So that I stay. Kind of number one in the church. And those kind of things. Right. I think that's from verse 31.

Verse 41. Is a little bit weird. I don't know if. What you follow this verse. Verse 31. Yeah. After all this. Does everyone have this gift? No. Does everyone have this gift? No. But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And it seems a bit contradictory. Right. If he just said that. You know. Hey. We all have gifts. And we're all different. And that is exactly God's design. But. Now. We need to. Desire the higher gifts. Especially because. As we will see next week. He hasn't finished rebuking them yet. Well. The thing about verse 31. Is that. It can be. It's a bit technical. But it can be translated.

In two different ways. And we can't really see. What's when it is. It can be a command. Right. Desire the higher gifts. It can also just be a statement. So.

[24 : 39] Here is the. The. The LSB. But you earnestly desire the greater gifts. Yeah. Not everyone has these gifts. But you desire the greater gifts. Yeah.

Or God. Another translation. You only want the better gifts. Or the message. Yet some of you keep competing for so-called important parts. And I think that's more.

Or. I think that's the correct one. Right. But he's telling them. Look. Why are you competing for the higher gifts? Why is your focus on just. These gifts. Just. It's not.

Gifts are not important. The. Eh. No. Later he'll talk about. Okay. Let's talk about prophecy and tongues. But for now. You know. Don't fight over gifts.

Rather. Well the opposite. Right. Serve with the gifts you have. Serve the body. With the gifts you have. God gave you certain gifts. He brought you here. He wants you to use them.

[25 : 33] He wants you to. If you're a foot. Be a foot. If you're a hand. Be a hand. Right. That's the idea. And not for yourselves. For the body. Because we need each other.

Right. For us. For watermark. For each other. If we each do our part. For each other. For watermark. For the church. For Christ. That's what we are doing.

What we're doing. So. Ask yourself. You know. Who am I? What can I do? What gifts do I have? Who has God made me? And how can I use that.

To benefit the church? Maybe it's certain skills. Maybe it's just your personality. Maybe it is your experience. That you can share.

There's all kinds of things about you. That God wants you to use here. For each other. That we. You know. Not just on Sundays.

[26 : 29] Usually we think of teams. But just the community. Right. The relationships. The. What's it? The. Your CG. Right.

Or just one to one. With people. There's so many ways. That we can serve each other. And it's not just on Sundays. But. That's basically. I think. What Paul wants. Don't worry about other gifts. You know.

God made you. This person. How can you be a blessing. To the church. And if we all think like that. What an amazing church. Would we be. Right. If we're not consumers. But we come here.

With this mindset. That hey. God. Has made me a certain person. To be a blessing. And so. That's what I'm going to do. And as we finish.

Don't you think. That's a really beautiful vision. Wouldn't that really be. The loveliest place on earth. Right. It's a community. Where we all. Belong. Where there's no jealousy.

[27 : 24] And no inferiority. Right. No. No pride. Just marked by. By love. I mean. Isn't that so different. From your workplace. I mean. The thing about your workplace.

Is that it's not about grace. Right. You were hired. Because of your skills. And you should use those skills. And otherwise. They don't need you anymore. That's true. Right. And you need to perform. And the team needs to do well. Otherwise. They'll get rid of you. Right. I was a management consultant. And yeah. It was. Up or out. That was basically it. Right. But the church is different. I mean. Ultimately. This is grace. Right. You are not in church. Because of your gifts. You are in church. Because Jesus loved you. And died for you. And gave you his spirit.

To bring you here. Right. You're not loved. Because of your gifts. You have gifts. Because you are loved. That is. The whole wrong way around. The whole. The other way around. Right.

[28 : 19] Than the world. There's no up or out. We are here by grace. We came in by grace. We stay in by grace. And we don't need to worry. We can just serve.

It makes you free. Isn't it? If I need to perform. If I need to have certain gifts. And use those gifts. To be useful here. Otherwise I'm out.

I'm not free. I'm not free to be who I am. I'm not free to serve with what I have. I. Oh. I have to measure up to these expectations.

That's the world. And here. No. We are free. The gospel sets us free. We are free to use the gifts. We have free to be the people. We are who God made us to be.

And just to play our part here in the church. Isn't that a beautiful vision? Right. It's not that we always get it right. We are still sinners. Sadly. We often get it wrong.

[29 : 14] In Corinth they got it wrong. I'm sure we get it wrong. You've been in churches where they got it wrong. But the ideal. The picture here. It's beautiful. Maybe especially you're here.

You're not a Christian. You feel that. Right. You know about your life in the world. That is how you live. You need to perform. You need to. If you don't measure up.

You are out. And it's tiring you out. Because. We can't live like that. Right. We fail. We struggle. It's a broken world. That messes everything up.

Isn't it then so wonderful. This picture here. Of a community of grace. Where God just made you the person you are. And that's who he wants you to be. Rather than what the world expects of you.

Can I encourage you. To explore the Christian faith. If that sounds attractive to you. To look at Jesus and his love. And how that changes everything. As we heard before. But for us Christians.

[30 : 12] Yeah. Those of us who are Christians. Let's rejoice in the gospel. Let's rejoice in this grace. Just rejoice in who God made you. And how he's gifted you. And as we all play our part.

As we go into Hong Kong this week. As we meet here in Ebenezer every week. If we are the body of Christ. And do this. What a wonderful thing that would be.

For the glory of God. So why don't we pray together. Father. Father. Father. Thank you so much.

For the grace of Jesus. Thank you. That we are one body. Not because of anything we've done. But just out of love. Help us to know that. To feel free.

To be free. To just serve. To love with Jesus' love. To be who we are. Think about our personalities. Our gifts. What we have.

[31 : 15] What we can do. And to just serve. To play our parts. In the body that you've created. In your wisdom. In your grace. Father. We often get this wrong.

We know. Our hearts are still sinful. We still try to find our value. Our identity. And the things we do. Even here in church. Show us Jesus. Help us to.

Keep hold of him. So that we can just. Serve. Yeah. As the people we are. As the people you've made us. And who you are continuing to make us. As you grow us. As you work in us by your spirit. As you grow us through your words. As we walk with you. As we abide in Christ. In Jesus name. Amen.