

“Unity, Diversity and Community”
1 Corinthians 12:12-27
Mercy Hill Church | October 17, 2021

Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1. Unity (vv.12-13, 27)

- Apostle Paul addresses the issue of unity in many of his letters (cf. Romans 12:-45; Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16; Colossians 3:12-15)
- Context of 1 Corinthians: A church divided (cf. 1:10, 11-15, 6:1-11, 6:12-20, 10:14-17, 11:17-32, 12:1-11)
- One Body (of Christ) = The (Universal & Local) Church = Community of Believers
- The early church was not “perfect” and struggled with unity and division (cf. Acts 2:42-47 => Acts 5:1-11, Acts 6:1-6, Acts 11:1-18, Acts 15)
- The body is composed of many/different members (parts)
- What is the basis of our unity? We are united in Christ by the Holy Spirit
 - “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become “unity” conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.” AW Tozer, *Pursuit of God*

2. Diversity (vv.14-20)

- Unity is not uniformity (or conformity) – rather true unity in Christ is revealed through its diversity
- 5 Viruses which cause the body to be unhealthy (divided)

- Virus #1: Comparison – the sin of envy & pride (vv.15-16)
- Virus #2: Distorted Understanding of Unity (vv.17-20)
 - “If all the parts were of one kind, there would be no body at all, only a monstrosity”
Gordon Fee

3. Community (vv.21-27)

- How are we as the church (members) to relate to one another (as the body)?
- Virus #3: Independence (vs. Dependence on each other) -- sin of self-reliance (vv.21-22)
- Virus #4: “Worldly” (vs. Kingdom perspective of one another) (vv.22-25)
- Virus #5: Hardened Heart (vs. Compassionate Heart) towards one another (vv.25-26)
 - Love one another (cf. 1 Corinthians 13)

Conclusion

- We as individual Christians -- and as the church -- are all “works in progress.” Let us continue to hold onto the, “Gospel which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved...” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2)
- Unity, Diversity and Community isn’t just for our good but also -- ultimately – for the spread of the Gospel and the glory of God! (cf. John 17:20-23)

Reflection/Application Questions:

- What are the things which typically connect people in our schools, workplaces and society? Why – and what might that reveal about those things?
- How does this morning’s passage (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) reshape your understanding of unity (and diversity) in the church?
- Who are the “types” of people you naturally feel more connected to – and what about those “types” who you naturally feel more distant from? Why?
- Which of the “viruses” have you seen infect you (or the church) – whether recently or in the past – when it comes to relating with one another in the church?
 - Are there certain things we need to acknowledge, confess and repent of to the Lord in this area?
- What might it look like for us as the church to, “Be united in Christ by the Spirit”?
 - How might the Gospel – and the life of Jesus – empower us to be more united in Him?