

1 Corinthians Ch12v12-27 - Members Of The Body

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Date: 12 October 2025

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[0 : 00] And just to say that after our gathering this morning, there is tea and coffee and it's a great opportunity to catch up with people, to meet people who perhaps you don't know, to talk to people who we've met this morning, talk to the students.

And I wonder if there's any here, if you put up your hand, were you here yesterday afternoon, evening? So there's a few here and they had a great time.

And I popped in for a short while as they learned how we can trust the Bible, God's word. So if you want to know what that was all about, ask one of the younger people who are here and they'll tell you over tea and coffee.

I'd like you to turn in your Bible, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Well, we're in a short series of healthy membership or meaningful membership.

Ralph kicked us off last week as we looked at members of the kingdom. And today we're looking at members of the body.

[1 : 11] And just to remind you that from today's talk, we're going to be meeting on Wednesday. So if there's anything that you want to follow up on or questions that you may have, certainly ask them today.

But come along Wednesday night as we think about it a bit more together. You're all very, very welcome. So let's read 1 Corinthians chapter 12, starting at verse 12 to 27.

Let's hear God's word. Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

For we were all baptized by one spirit so as to form one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free.

And we were all given the one spirit to drink. And so the body is made up of one part, not made up of one part, but of many.

[2 : 22] Now if the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? And if the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

[3 : 26] And the head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

And the parts that we think are less honourable, we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ. And each one of you is a part of it.

[4 : 36] Well, let's pray. Father, thank you that you have not left us alone in the dark, but you have given to us your word, and you have given to us your spirit that we may have understanding.

And we pray for each one of us as we gather this morning, that as a result of what we hear and think about, we would live, we would leave with a greater and bigger picture of what it means to be

part of the body of Christ.

Help us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we're all used to memberships.

Maybe you're a member of a sports club, or members of the Men's Shed, or the Credit Union, or a political party. Membership of all kinds of different things.

I'm a member of the local gym, and I'm sure you can tell by just looking at me. I pay my fees, and I have access to all the facilities.

[6 : 02] Being a member means I can work out every single day, and I can talk to all the other members. But I can also decide not to go at all, and I can choose not to talk to anybody else.

But you know what? I'm still a member. I've paid my fees. I have my rights. I decide on the level of commitment I give to that membership.

Now, membership of the church is not like that. When the Bible talks about church membership, it uses deep and rich imagery.

We are citizens of a kingdom. We are blocks in a temple. We are children in a family. Each image, the individuals make up the whole.

So the citizens make up a kingdom. The stones or the blocks together make up the temple. The children together make up a family.

[7 : 22] Each part is related to the other. There's a union. There's an interdependence. There's a relationship between the parts.

And we are, as we're going to look at together, members of the body. Look at the key verse.

It was the last verse we read together, verse 27. This is our memory verse for today. Verse 27.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. Did you get that?

You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. So let's together unpack this image of the church.

[8 : 20] What does it mean to be members of the body? Well, first, Christ is the head.

If there's a body, that it implies there is a head of the body. Now it doesn't talk about it explicitly in the text that we just read in Corinthians, but in other parts of the New Testament it makes it very clear.

So in Colossians 1, verse 18, the Apostle Paul says this, speaking of Christ, Christ, and he, that is Christ, is the head of the body, that is, the church.

Now, if you're the head, Sam referred to this earlier, if the head, well, it can mean something like rule or authority, like your headmaster in school.

They're the head. But head can also mean source or beginning. So we talk about the head of a river. In other words, in that context, Christ is the source of life.

[9 : 30] Christ has the authority to give people new and eternal life through his death and the cross and his resurrection from the grave. One writer put it like this, the church receives all its life from Christ and has no life apart from him.

I'll read that again. It's important. The church receives all its life from Christ and has no life apart from him.

So from the head flows life to the body. And the idea of Christ being the source of life is picked up again in Colossians 2.

Here it's talking about those who might turn from Christ or want to separate themselves from Christ. Look at the language used.

Colossians 2 verse 19. It's on the screen. It says they've lost connection with the head from whom the whole body supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews grows as God causes it to grow.

[10 : 51] So to live without Christ is like to sever the head from the body. It's cutting yourself off from the source of all life.

So Christ is the head. And second if Christ is the head then the church is the body.

That's what we read in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 27. Now you are the body of Christ. Now question for us here.

I want us to think about that verse. Look at it with me. Who is the you in this verse? You are the body of Christ.

Who's it referring to? Each one of you is a part of it. So who's the you? Does it mean everybody?

[11 : 50] Does everyone right now in this building does it refer to each person here that they are the body of Christ? Well the Bible makes it very clear that the you are those who confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord.

You might remember from last week Ralph talked about the church being built on the right confession and the right confessor. Well the same idea is picked up here.

Have a look with me at chapter 12 verse 3. Chapter 12 verse 3. As we think about who it is who does belong to the body.

Chapter 12 verse 3. Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the spirit of God says Jesus be cursed and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Only those who have the spirit of God only those who've been changed or saved by Jesus can truly say from their heart Jesus is Lord.

[13:17] Lord. Only those who submit to the Lordship of Jesus only those who are living according to the confession are part of the body of Christ.

Now when this was written this would have been very clear to everybody because in that time under the Romans Caesar was Lord.

So to claim that anybody else was Lord to say that Jesus is Lord well that was a direct threat against the authority of Caesar.

It could cost you your life. So the confession to say yes I believe Jesus is Lord could only come from the very fact that you had been changed and you were trusting!

Jesus an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. So if you have turned to Jesus today if you are here and you have submitted your life to Jesus then let's be clear you are part of the body of Christ you have received life but if you haven't yet turned to Jesus as Lord if you haven't submitted to his rulership to his authority then you are not yet part of the body you don't have that new and eternal life but here's the good news you can by turning to Jesus right now where you are by confessing and saying yes I truly believe Jesus is Lord I submit to his authority I want to live under his rule he is my king my savior you can do that right now where you are and know the life that comes from

[15:24] God life in all its fullness so Christ is the head the church is the body now just as our physical heads are joined to our physical bodies so Christ and his church are joined and can't be separated the body is united to the head so wherever the head goes the body naturally follows and that is true spiritually in our relationship with Christ so just as Christ died if I'm trusting in him we can say that I died with Christ and just as Christ was raised we can truly say that we were raised with him his life is our life we are joined to the very source of life have a look at our verse chapter 12 verse 27 now you are the body of

Christ and each one of you is a part of it you see membership of the church is not like being a member of your favorite club membership of the church starts with being in the body of Christ a body uniquely joined to Christ who is our head the source of all life life in all its fullness today and life for all eternity in his glorious kingdom to come now we've looked at the head we've looked at the body we've looked at how the head and the body may relate to each other now we want to look together at the body parts look at verse 12 Christ is the head the church is the body now we're going to look at the body parts so look at verse 12 chapter 12 verse 12 here we're given a picture of the physical body that we all have that's why we're here and in case you don't think you're here pinch yourself and you'll know you're here your physical body is to illustrate the body of

Christ or the church so I have an arm I have a leg I have an ear I have a nose but an arm by itself or a nose by itself is not a body right but you put all the different parts of my body together and you've got a most glorious body a body like mine and you've got your own body of course verse 12 just as a body though one has many parts but all its many parts form one body so it is with Christ or so it is with the body of Christ the church let's read on verse 13 for we were all baptized by one spirit that's referring to your conversion as the spirit of God worked in your life for we were all baptized by one spirit so as to form one body whether

Jew or Gentile whatever race or religion it may be slave or free whatever your status in life is and we were all given the one spirit to drink God gives his one spirit the holy spirit to all who believe and by that same spirit supernaturally joins us to Christ who is the head but also joins us to one another the spirit unites us to Christ and he unites us to one another verse 14 and so the body is not made up of one part but of many in other words if you say you're in relationship with Christ then that means you're also in relationship with his church

God's people one writer put it like this I'll put it up on the screen and you can read along with me he's referring to Christ he says joining Christ means also being joined to others who are joined to Christ we don't get Jesus without also getting his people being in Christ means being part of others

who are also in him we don't get him without them we don't get Jesus without getting his people now some of you might be thinking well yes I agree with that doesn't that mean that we're all part of the universal church yes that's wonderfully true we are part of the body of Christ that is Christians from all time and all ages from all the nations of the world those who've gone before us and those who may come after we are part of the universal church the body of

[21 : 16] Christ and that is rich and wonderful but being part of the universal church is always lived out and practiced in the local church church that's the point look at the key verse verse 27 chapter 12 verse 27 hopefully you know it by now now you're the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it we're connected to Christ and we're also connected to each other in fact being part of the body means that we need each other we'll never become the kind of people God has called us to be if we live in isolation or if I think of being a Christian all on my own the new testament never ever thinks of Christians like that it always assumes!

we're part of the body of Christ the local church so how do we function as members of the body what's it going to look like well two things first we are indispensable every individual part of the body every member of the church is of vital importance let's read together from verse 15 chapter 12 verse 15 now if the foot should say because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body it would not for that reason stop being part of the body and if the ear should say because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body it would not for that reason stop being 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 now switch on your little imagination switch because this is really quite comical isn't it imagine your whole body consisted of an eyeball no arms no legs just one enormous eye bouncing along you would be great at seeing things wouldn't you 360 all the it would be amazing but the terrible thing is you wouldn't hear a thing and you wouldn't get very far because you couldn't walk and you couldn't do anything you just be this enormous eye or imagine if your whole body was an enormous ear sitting beside you you're an eye and there's this big huge ear massive where you could hear everything you could hear from miles away but you would be useless at telling the person the eye next to you well they couldn't hear you anyway because they haven't got an ear they're just an eye it's really quite comical but verse 18 in fact

God has placed the parts in the body every one of them just as he wanted them to be if they were all one part where would the body be as it is there are many parts but one body you see just as every part of our physical body is indispensable so every member of the church is indispensable no one who is a member can say to the church I don't belong no you are a necessary and essential part the church doesn't function properly without you God designed you and made you uniquely and gave you the gifts and abilities that you had he designed and planned and brought you into the fellowship of the body of the church because you are indispensable you belong but not only are we indispensable we are also interdependent each part of the body each member of the church is dependent on the others let's pick it up in verse 21 the eye cannot say to the hand

I don't need you and the hands cannot say to the feet I don't need you on the contrary those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor and the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty now there's parts of our own physical bodies that we think are weaker trying to think about this what are the weaker parts of your body well I was thinking maybe the big toe we don't really look at it very much it's covered up most of the time but cut your big toe off and you'll notice the difference you won't be able to balance very well you may think of it being weaker but it's vitally important or what about the less honorable parts of your body that you don't really like to think about like the large intestine well you don't think that's very honorable but try and live without it it's most needed because it gets rid of all the waste or what about the unrepresentable parts the male and female parts well they're needed too you see we need every part of the body and so it is with the family of the church no member can turn around and say to the other member

I don't really need you no the people that we think or I might think of nothing to offer we are actually dependent on they are not weaker they are needed they are to be treated with special honor and special treatment look at verse the middle of verse 24 but God has put the body together giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it so that there should be no division in the body but that its part should have equal concern for each other if one person suffers every person suffers if one part is honored every part rejoices with it you see just as I need every part of my physical body so the members of the church need each other

[29 : 05] I need you and you need me as members of the church there is no inferiority and no superiority nobody can say I don't belong and no one can say I don't need you members are indispensable and interdependent in fact if we take the view of operating as a lone Christian is to go against God's design look again at verse 18 here's what the creator of the universe tells us the one who builds and makes the church verse 18 but in fact God has placed the parts in the body every one of them just as he wanted them to be no mistakes his perfect design for his local church you see

God didn't save us to live as isolated individuals but to be brought into the body of the church as members we are to be committed to one another you might know the song head shoulders knees and toes knees and toes well if Paul was to sing it if you want to remember it's head body many parts many parts so let's think about body parts means body commitment three things I want us to look together are three pairings for us to think through as we try to apply it together you see being a member being part of the body means we are servants not spectators God has gifted each person with a gift to be used for the good of others

God has placed you into the church for the good and the blessing of other people look at this verse on the screen each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in all its various forms isn't that wonderful God wants to bring grace into your life and the means by which he brings grace into your life is through another person you are conduits of God's grace you are the means by which God blesses another person we might think about people in the church who need practical help think about all the different people who are involved bringing grace to that person it might be looking after their children it might be making a meal it might be praying for them it might be going to visit

God's grace in its various form delivered to a person through the members of the church now the difference between a spectator and a servant is a spectator just watches and goes I wonder who's going to help a servant doesn't ask they just get on with it or second contributors not consumers God has placed us together according to his good and perfect design for our good and growth and we all have a part to play in growing one another in our faith and in our relationship with God have a look at this verse from him from Christ the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work isn't it wonderful

God's good design think about our gathering here this morning as we come on Sunday morning think of all the people who are here to make it possible all the planning all the organizing the setting up the setting down the teas and coffees the music the speaking the teaching the leading the conversations that's all just on the Sunday morning and all the different ways by getting alongside people and encouraging each other as we gather afterwards now the difference between a consumer and a contributor is a consumer will go tick box done my duty thank goodness I don't have to do that again for another six weeks I hate doing the chairs a contributor gets on with it joyfully and gladly and helps everybody else or a third one participants not passiveness if we are to truly experience the life of the body and maybe you're here thinking gosh well I've never been part of that to benefit and receive to enjoy the love and care and support well it happens as you get involved

[35 : 06] Colossians 3 15 to 16 let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you are called to peace and be thankful thankful for one another let the message of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another as you bring the encouragement from God's word into each other's lives because you may be going through a hard time or a suffering time or a difficult time and somebody who brings that word of God into your life to build you up and encourage you you see membership of the body is a beautiful thing it's

God's good design for our lives but here's the question how do you know or how do I know who I'm committed to who is it that I'm serving well let me close with this illustration imagine you're playing a soccer match or hurley or whatever your sport is and everybody on the pitch is all wearing different coloured tops and shorts and socks it's all different an array of multicoloured tops and shorts who would you pass to who do you give the ball to which way are you playing which goal are we scoring into you see it's vital that you identify who your team is so that you can work together to win the match each well if we're to serve each other and to give to each other and to encourage one another we need to know who's part of the body what team are you on it's vital to identify who are the body parts and the way to do that we believe is by becoming a member of the local church it's like pulling on your team jersey and going out to play the match you know who's on your side and

who to pass to

I'm with you I'm for you I'm committed to you membership is the means for identifying with the local church so if you're a member thank you for serving thank you for contributing thank you for being involved in the life of the church maybe you're not yet a member of the church but you still do things you're still helping out I want to say thank you as well but can you consider and think about pulling on that team jersey and saying yes I'm committed to you I'm for you maybe you're here and you are realizing that you're not part of the body of Christ at all well my encouragement to you is to look to Christ the one who came to serve you and give his life for you so that you could receive life in all its fullness and become part of the body of Christ to receive encouragement and support and grace and blessing from God's people let's finish by looking at verse 27 together now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it let's pray our father god we thank you for your beautiful perfect design for your local church thank you for the blessing of being part of your body your people thank you for the gifts that you have given to each one thank you for the grace that we receive from and through each other thank you father for all that you have done for us and we ask and pray that you will continue to work amongst us for our good and for your glory in Jesus name amen we're going to sing together Thank you.