

WARM UP

1. What's the worst injury you've ever had? How long did it take to recover?
2. If you could change one aspect about your appearance what would it be, and why?
3. If you were tasked with building a tower with playing cards, what would you do? *(If leaders want, you could actually get a few decks of playing cards, break up the connect group into smaller twos and threes, and give them 5-10 minutes to build a card tower together).*

WORD

"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit." - 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13

Today's Sunday+ lesson is going to explore what the Apostle Paul says to the church at Corinth about the analogy between our physical body and the Body of Christ. Our physical bodies have various parts that complete different functions. If we keep reading in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, Paul continues discusses our physical body's interconnectedness:

*"Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. **How strange a body would be if it had only one part!** Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." - 1 Corinthians 12:14-21*

Each part of our body, whether exterior, interior, visible, or hidden is valuable and important. If a member of our physical body is hurting or injured, it has an impact on the rest of our body. If something is wrong internally with a muscle, our nervous, respiratory, digestive, or circulatory systems, it impacts what we can do and our ability to function.

1: Many parts → many functions → many opportunities

Just like our physical bodies have various parts that complete different functions, the Body of Christ (ie. God's Family) is made up of many different people that form different parts and complete many different functions. If a part of our physical body is missing or malfunctioning medical professionals become extremely concerned. Do we take notice when parts of the body of Christ are missing or not functioning well? For Christ's body:

*“If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad. All of you **together** are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”*
– 1 Corinthians 12: 26-27

What part of Christ’s body are you? What valuable functions has God entrusted you to be a part of within our local church? The Apostle Paul lists some of the church parts: (please note this is not exhaustive)

*“Here are some of the parts **God has appointed** for the church: apostles... prophets... teachers... those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, **those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership**, those who speak in unknown languages.*

*Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! So **you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts**. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.” - 1 Corinthians 12: 27-31*

Paul asked questions that had a clear “no” answer to them. Two questions he did not ask were: Can all help? Can all lead?

Why? Because all parts of the church can and do help; all people who make-up Christ’s Body can lead, even if simply leading themselves (self-leadership). Just like each physical individual body part **helps** our whole body function fully, each person **helps** with Christ’s Body being able to fully function. Each of us have opportunities to help our wider spiritual family, if we do the part and associated function that **God has appointed** (v.27) for us. It is God who has appointed, chosen, and entrusted each one of us to be an active part of His family. How faithful are we being with what He’s entrusted to us? Why should we?

2: We display love: love for God and love for others

Paul provides the motivation for the function of the parts of Christ’s Body:

*“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but **didn’t love others, I would be nothing**. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but **if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing**.” - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3*

Why do we do what we do? Because we love God. How do we show our love for God? Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey and follow His commandments (John 14:15). Jesus summed all of God’s commandments into two: Love God and love others (Matthew 12:28-31). Paul affirms:

*“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. Let love be your highest goal! But you should also **desire the special abilities the Spirit gives**.”*
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 - 14:1a

This leads us to our final point of the lesson: Let's

3: Desire what the Spirit gives to help and lead in the Body of Christ

"Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you." - 1 Corinthians 14:26

When we come together and we are each doing what God has appointed us to do, it will strengthen everyone. Even the small things make a difference. Saying a warm hello to someone, we never know they could be thinking they are never noticed, and your speaking to them can help dispel that lie from their mind, so they can connect better with the Lord and His body of believers.

Are we making ourselves available to God to be a participating member of the Body of Christ? Are we a numb or asleep limb (with pens and needles)?

Our availability and willingness to help is more pleasing to God than our natural ability and talents. How can we spread God's love and display that we believe He has appointed us as a valuable member in His family?

APPLICATION

1. Is there a practical need you can help with in the Body of Christ? What about specifically in the local church? *Are there any "dream team" holes you can help fill?*
2. What part of the body of Christ do you think God has appointed you to be, and why?
3. What are some reasons people may not want to help in the Body of Christ? Why would people think their participation may not be helpful? How can encourage people to participate?

Prayer

- Pray for God to reveal to us what part of the body we are, and how He entrusts us to function. Pray for wisdom to manage our life, so we can lovingly participate in the Body of Christ.
- Thank Jesus for doing the inconvenient thing of going to and dying on the cross for our salvation and adoption into God's Family. Pray for a life that reflects Jesus, who fully obeyed the Father and was empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to increase our capacity to love God and love others, so we can display God's love however He appoints. Pray to receive the Holy Spirit's gifts so we can have a well-functioning Body of Christ.

BE PART OF OUR DREAM TEAM – Any connect group member can send an Expression of interest for the ministry that they want to be a part of.

<https://everynationauckland.city/connect/join-team>

