

Introduction

Many people consider the automatic transmission on a car the most complicated piece of equipment on the car. “The main components of an automatic transmission include the torque converter, planetary gearset, pump, clutches, bands, sensors, valve body and the transmission fluid, otherwise known as ATF.”¹ Each of these main components has lots of different parts. Overall, the transmission has roughly eight hundred unique parts that all have to work together. If any of these parts do not work properly, the transmission will not operate properly, making the car inoperable.

The body of Christ is very similar to the transmission on your car. It is made up with many different members, and they are all members of the same body. For the body of Christ to function properly, all the members must work together. Like the transmission, each member has a unique function in the body, and it is vitally important. The body cannot function with eight hundred of the same members. Each member is unique and has a different role to play. God has placed each member in the body as He desired.

Our passage today is about how the body of Christ is one body with many different members. Paul gives four primary characteristics of the body of Christ. The first characteristic is Unity. The body is to be unified, and there is to be no division. The second characteristic is Diversity. The body of Christ is diverse. It is one body, but it is made up of many different parts. The third characteristic is Care. All the member of the body are to care for one another. The fourth characteristic is order. God has designated an order for the gifts in the church.

Four Characteristics of the Body of Christ

1. Unity
2. Diversity
3. Care
4. Order

(1 Cor 12:12–31) “For even as the **body** is **one** and yet has **many** members, and all the members of the **body**, though they are **many**, are **one** body, so also is Christ. {13} For by **one** Spirit we were all baptized into **one** body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of **one** Spirit. {14} For the **body** is not **one** member, but **many**. {15} If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**. {16} And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**. {17} If the whole **body** were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? {18} But now God has placed the members, each **one** of them, in the **body**, just as He desired. {19} If they were all **one** member, where would the **body** be? {20} But now there are **many** members, but **one** body. {21} And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” {22} On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the **body** which seem to be weaker are necessary; {23} and those members of the **body** which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, {24} whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the **body**, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, {25} so that there may be **no division** in the **body**, but that the members may have the same care for **one** another. {26} And if **one** member suffers, all the

¹ <https://www.engineeringchoice.com/what-are-the-parts-of-a-transmission/>

members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. {27} Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. {28} And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. {29} All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? {30} All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? {31} But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

1. Unity (1 Cor 12:12-27)

God addresses the church as His body, and it has many members. The body of Christ is one, but has many members. Even though there are many different members, it is one body. In chapter one, when dealing with the division over leadership, Paul asked the rhetorical question, "Has Christ been divided?" The obvious answer is no. Paul now says that the church is one body, as is Christ. Christ has not been divided, and the church should not be divided, even though it has many different members or gifts.

(1 Cor 12:12) "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ."

(1 Cor 1:13) "Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

There are many different ways that God addresses His people in the Scriptures. We often see Him refer to us as His flock. He is our Shepherd. He leads us beside still waters and makes us lie down in green pastures. His sheep hear His voice, and will not follow a stranger.

(Ps 23:1-2) "The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want. {2} He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters."

(John 10:3-5) "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. {4} When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. {5} A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

Sometimes God refers to us as His vineyard. We are the branches and He is the Vine. He expects us to bear good fruit. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul said, I planted and Apollos watered, but God causes the growth.

(Jer 12:10) "Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard, they have trampled down My field; They have made My pleasant field A desolate wilderness."

(John 15:1-5) "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.... {5} I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

(1 Cor 3:6) "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

In that same passage, God refers to the church as His building. God is the Master Builder and He is building His church. Jesus is the Cornerstone, and the foundation is Christ.

(1 Cor 3:9–10) “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. {10} According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.”

(1 Pet 2:6) “For this is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

Sometimes He refers to us as His bride. Jesus is the Bridegroom and He is coming back for His bride. We are to be readying ourselves, because He is coming for a bride without spot or wrinkle.

(Eph 5:27–32) “that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.... {32} This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

In other places God refers to His people as the household. When giving the qualifications of pastors, God says that if a man cannot take care of his own household, how can he take care of the household of God. When speaking about tithes in Malachi, God said to bring in the whole tithe so that there would be food in His house. He wanted to make sure the Levites and Priests were being taken care of.

(Eph 2:19) “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,”

(Mal 3:10) “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”

Jesus often spoke about the kingdom of God. When we are saved, we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Jesus is the King of Kings, and the King of the Kingdom of God.

(Col 1:13) “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,”

These are all pictures and ways that God refers to His people. In our passage today, God refers to us in still another way, as His body. We are the body of Christ. As I began looking at the passage, I highlighted several words. The word, body, is used eighteen (18) times in the passage. This passage is about the body of Christ. The second most-used word is members, and it is used seventeen (17) times. Members is plural, and four (4) times Paul said, “many members.” The word, “one,” is used twelve (12) times. This passage is about the body of Christ that is made up of many members, yet is one body. Throughout this passage the emphasis is on unity.

(1 Cor 12:12–27) “For even as the **body** is **one** and yet has **many** members, and all the members of the **body**, though they are **many**, are **one** **body**, so also is Christ. {13} For by **one** Spirit we were all baptized into **one** **body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of **one** Spirit. {14} For the **body** is not **one** member, but **many**. {15} If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**. {16} And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**. {17} If the whole **body** were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? {18} But now God has placed the members, each **one** of them, in the **body**, just as He desired. {19}

If they were all **one** member, where would the **body** be? {20} But now there are **many** members, but **one** body. {21} And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." {22} On the contrary, it is much truer that the **members** of the **body** which seem to be weaker are necessary; {23} and those **members** of the **body** which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable **members** become much more presentable, {24} whereas our more presentable **members** have no need of it. But God has so composed the **body**, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, {25} so that there may be **no division** in the **body**, but that the **members** may have the same care for **one** another. {26} And if **one** member suffers, all the **members** suffer with it; if **one** member is honored, all the **members** rejoice with it. {27} Now you are Christ's **body**, and individually **members** of it."

The gifts are one of the issues that the church is divided over, and when God gave the gifts, they were meant to bring unity to the body. Paul begins by saying, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." We are one body that is made up of many members.

Paul gives two additional thoughts to reinforce the unity. He said that by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free..." The church in Corinth was made up of both Jews and Greeks, and slaves and free men. There may have been more slaves than free men in the church. Paul and he is telling them that if they have all been baptized into one body. The divisions over leadership, philosophers, ethnos, and wealth were dealt with at the cross. When you receive Christ, you are baptized into His body, and it is one body. These divisions were an issue at many churches, and Paul wrote the Galatians a similar letter, telling them, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The word is still relevant today. We have all been baptized into one body, not matter what our sex, color, or financial status.

(1 Cor 12:13) "For by **one** Spirit we were all baptized into **one** body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of **one** Spirit."

(Gal 3:28) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The second thing that Paul tells them is that they were all made to drink of one Spirit. When we receive Christ into our lives, we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit, and we all drink of the same Holy Spirit. Paul wrote in Romans 8 that we do not have the Spirit of God, we do not belong to Christ. The sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. Believers are baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit of God and drink from one Spirit.

(Rom 8:9–14) "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.... {14} For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 12 we saw all of the gifts came from the same Spirit. All of the manifestations came from the Spirit. The one and same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. Believers are baptized into the body by the Spirit. They drink from the same Spirit. They are all given gifts by the same Spirit. We should have unity because of the Holy Spirit working inside all believers.

(1 Cor 12:4–11) "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.... {7} But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... {11} But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

In Ephesians 4, Paul implored or begged the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of the calling and to diligently preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He went on to impress upon them that there is one body and one Spirit, just as we were all called in one hope of our calling. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

(Eph 4:1–6) “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, {2} with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, {3} being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. {4} There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; {5} one Lord, one faith, one baptism, {6} one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

2. Diversity (1 Cor 12:14-20)

The body of Christ is one body, but it is not one member, but many. In our natural body, we are not just one arm, or one eye, or one foot. Our body has many different members, and this is the picture that God gives to us. We are one body, and there are many members of that body. The context of the passage is spiritual gifts, and each member has a different and unique gift. There are many different gifts in the body, and it is to be one body.

(1 Cor 12:14) “For the **body** is not **one** member, but **many**.”

This week I was reading the significance of the big toe. When a person loses a big toe, it makes walking very difficult. The big toe helps the body maintain balance when walking. It applies pressure when needed to keep our balance. We are not even aware of the natural function of the big toe, but those who have lost their big toe learn the importance of it very quickly. All the members of the body are important. There are many members and gifts in the body, and all of them are important.

Many times, we use the gifts to divide the body. A teacher will gravitate to a body where teaching is emphasized. Someone who is prophetic will often gravitate to a church that is led by a prophet. A person with the gift of mercy may go to a church that emphasizes outreach to the poor. An evangelistic person may gravitate towards a church that is heavily involved in local and foreign missions. All the gifts are needed in the body, and a healthy body has all of these expressions, but we sometimes divide ourselves based on our preferred members. That is not what God intended. He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the body of Christ. A balanced leadership makes for a more balanced body, which is God’s intent.

Next, Paul deals with two different attitudes that try to divide the body. The first attitude is that of insignificance (vs 15-20), and the second is independence (21-25). The person feeling insignificant (a foot) says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body.” Or, an ear may say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body.” God’s emphatic answer in both examples is that “it is not for this reason any less a part of the body.” We may be different parts, but we are still part of the body. We are one body, but many members.

(1 Cor 12:15–16) “If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**. {16} And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the **body**,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the **body**.”

Paul supports this by saying, “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” We need all of the parts of the body. God never intended the church to be one dimensional. God placed each one of the members into the body, just as He desired. God knows the importance and role of each member of the body, and He put them in the body for a reason. Paul states again that there are many members, but one body. A person feeling insignificant needs to know that they are needed and appreciated. When people do not feel needed and appreciated, they are far more likely to leave a church.

(1 Cor 12:17–20) “If the whole **body** were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? {18} But now God has placed the **members**, each **one** of them, in the **body**, just as He desired. {19} If they were all **one** member, where would the **body** be? {20} But now there are **many** members, but **one** body.”

The second attitude that Paul addresses is independence. He said, “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’” We live in a very independent culture, and this is a common attitude today. Church attendance since Covid-19 has suffered, even after the threat was gone. Many believers have not gone back to church. Many say that they watch it online. That tells me they value the teaching member, but what about all the other members in the body? Do they need or value those that could encourage them? Do they need those that could comfort them? Do they value those that could pray for them? Or, do they only need the teaching member? The truth is that they need all the members in the body. For them to even hear the pastor preach a sermon, they need the members of the media team to record the message. There are teams of people working that are not seen or heard, but are working quietly in the background so that the pastor’s message can get out.

(1 Cor 12:21) “And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

In Proverbs 18:1, Solomon wrote that “he who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.” Those that think that they do not need anyone else and separate themselves, thinking they can do it on their own, are quarreling against all sound wisdom. Furthermore, they are selfishly thinking of their own desires. In Hebrews 10:24-25, God tells us to consider how to stimulate others to love and good deeds, not forsaking the assembly of ourselves, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as we see the day drawing near.” We are to assemble together, and it is not just what we think we can get out of a service, but it is a corporate experience. We are to think about how we can encourage and build up others. Those that say they have no need of anyone else are selfishly seeking their own desires. God does not want us to have this independent attitude.

(Pr 18:1) “He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.”

(Heb 10:24–25) “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

In response to this independent attitude that does not think it needs the other members, Paul wrote, “On the contrary.” He disagrees completely with that line of thinking. “It is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less

presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked.” Why does God do this? He does this so that there is no division in the body. We are one body with many members, and there is not be any division in it.

(1 Cor 12:22-27) “On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; {23} and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, {24} whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, {25} so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”

In James 2, God deals with partiality in the church. Some were discriminating against the poor and thereby dishonoring them. James wrote, “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” God often gives the less presentable member more abundant honor. He often gives the poor more abundant faith. God did this so that they would not feel less important. God wants the body to be unified, and for us to know that we need one another. We need every member, no matter what their gifting or status in life is.

(James 2:5) “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

3. Care (1 Cor 12:25-26)

Paul’s next point is that the members are to care for one another. He said that when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Last week I was coming down the staircase at my daughter’s house. It was dark and I thought I was at the bottom, but I was actually one step from the bottom. I slid my left foot forward and I slid down very hard on my left foot. My foot and ankle were hurting very badly. My whole body suffered because my foot was hurting. I was not able to do my normal activities because the whole body was affected by my left foot. The same is true in the body of Christ. When one member suffers, the whole body suffers with it. There are many today that would not know if a member is suffering because they are not in relationship with the other members. Unfortunately, when they go through something, there are not others around them that will suffer with them, and comfort them. God has designed the body to care for one another. When one member suffers, there are others there to suffer with it.

(1 Cor 12:25–26) “so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. {26} And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

The members of the body are also exhorted to rejoice with one another. My wife gets pretty excited when she wins something. She also gets excited when I do something well or win. When I played professional golf, and played well or won a tournament, it was Karen that got on the phone and showed her exuberation. That is what the body is supposed to do. When one member is honored, all the members are to rejoice with it.

Paul has just given two examples of how the body is to care for one another. There are many “one another” commands in scripture. All of these are not going to take place if we are not connected to one another, value one another, and make a point of caring for one another.

1. Accept one another. Rom 15:7
2. Admonish one another. Rom 15:14, Col 3:16
3. Agree with one another. 1 Cor 1:10
4. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Rom 12:10
5. Be of the same mind toward one another. Rom 12:16, Rom 15:5
6. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 1 Pe 4:9
7. Be kind to one another. Eph 4:32
8. Be subject to one another. Eph 5:21
9. Bear one another’s burdens. Gal 6:2
10. Build up one another. Rom 14:19, 1 Thess 5:11
11. Care for one another. 1 Cor 12:25
12. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. 1 Pe 5:5
13. Comfort one another. 1 Thess 4:18
14. Confess your sins to one another. James 5:16
15. Encourage and build up one another. 1 Thess 5:11, Heb 3:13, Heb 10:25
16. Fellowship with one another. 1 Jn 1:7
17. Forgive one another. Eph 4:32, Col 3:13
18. Give preference to one another in honor or honor one another. Rom 12:10
19. Greet one another. 1 Pe 5:14, Rom 16:16, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12
20. Live in peace with one another. 1 Thess 5:13
21. Love one another. 1 Jn 4:11, 1 Pe 1:22, 1 Pe 4:8, Jn 13:34-35, Jn 15:12, Jn 15:17, 1 Thess 3:12, 1 Thess 4:9
22. Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. James 5:16
23. Regard one another as more important than himself. Phil 2:3
24. Rejoice with one another. Rom 12:15
25. Restore one another in a spirit of gentleness. Gal 6:1
26. Seek that which is good for one another. 1 Thess 5:15
27. Serve one another. 1 Pe 4:10, Gal 5:13
28. Show forbearance to one another in love. Eph 4:2, Col 3:13
29. Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Eph 5:19
30. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Heb 10:24
31. Teach one another. Col 3:16
32. Wait for one another. 1 Cor 11:33
33. Weep with one another. Rom 12:15

4. Order (1 Cor 12:27-31)

We are one body, a unified body, and it is made up of a diversity of members. God has placed the members of the body according to His desire. The members are not to be feel insignificant or not needed because they do not have some other gift. They are not to be feel independent, thinking they do not need the other members. The members have gifts that they are to use to serve one another. The members are to care for one another. We are Christ’s body and individually members of it.

(1 Cor 12:27) ““Now you are Christ’s **body**, and individually **members** of it.”

God has not only placed the members in the body as He desired, He has placed the members in a particular order. God appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All the gifts are needed, but for there to be order in the church, they have been placed in a divine order.

(1 Cor 12:28) “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.”

In Ephesians 2:20, God tells us that the church, God’s household, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. The foundation of the church is laid by the apostles and prophets. That is why God appointed them first in the church. Apostles have a keen sense of order. When Paul left Titus in Crete, he told him to set things in order, ordaining elders in every city. The apostles set in pastors and deal with issues that are causing disorder. God has anointed them and given them the grace to deal with these things. In addition to setting in leaders, they help equip the saints for the work of service, and help the church to grow and mature. There is a reason that they are given first.

(Eph 2:20) “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

(Tit 1:5–11) “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you....{10} For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, {11} who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.”

Paul has already dealt with the insignificance and independence. Just because somebody is not an apostle or prophet does not make them less significant or valuable. Every member is needed and is valuable, but every member does not have the same function or responsibility. Many times, we equate value with function, and that is not how God sees it. God is looking for faithfulness, and each of us will receive our rewards based on our stewardship of the things that He has entrusted to us.

Paul’s next line of rhetorical questions affirms this. He asked, “All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?” The answer is NO. We do not all have the same gifts. We are not all hands. We are not all feet. We are not all eyes. We are not all ears. The body of Christ is one body with many different members, and all of them are necessary and important. But He has placed and ordained the gifts in a certain way to bring order and maturity to the church.

(1 Cor 12:29–30) “All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? {30} All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”

Paul ends by exhorting us to earnestly desire the greater gifts. The Greek word for earnestly desire is *zelos* (Strong’s G2205), which means to be zealous for. The root word, *zeo*, means to heat or to boil. We are to be boiling hot in our desire for spiritual gifts. Unfortunately, many in the church are not boiling hot in their desire for spiritual gifts. We are not just to be zealous for

spiritual gifts, but to be zealous for the greater gifts. We will see in chapter fourteen that the greater gifts are the ones that edify the whole church. Prophecy and teaching bring edification to the entire body. There are certain gifts, like tongues, that edify the individual, and in our gatherings, God wants the entire body to be edified.

(1 Cor 12:31) “But earnestly desire (zealos) the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”

Chapter thirteen is known as the love chapter. Paul is going to show them a more excellent way. He is going to show them something even more important than the spiritual gifts, which is love.

Conclusion and Applications

Paul sums up by saying, “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.” The body of Christ is one body, but has many members. We are to be unified, and there is to be no division in it. We have all been baptized into one body, and we all drink of the same Spirit. We are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

The members need one another. They should not feel less a part of the body because they have a different gifting, and members should not be so arrogant to think that they have no need of the other members. We all need one another. The gifts of the body are intended to bring unity, not division. God has placed and ordained the members where He desires. We are to value and honor one another. The members have gifts and are called to exercise those gifts in serving others. The members are to show care for one another. When one suffers, all the members suffer. When one is honored, all should rejoice.

God wants us to earnestly desire or be zealous for spiritual gifts. The body of Christ needs these gifts. There are lots of members of the body not gathering today, and these members are sorely missed. There are other members who are gathering, but are not zealously operating in their gifts. We are one body with many members, and we need all the members.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for choosing and calling each one of us. Thank You for making us part of the body of Christ. Thank You for giving each one of us unique gifts and abilities, and for placing us in the body as You desire. Help us to value the other members of the body, and be appreciative of their contributions. Help us to be use our gifts to serve other members. Help us to care for one another. May we be one body with many members. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Introduction (1 Cor 12:12–27)

1. **Unity** (1 Cor 12:12-27, Ps 23:1–2, John 10:3–5, Jer 12:10, John 15:1-5, 1 Cor 3:6, 3:9-10, 1 Pet 2:6, Eph 5:27-32, 2:19, Mal 3:10, Col 1:13, Gal 3:28, Rom 8:9-14, 1 Cor 12:4-11, Eph 4:1–6)

2. **Diversity** (1 Cor 12:14-20, James 2:5)
 - a. Attitude of Insignificance (1 Cor 12:15-20)

 - b. Attitude of Independence (1 Cor 12:21-25, Pr 18:1, Heb 10:24-25)

3. **Care** (1 Cor 12:25-26)

4. **Order** (1 Cor 12:27-31, Eph 2:20, Tit 1:5-11)

Conclusion and Applications (1 Cor 12:27)