

Introduction

We are in the midst of a short series on the church. We saw that the Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, and it means those who are called out. The church is God's people, who have been called out of darkness into His light. They have been sanctified, which means to be made holy, and therefore, they are called saints. The church in Corinth were called saints, even though they were not carnal and not living like saints.

We also saw that the church is made up of disciples, which means learners. The church is made up of saints, who are also known as disciples. Being a disciple is not a choice that some people in the church decide to do; if you are a follower of Jesus, you are a disciple. The term, disciple, is used 272 times in Scripture; and is the way that believers were most commonly referred to. The second most-used term is brethren, which is used 190 times. Brethren is the plural of brother, so the brethren are brothers and sisters in the God's family. Because believers are family members, they are to love one another, care for one another, serve one another, pray for one another, and serve one another. There are thirty-three one-another commands, and family members should carry these out these commands, and the best place to do that is in the local church.

Our focus today in this series on the church is on body of Christ. First, we will look at the body of Christ, which is the church. We will see that there is a global body of Christ, and there are also local bodies of Christ. Second, we will look at the head of the body, which is Christ. Third, we will look at the members of the body, which is the church. In our conclusion and applications, we will look at the significance of being called the body of Christ, and applications for our lives.

What is the body of Christ?

1. The body of Christ
2. The head of the body: Christ
3. The members of body: the church

1. The body of Christ

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul told the Corinthians that they are Christ's body, and individual members of it. The Bible breaks up the body into two distinct parts, the head and the body. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:18, that Christ is the head of the body, the church. Christ is the head of the body, and the church is the body of Christ. We will address the head of the body later; right now we are going to focus on the body of Christ, which is the church, comprised of many individual members.

(1 Co 12:27) "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

(Col 1:18) "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Christ does not have many bodies, but one body, and that body is Christ's body. When we think of a body, we see that there are many different members of the body who are all connected and working together. Paul talks about the eye, hand, feet, ears, and nose, but it was just a simple illustration to say that there are many members, but one body. Here is a simple diagram that I did showing just the major parts of the upper limbs, trunk, and lower limbs, and that count comes to thirty-four. Paul's main point is that there are many individual members in the body of Christ.

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

The church in Corinth was part of Christ’s body, but it was not the entire body of Christ. Just as we saw that there is a universal church and a local church, there is a universal body and a local body of Christ. The universal body, often referred to as the global body of Christ, is made up of all members of the body of Christ in every place and all time. The individual members of Christ’s body in Corinth were members of the local body and also the global body of Christ.

In verse twenty-eight, Paul told the Corinthians that God had appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administration, and various kinds of tongues. Paul is speaking of the global body of Christ. Every local church does not necessarily have apostles, prophets, and all the other gifts. It would be great if every local church had these gifts, but many do not have these gifts in their church.

(1 Co 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.”

When Paul wrote the church in Rome, he said that he was longing to come to them so that he could impart some spiritual gift to them, so that they could be established. We do not know what that gift was, but it was a gift that was needed in their church. My guess is that it may have been a teaching or prophetic gift, because those greater gifts strengthen, build up, and establish believers. My point here is that not every local church will necessarily have every gift resident, but the global church does have all the gifts in it. Local churches should not be islands unto themselves; they need the rest of the body of Christ.

(Ro 1:11) “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;”

In Ephesians 4, Paul wrote that God gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers. Why did God give these gift ministries to the church? He gave them to equip the saints for the work of service. Second, He gave them for the building up of the body of Christ. Third, He gave them to bring unity of the faith. Fourth, He gave them to help the church grow in the knowledge of the Son of God. Fifth, He gave them to help the church become mature, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Local churches need these ministries operating in them so that the people in the local churches can be equipped and grow to maturity.

(Eph 4:11–13) “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

When a local church is connected with other churches and ministries, they can have access to any of these gifts that they do not have resident in them. Fortunately, in my life I have been part of churches that brought in other ministries. We brought in prophets, evangelists, and apostles. We already had pastors and teachers, so for the church to be equipped by all these ministry gifts, we brought them in. For the past thirty years I have been planting churches, and I did the same thing. My primary gift is teaching, even though I have done a lot of evangelistic ministry. I

brought in prophets and apostles and occasionally another teacher. For the church to mature and be equipped in all areas, all of the various gift ministries need to be used, and most local churches do not have these gifts.

God wants us to know that the body of Christ is one body. It is one body and has many members. When we look at the 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 with the key words highlighted, we see that body (green highlight) is used eighteen times and member(s) (blue highlight) is used seventeen times. It is one body with many members. Twelve times in the passage Paul used the word one (yellow highlight). It is one body, and has many members. The church is diverse, and yet it is to be united.

Emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 by word count	
Body: 18x	Member(s): 17x
One: 12x	Many: 4x

(1 Co 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."

2. The head of the body: Christ

We began this series on the church in 1 Corinthians 1. Paul wrote this letter to the church of God in Corinth. Paul was not talking about the Church of God denomination, as they were not around. Paul was clearly teaching that the church belongs to God.

(1 Co 1:2) "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:"

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus told Peter, "and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." It is Jesus' church. The church does not belong to a pastor, or a denomination, or the people in the church.

(Mt 16:18) "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

The church belongs to God, and Jesus is the head of the church, which is His body. In Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22, God makes it very clear that Jesus is the head of the body, the church.

(Col 1:18) "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

(Eph 1:22) "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,"

From a leadership perspective, pastors need to keep in mind that the church belongs to God. Pastors are stewards of the flock that God entrusts to them. They are shepherds, but He is the Chief Shepherd. In 1 Peter 5, pastors are exhorted not to lord over those allotted to their charge. God allots people to pastors so that they can take care of them for Him. Peter goes on to say that when the Chief Shepherd appears, the pastors will be rewarded. God is the Chief Shepherd, and the elders are the under-shepherds.

(1 Pe 5:3–4) “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. {4} And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

My friend, Jim Elliff, who leads a group of churches in Kansas City, wrote an article, *Christ's Headship in the Church: The Neglected First Principle of Decision-Making*. He believes that when leaders properly understand Christ's headship in the church, it will do more to clear up confusion over decision-making in the church than any other consideration. He said that elders and members should have one goal in decision-making—to find out what the Head of the church wills for His church. I believe Jim is one hundred percent correct.

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul said that he and Apollos were stewards. A steward is one who manages something that belongs to someone else. Pastors lead the church of God. When Paul gave the qualifications of a pastor, he said that they are not to be self-willed. The job of a pastor is to seek the will of the head of the church, the Chief Shepherd, because it is His church.

(1 Co 4:1) “Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

(Tt 1:7) “For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,”

From a congregational standpoint, the church belongs to God. There are some people who try to control the church. Like pastors, they need to recognize that the church belongs to God, not them. It is His will that we pray for, and that we try to carry out in His church.

The principle of headship carries over into marriage, leadership, and many other areas. There are some today that reject headship, and say that it really means the source, not the authority. When Paul wrote that the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church, they say that husbands do not have authority over their wives. Jesus has all rule, power, and authority to do what He wants to do in the church; it is His church. When we submit to His headship, we are submitting to His authority and are committing ourselves to do His will. In a marriage, a husband must be submitted to the headship of Christ, seeking His will in every matter and decision. Just as a husband is submitted to Christ, a wife is to be submitted to her husband. If a husband is submitted to God and following Him, a wife has no problem with submitting to her husband. A husband and wife are one, but in that marriage relationship, the husband is the head.

(Eph 5:22–24) “Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. {24} But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.”

3. The members of the body: the church

When I think of my body, it has many different parts or members. I have two hands that I use for countless different things. I have eyes that help me see where I am going and what I am doing. I have ears that hear sounds, and when I am walking, to know that a car is approaching and that I need to proceed with caution. All the members of my body have different functions, and are necessary. All my members are attached and connected to my body, and they work together to accomplish whatever I am trying to do.

In the same way, the body of Christ is one body, yet it has many members. Paul wrote, ““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. 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. For the body is not one member, but many.” The body is one body and it is comprised of many different members, each have different gifts.

(1 Co 12:12–14) “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.”

Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 12:14, Paul wrote that the body is not one member but many. I gave a simple illustration showing thirty-four members, but there are many more parts than that, especially if we begin to think of internal organs. I said that there were two hands and two fingers. There are actually twenty-seven bones in each hand, making fifty-four bones in our two hands alone. Paul is not teaching anatomy; he is just using a simple illustration of the body, which has many different members, but all of them are part of the same body.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul wrote that all the gifts, ministries, and manifestations had come from God. He said there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are a varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. He was emphasizing that all the gifts, manifestations, and ministries had all been given by God. There should be unity because no matter what gift you have, it is from God.

(1 Co 12:4–6) “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. {5} And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. {6} There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

When God created me, He gave me an analytical mind. He knew the plans He had for me, and that He was going to call me to be a teacher in the church. The aptitudes, skills, personality, and God’s calling for me were all given by God according to His will. God knew me before He ever formed me in my mother’s womb. He had a plan for my life, which included the ministry He was going to call me to do. Notice that in Psalm 139, David said that God had formed his inward parts and wove them in his mother’s womb. He said that God knew the days ordained for him before he was born.

(Ps 139:13) “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb.”

(Ps 139:16) “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them.”

Notice that God told Jeremiah that before He formed him in the womb, He knew Him. Before Jeremiah was born, God consecrated and appointed him to be a prophet to the nations. God has a plan for every one of us. He is the One who forms us in the womb, and He gives us a gift for the common good of the body. Our gifts are given by God for the common good according to the will of God.

(Je 1:5) “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Paul wrote that all these different gifts, manifestations, and ministries were given for the common good. The gift of teaching that God gave to me was given for the common good, that I would teach and instruct others in the body of Christ. It was never given just so that I could study for my own benefit.

(1 Co 12:7) “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

A number of years ago, when I was working as the CEO of a company, and was also planting and pastoring a church, I did not have much free time. During Thanksgiving, I took a week off from work, and had my message done for Sunday, so I had a few days to do whatever I wanted. I wanted to study the fear of the Lord, so I studied it for three days. I got a lot out of the study, and was personally edified. I had not studied it for a sermon; I studied it because I had an interest in knowing more about the fear of the Lord. When I was done, the Holy Spirit told me to take what I had learned and teach it at a men’s conference. I gathered together the men from the four Vineyard churches in New Mexico, and our conference focused on the fear of the Lord. The gifts that we have from God are given for the common good, and we need to use them to build up the body of Christ.

You may have a gift of mercy, but it has been given to you to benefit the whole body. You may have the gift of teaching, but it is not primarily for you, but for you to use to teach the body. You may have a prophetic gifting, but it was given to you for the common good, to encourage, edify, and console others. The gifts are meant to bring unity and to build up the body; they are for the common good.

(1 Co 14:3) “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

We have some people who think about only what they can get out of church, and that is the wrong perspective. The right attitude is to think about how you can serve others, comfort others, encourage others, teach others, heal others, or one of the other thirty-three “one another” commands that God gave us. He gave us our gifts to serve others. Look what Peter wrote, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” This command goes well beyond a weekly worship service; you may be serving someone else at any time during the remainder of the week. We are stewards of these gifts, and we are to use them to serve others.

(1 Pe 4:10) “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

I was having lunch with my oldest son this week. He had just returned from a ministry trip to Scotland. His church took some men to Scotland, and poured into them while they were there. He had an epiphany while there about his life verse, out of Hebrews 11:24, that he was to consider how to encourage others to love and good works. He believes this is a life verse for him. That is not just for him; that is something that God wants each one of us to do. We cannot come to our church services just to get out of the service what we can; we must come ready to worship and praise God, and to stimulate and encourage other believers to love and good works.

(He 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.”

The next point that Paul makes is that every member of the body is important and needed. He said that members should not feel unimportant or unnecessary just because they are a different part than someone else. He wrote, “If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 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. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?”

(1 Co 12:15-17) “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?”

I have seen the emphasis placed on certain gifts, and those without those gifts feel like they are second class citizens, or unimportant. If the emphasis is on teaching, someone who is not a teacher, but a person with the gift of mercy, may feel less important. However, that person with the gift of mercy is very important. We need the mercy, compassion, and comfort that they bring, particularly when going through trials.

For a season in the late 90’s and early 2000’s there was a strong emphasis on prophesy in many churches. Those who did not flow in prophecy felt pressured to prophesy to show their spiritual worth. I witnessed many false prophecies by pastors and church members during that time. I focused on using my gift, teaching, and did not try to prophesy. However, if God gave me a prophetic word, I would give it. We have to understand who God has made us to be and appreciate who He has made us to be.

Paul made this point earlier in 1 Corinthians 12, saying that there are a variety of gifts, ministries, and effects, but it was God who works all things in all persons. Whatever gift, ministry, or manifestation that you have is from the Spirit of God. He distributes to each person individually just as He wills. We need to understand that God created each one of us, and it is He who gave us the gift we have. That is significant, and we need to fully grasp it. God has a plan for each of our lives, and He has given us our unique and special gifts to help us accomplish the work He has given us to do.

(1 Co 12:4–11) “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. {5} And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. {6} There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. {7} But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. {8} For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; {9} to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, {10} and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. {11} But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

There are many people that are not connected to a local body. This is a significant loss to the local body, whether those members realize it or understand it or not. We need those missing parts. The Scriptures are inspired by God. They were given to men moved by the Holy Spirit that spoke from God. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote that God has placed each member in the body, just as He desired. Whatever gift you have, whatever member of the body that God created you to be, you are a needed and necessary member. God did not make you as a dispensable member, a redundant member, a spare part for inventory, or an unnecessary member. You are a needed part of the body.

(2 Ti 3:16) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;”

(2 Pe 1:20–21) “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, {21} for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

(1 Co 12:18) “But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”

Next, Paul emphasized the need for members of the body of Christ to appreciate the other members and the value that they bring to all of us. We need to tell them that we appreciate them. Paul addresses this concern in verses nineteen through twenty-four. He said, “if they were all one member, where would the body be?” It would be a member, not a body. He continued, “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 cannot say those things, think those things, or behave in such a way that makes people feel that they are not needed.

(1 Co 12:19-21) “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.”

God wants believers to understand how much they are needed in the body of Christ. There is no reason for anyone to think that they are not important or necessary. They need to understand that God created them and gave them the special gift that they have, and we need to affirm and appreciate them.

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 Co 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.

(Jas 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?”

Conclusion and Applications

What is the significance of knowing and being the body of Christ? What are the take-aways that we have from learning that we are the body of Christ?

First, we are to be diligent to preserve unity. We are to be one body. We are to be unified in the body of Christ. Our local bodies are to be unified. In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts us to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He said there is one body and one Spirit, just as we were 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. Notice the constant use of one. We saw in our passage in 1 Corinthians 12 that one was used twelve times. We are to be diligent to preserve that unity. The Greek word that is used for diligent is *spoudazo* (Strong’s G4704), which comes from *spoude* (G4750), which means to use speed. We are to be quick, prompt, earnest, and diligent to preserve unity.

(Eph 4:3–6) “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.*”

There is also to be unity in the global body of Christ. Sometimes, we get wrapped up in the differences between churches. We need to be firm on the essential doctrines, like the deity of Christ, that He came in the flesh, that the fullness of deity dwelt in Him in full measure, that He died and rose again, and that our salvation is based on faith, not works. We cannot compromise on those essentials. While we may not agree with others on some other teachings, and may feel passionate about some of them, we should not allow these to divide us. Churches need to work together and to help each other out.

The second takeaway is that we need to appreciate and value one another. We are a diverse body, and every member is created uniquely and with a special gift. God gave each one of us that gift. He is the One that has placed us in the body, and He has a specific function and work for us to do. We need to appreciate the diversity and those with different gifts. We need them and what they have to offer, and they need us also. We need one another, and we need to serve one another with the gifts and abilities God has given each one of us. In 1 Corinthians 12:25, Paul wrote, “that there may be no division in the body, but that the members have the same care for one another.” We are to be unified and to care for one another.

Our third takeaway is from Ephesians 4:15-16. We need every member in the body to be working properly, using their God-given gifts, talents, and abilities, to grow the church.

God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the body for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. God wants the body equipped, so that they can serve. He wants each member to be using his/her gift to serve others in the body.

(Eph 4:11–13) “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Notice what Paul wrote in verse sixteen, “that the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

(Eph 4:15–16) “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Fourth, Get connected to a local church. Become a member of a local church. We have many in the body who have been offended, hurt, or have just got out of the habit of assembling together in a local church. They have gifts that are not being used to serve others. There are others that are needing their gifts and are not receiving the care they need. We need to encourage these believers to get back into church and become functioning members.

There are others that have never been a member of a local body. They have believed that they are a member of the body of Christ, and therefore do not need to be a member of a local body. However, based on Hebrews 13:17, they are to submit and obey their leaders, the ones who will give account to God for their lives. This clearly points to the need of being in a local body.

We have others that are attending, but their focus is on what they can get, rather than what they can give, or how they can serve. They need encouragement to use their gifts to serve others. They need the same revelation that my son had, to consider how to stimulate others to love and good deeds. The body of Christ needs all the members of the body, and for all the members of the body to be properly working so that the church can grow to maturity.

You may be listening to this message, and you are not a member of the body. You believe that Jesus came in the flesh, died for our sins, and was raised from the dead, but you have never received Christ into your life. Let me encourage you to receive Christ today and become a member of the body of Christ. In Romans 10, we find that believing in our heart results in righteousness, and confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord results in salvation. If you believe, I encourage you to confess with your mouth, praying something like this:

“Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You came and died for our sins and were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I turn my life over to You today, and confess You as Lord. It is in Jesus’ name I pray.”

(Ro 10:9–10) “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; {10} for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we come to You, and acknowledge that You are the head of the body. Help us to seek, pray, and consult Your will in every matter so that we can accomplish Your will here on earth. We thank You for each member in the body, and for the diversity of gifts. Thank You for creating each one of us, giving us unique gifts and making a special place for us in the body. I pray that we will appreciate the gift You have given us, and that we will also appreciate the gifts that You have given others in Your body. Help us to use our gifts to serve and care for one another. Help us to be diligent to preserve the unity of the body. Help each one of us to function properly, and to bring glory and honor to You. In Jesus’ name I pray.

Discussion Questions

- How important is it for churches to acknowledge the headship of Jesus over the body?
- Practically, what are some ways to acknowledge His headship?
- Do you feel that your gift is appreciated and valued by others in the body?
- What are some ways to show appreciation for the other members of the body?
- How do people get connected to the global body of Christ?
- How do people get connected to the local body?
- Why are small groups essential for the body to function properly?
- Members need to be equipped so that each member is a properly functioning member. In your experience, have you been equipped for service in the body? How were you equipped?
- Paul wrote the Corinthians about spiritual gifts, and he began by saying that he did not want them ignorant about spiritual gifts. Why is it essential for believers to be knowledgeable about spiritual gifts?
- Since the body is comprised of many diverse members, what are some things that will help all the members be unified and acting as one body?

What is the body of Christ?

Introduction

- 1. The body of Christ** (1 Co 12:27, Col 1:18, 1 Co 12:14, 12:28, Ro 1:11, Eph 4:11-13)

- 2. The head of the body: Christ** (1 Cor 1:2, Mt 16:18, Col 1:18, Eph 1:22, 1 Pet 5:3-4, 1 Co 4:1, Tt 1:7, Eph 5:22-24)

- 3. The members of the body: the church** (1 Co 12:12-14, 12:4-6, Ps 139:13, 16, Je 1:5, 1 Co 12:7, 14:3, 1 Pe 4:10, He 10:24-25, 1 Co 12:15-17, 1 Co 12:4-11, 2 Ti 3:16, 2 Pe 1:20-21, 1 Co 12:27, Jas 2:5)

Conclusion and Applications (Eph 4:3-6, Eph 4:11-16, Ro 10:9-10)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.