

The apostle Paul wrote the followers of Christ in Corinth in hopes of building unity and helping them see the importance of every member of the church. *1 Corinthians 11* addresses the divisions taking place around the Lord's Supper table. *1 Corinthians 12* addresses the over emphasis of some gifts and the necessity of working together. Today's study explores the way Paul uses the human body as a metaphor to describe the church.

*12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts...*

We all know the complex yet unified nature of the human body and the need for the various body parts to work in harmony. *12 and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So, it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

These explosive words broke down ethnic, religious and social barriers. Our common commitment to Jesus Christ gives us equal value before God.

*he who has the Son has life.*

*1 John 5:12*

*He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

*1 Corinthians 6:17*

When we were born again, God placed us in the body of Christ and put his spirit within us.

*14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

The two biblical letters to Corinth reveal a variety issues dividing the church. Discontent and pride distorted the values of the gifts God gave. *Who resists [God's] will? Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"*

*Romans 9:19-20*

*15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.*

*16 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 cease to be part of the body.*

*17 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?*

*18 But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.*

In creation God formed the first human beings (*Genesis 1, 2*). In the new birth as we repent of our sins and commit our lives to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, each one of us becomes a new creation.

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

As God forms the church he is once again making a new body, the body of Christ for today's world.

*18 God has arranged (placed) the parts in the body.*

God is shaping the body of Christ—the church—into his own image.

The *parts of the body* (v.18) are called *the members of the body* (v. 24). Some interpreters use this passage to emphasize the need for membership in a church body.

*19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?*

Paul's picture reveals some humor for no single part reflects the whole body. Just as no human body could function as a single part, no church can function with one person doing everything.

*20 As it is there are many parts, but one body.*

The variety of spiritual gifts helps us understand the need to address many different issues in the life of the church. Various spiritual gifts are listed in *1 Corinthians 12—14*, *Romans 12:3-8* and *Ephesians 4:7-13*. These gift lists do not form an exhaustive presentation of the various ways God works through his people.

*21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"*

Each body part serves a purpose, and all parts are designed to work together.

*25...so that there should be no division in the body,*

The church in Corinth had divisions over leadership, theology, social standing, spiritual gifts, and residue from their pagan past.

*25 ...but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.*

*26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.*

None of us can completely fulfill God's purpose in our lives without engaging other believers in the body of Christ, the church. The church body is the vehicle on earth by which Jesus makes himself known.

