

Message #54

I Corinthians 12:20-26

The Corinthian church was a carnal church. It was a church with many people who had big egos. Most were not spiritually-minded and most thought the more public and impressive a person was, the more important he was to the church.

In this context there seems to have been two critical problems:

(Problem #1) - Those that were less prominent tended to minimize themselves. **12:15-16**

(Problem #2) - Those that were more prominent tended to minimize others. **12:21**

GOD WANTS HIS CHURCH TO REALIZE THAT EVERY MEMBER IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST NO MATTER HOW PUBLIC OR PRIVATE HIS SPIRITUAL GIFT.

A church of God is one body, comprised of many parts. Every part is important, every part is needed, every part is unique and every part is a significant and sovereign work of God.

REALITY #1 – There are many members but only one body. **12:20**

We cannot help but get the impression that the Corinthians were very confused on this matter because Paul repeats this concept several times in this context (12:12, 14, 20).

Paul is trying to drive home one key thought: one body, many parts. This immediately tells us that two extremes are very unbiblical:

Extreme #1 - The person who is an isolationist is unbiblical in his thinking.

An isolationist is one who thinks he is his own part, in and of himself, not part or in need of the rest of the body.

Extreme #2 - The person who is a uniformist is unbiblical in his thinking.

This is one who thinks all parts should be the same.

REALITY #2 – The more noticeable member cannot say he does not need the less noticeable member. **12:21**

As we have already seen, there is a tendency for the less noticeable member to say, “They don’t need me” (12:15-16). There is also a tendency for the more noticeable member to say, “I don’t need them.” Both ideas are wrong.

The word “need,” which shows up twice in this verse, is a word that refers to some matter, specifically connected to business, which is necessary for corporate life (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 483).

It is a term that describes something that is needed in the organization to make that business a success.

REALITY #3 – The seemingly weaker members are needed members. **12:22**

The word “weaker” describes something that appears to have no strength, something that appears to be very weak and feeble and sick.

In this context, there is a tendency for the more noticeable member to view the less noticeable member in at least three ways:

Way #1 - As being weak. **12:22**

Way #2 - As being less honorable. **12:23a**

Way #3 - As being unseemly. **12:23b** (as being shapeless)

In Corinth, the more noticeable person really looked down on the less noticeable person.

Some of these members had struggled with morality, idolatry, alcohol and covetousness (i.e. 6:9-10), but all were still needed.

REALITY #4 – The less noticeable member needs more attention than the more noticeable member. **12:23-24a**

The word “honor” refers to something highly esteemed. The word “seemly” refers to something elegant and graceful. What Paul is saying here is that when a church is functioning in a spiritual way, it will highly esteem those members who perhaps aren’t as elegant or graceful. When a church is functioning right, it will devote more attention to the weak and struggling and less to the strong and successful.

REALITY #5 – Each member of the body has been sovereignly placed in the body by God. **12:24b-25**

The word “composed” which is only used here, means that God is the one who mixes together, who blends together and who compounds together the church.

God senses what this church needs and then sends each person to the church so that He might blend together His body. Now there are at least two critical facts we learn about this:

Fact#1 - How God composed His body. **12:24b**

God has designed this body in such a way that there will be a continual opportunity to minister to the lacking parts. The participle “lacked” is present tense indicating that God will continually blend into the church those who need to be ministered to.

Fact #2 - Why God designed the body this way. **12:25**

God has blended seemingly inferior parts into His body for two reasons:

(Reason #1) - The negative reason of no divisions. **12:25a**

God has intentionally brought a variety of people into His church so that His church will learn how to function as a united group that has no division or dissension.

(Reason #2) - The positive reason of united caring. **12:25b**

God has blended into His church seemingly less honorable members so that the church will learn to care for all types of people. When a church is functioning properly, every person will be cared for equally.

REALITY #6 – The body that is spiritual is one that will hurt together and rejoice together.
12:26

Way #1 - When one member suffers, all members suffer. **12:26a**

The word “suffer” means to suffer in a way of misfortune. When the body is right, it cares when one of its members is having a hard time.

Way #2 - When one member is praised, all members rejoice. **12:26b**

When one member is honored, all other members rejoice. There is no jealousy or division in the spiritual family.

Every believer is wanted and needed in this church. Every believer has been put here by God. We need each other. We need to be involved in each other’s lives, no matter what our spiritual gift.