

A HEALTHY BODY

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Intro: I was a proud Papa yesterday. After Grady's soccer game we went to Bella's for an early lunch. When our sandwich orders came, each plate was garnished with a beautiful clump of kale. Now in a world of kale haters, my family ranges from knowing it is good for you and enduring it in a smoothie to not eating it if you really don't have to. So I announced that I would gladly eat anyone's kale if they didn't want it. Everybody swiftly surrendered theirs to me except Grady who hungrily stuffed it into his mouth. Grady likes kale. That makes me proud. It also means that Grady will have a good chance of having a healthy body because, despite all the hate it receives, kale is really good for you. It's called a super food because it is:

Rich in Vitamins and Minerals

Supports Heart, Bone, and Eye Health

Boosts Immunity

Aids Digestion

Promotes Healthy Skin

Has Antioxidant and Anti-inflammatory Properties

May Have Cancer-Preventive Benefit

And Aids in Weight Management (I'm still waiting for that to happen).

So, kale is good for a healthy body.

What is good for the Body of Christ – that is, the Church, is when Christ Followers are utilizing their Spiritual gifts. Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 and we unpacked the Apostle Paul's response to the Corinthian church's questions concerning spiritual gifts. This week I want to cover the remainder of the chapter and talk about Paul's discussion of what makes the body of Christ a healthy body.

Let's look at the text. I'm reading the ESV and, so, of course, that is what is on the screen. If you have your own Bible follow along, especially if you have another translation so that maybe you can catch some helpful nuances.

(Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

First of all, notice the . . .

Diversity and Unity all at the same time

- Timothy Keller writes, *"A classic formulation of the Gospel and its relationship with life is this: that we are saved through Christ alone, by faith alone, but not by a faith which remains alone."* We cannot live this life in Christ alone – we need one another – let me say it again: Life in Christ is NEVER to be attempted alone. From time to time I hear folks say something like, "I'm a Christian, but it's a private thing." I fear that it's an excuse to never grow or to avoid maturing in faith. But, the truth is, it's impossible. We need each other! More on that in a bit.
- Last week I pointed out that every Christ Follower has, at minimum, one spiritual gift. As each of us utilize our spiritual gifts, we complete the Body of Christ. Paul gets pretty graphic here in our text as he presents a visual while trying to imagine what the body would be like if it was a big eye. Not only would it be terrifying, but how could we hear, feel, smell, or move around. I mean it's ridiculous, right? Then imagine the Church if all we had was me preaching and no one else applying their gift. A church like that would die swiftly – and sadly some do.
- Paul tells us *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.* 1 Corinthians 12:12-14. Edgar Goodspeed adds this, *"Baptism is the same for all Christ followers. It's a symbolism of the person's incorporation into the unity of the body of Christ by his or her death and resurrection portrayed in their baptism. In other words, all Christians have been saturated with one Spirit."* The Body of Christ is a symbol of the gifting given to us by that same Spirit.
- When we become Christ Followers we move from being lone rangers to being part of a functioning holy system. We are no longer independent, instead we are interdependent. Steven Kopp writes, *"In an 'independent' church, individuals take responsibility for their own spiritual growth but don't work together as a team. Churches of this ilk may be marked by in-fighting or jealousy. Perhaps the church in*

Corinth was overly marked by a spirit of independence where everyone was clamoring for their own voice to be heard. It was a church marked by pride instead of humility and factions instead of unity. Christians with a completely independent mindset may check-out of church altogether. After all, if they have everything they need within themselves, why go to church in the first place?” And then he proceeds to this, “In an “interdependent” church members see themselves as parts of a whole. Members with an interdependent mindset often look for churches where they can work as part of a team and utilize their gifts as part of a greater mission. Here everyone is moving toward the same goal – love, maturity, discipleship, service, evangelism, etc – but each person plays a different part. An interdependent church is like an orchestra playing in harmony. It embraces both unity and diversity. Each person takes responsibility for playing their own instrument well and rejoices when others play their instruments well. Leaders in interdependent churches encourage spiritual growth and cooperation between the parts. They try to create systems where growth occurs naturally and where the Spirit is given room to build up the body.”

- So, let me say it again . . .

We NEED one another!

- Kenneth Foreman, commenting on these verses from 1 Corinthians 12 writes, “*Though we all derive our true self from Christ, not one of us can live as a Christian—a living, serving Christian—without the intimate joining – with and working with – other Christians, just as it is among the members of a physical body.*” And then he says “*To sum it up bluntly, it is no more possible to be a lone independent Christian apart from the church than it is for an ear or an eye to be the lone independent ear or eye with no body. An eye in a head is priceless; an eye in a glass jar is a curiosity.*” That is, indeed, a less than pleasant visual, but it is extremely clear – we must be a priceless part of the body and not a curiosity in a bottle.
- David Guzik writes, “*The parts of the body work together. The eyes and ears do not only serve themselves, but the whole body. The hands do not only feed and defend themselves, but the whole body. The heart does not only supply blood to itself, but serves the whole body. Sometimes there is a part of our body that only lives to serve itself. It doesn’t contribute anything to the rest of the body, and everything it gets it uses to feed and grow itself. We call this cancer.*”
- As a baby matures he progresses from barely being able to touch his mother’s face to, being able to put a pacifier into his mouth, until a year later he is pressing the correct shapes through the corresponding holes in a toy. Thirty years later he might hit 52 home runs like the Phillies’ Kyle Schwarber because of his incredible eye hand coordination. It is that kind of coordination that points to how we NEED one another’s gifts for the body of Christ to run healthily and smoothly.
- This is why we need to joyfully accept that . . .

Being God appointed is good enough

- God, by his Holy Spirit, has given us our gift mix so we need to relish and share it. In fact, you MUST share it.
- F. B. Meyer writes, “*The Christian church is not an inert mass of mere learners and subjects who are to be authoritatively taught and ruled by a small fraction of its members. It is a great cooperative society, in which each is for all and all is for each, and the object is to bring Christ into every department of our being and our fellowship, as the lifeblood nourishes the body of man.*”
- So, you need to know that what you are gifted with is good. Rely on the Spirit and use the gifts he has given you for the kingdom. It will do the body good, better than milk ever did.
- My friend Andy has two very prominent gifts – Prayer and Prophecy. By prophecy I mean he is prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak into the lives of others. He is always telling me what he is praying about. (Tell about his trip to Juarez, Mexico that utilized both) Andy obediently uses his gifts and its good enough.
- Let’s do the same.

Conclusion – Let me wrap this up with those final words at the end of our text, *And yet I will show you the most excellent way.* 1 Corinthians 12:31b. Is he suddenly telling us, after he pounded into us the idea of using the gifts given to us, that there is something different than that? Nope – he’s telling us that there is a proper way to use those gifts and that is revealed in the verses that follow in 1 Corinthians 13. Our gifts of the Spirit

are to be dispensed with the love of God and Pam is going to bring that in next week's message. For the time being – work on the fitness of the healthy body of Christ by determining your own Spiritual gifts. Amen