

"EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY"
Diversity of Function In The Body
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Eph. 4: 11-16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

INTRODUCTION

A. In order for our body to function as they should each part, no matter how great or small, must be working properly.

1. Some time back I was asked by Janie Miller to visit Emily Young, a friend of her son in Bowling Green in the hospital here in Louisville.

2. Emily had trouble with her Pancreas. A small duct leading from the Pancreas to the intestines was not opened properly. This duct was about the size of a pencil lead.

3. Emily was taking enough pain medication to kill me if I took it just to be able to withstand the pain. She could not eat or function normally in any capacity.

4. One little duct nearly shut down the whole body.

B. Remember that Paul says that the church is the Lord's body.

1. When God put you into His body (the church), He had a purpose in mind for you.

2. Indeed, if we desire growth in the body of Christ, EVERY member must be doing his or her part! - **Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

3. There must be diversity of function in the body of Christ. This point is often overlooked when churches think about how they might involve every member

4. Failure to appreciate this truth can hinder true growth, and at the same time be very frustrating for the members of the body of Christ

I. THE BODY OF CHRIST HAS MANY MEMBERS

A. TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH, PAUL STRESSED THIS POINT...

1. Just as the physical body, though one, has many members - **1 Cor 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

2. So it is with the body of Christ - **1 Co 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ, 14 4 For in fact the body is not one member but many.**

B. HE TOLD THE BRETHREN IN ROME THE SAME THING...

1. As we have many members in our physical body – **Rom. 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,**

2. So the body of Christ is made up of many who are members of one another - **Rom 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.**

This point of the similarity between the physical body containing many members and the body of Christ having many members is a simple one, but it helps prepare us for the next point that is often neglected...

II. NOT ALL MEMBERS HAVE THE SAME FUNCTION

A. THIS POINT IS MADE MOST CLEARLY TO THE SAINTS AT ROME.

1. All the members do not have the same function – **Rom. 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.**

2. We have gifts differing according to the grace given to us – **Rom. 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

B. IT IS IMPLIED IN WRITING TO THE CORINTHIANS AS WELL.

1. God has appointed several different functions in the church - **1 Cor. 12:28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.**

2. The rhetorical questions then asked by Paul imply that not all members have the same function - **1 Cor. 12:29-30 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?**

C. OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS IMPLY THE SAME.

1. James, in his warning about becoming teachers - **James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

2. Peter, in his exhortation to be good stewards of the "manifold" grace of God - **1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen**

D. FAILURE TO APPRECIATE THIS POINT CAN BE DETRIMENTAL.

1. Detrimental to individual members

a. When members are led to believe that all Christians are to be alike, serving in the same way, it encourages some Christians to be what they are not, nor ever can be.

b. This leads to failure in their attempts to serve, which in turn can lead to discouragement and apathy.

2. Detrimental to the function of the body itself.

a. The body of Christ is designed by God to accomplish several functions (e.g., evangelism, edification, benevolence)

b. But when people are expected to do the same thing, other important functions go undone.

This leads us to the final point I wish to make about diversity of function in the body of Christ...

III. EVERY FUNCTION IS CRUCIAL TO THE OPERATION OF THE BODY

A. NO ONE CAN SAY THAT THEY OR THEIR ROLES ARE NOT IMPORTANT...

1. As Paul illustrated in **1 Cor. 12:15-20 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear**

should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

2. There is no place for low self-esteem among members of the body of Christ!

B. NO ONE CAN SAY THAT WHAT OTHERS DO IS NOT IMPORTANT.

1. As Paul illustrated in **1 Co 12:21-22** **And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.**

2. There is no place for an arrogant independence among members of the body of Christ!

C. THIS PLACES SEVERAL CHALLENGES BEFORE US.

1. First, to be aware of the different ways that members can serve in the body.

2. Second, to encourage members to develop those functions that best suit their abilities and opportunities to serve.

3. Third, to provide direction and opportunity for those willing and prepared to serve in their different functions.

CONCLUSION

1. I plan to offer suggestions on how we might meet these challenges in future lessons.

2. For now, though, I hope we appreciate more fully the points made in this lesson.

a. The body of Christ has many members

b. Not all members have the same function

c. Every function is crucial to the operation of the body

3. In closing this lesson, let me offer this quote from Flavil Yeakley, taken from his book, **"WHY CHURCHES GROW"**, which confirms the points I have been making.

"Some congregations have been built around one particular kind of ministry or program. In those congregations, the only members who are really involved are those taking part in that one special program. But the church is a body. A body must have diversity if it is to survive. Evangelism, edification, benevolence, and

worship are functions required of every local congregation. Successful congregational development requires a balanced program involving many areas of activity." (p. 114)