

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■
Bible Reading ■ Giving Time, Talents
& Resources ■ Spiritual Friendships ■
Service In & Beyond the Church

August 29, 2021

Day 1: I Corinthians 12:12-13

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Paul is making the claim that even though members of the church come from many different ethnic groups and nationalities they are still one body. He compares the church to a human body to help the Corinthians understand the body of Christ - the Church. He not only makes no distinction between ethnic groups but also no distinction between a person's social status.

Question: Why do you think Paul compared the church to a body? Why not a garden or a band or an army?

Challenge: Can you think of another image to describe the church?

Scripture: Romans 12:1-21

Day 2: I Corinthians 12:14-16

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body' that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Paul continues to make his point in what seems to be a humorous fashion. This verse is about belonging and how the different parts cannot claim they are not part of the body. Just as the body needs its parts to function well, so does the church need its various parts to function well. He is preparing us for what follows in the 12th chapter when he talks about the gifts of the Spirit.

Question: What does it take to be a member of a Christian congregation?

Challenge: Try eating with just one hand for a meal. How was it?

Scripture: Colossians 3:1-17

Day 3: I Corinthians 12:17-19

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

Paul, in this verse, is talking about functions not belonging. All the various parts are there to function well and the diversity of parts are there because it takes a number of different parts doing different functions so that the body will be whole. Diversity in the human body is present to make the body whole. Diversity in the church needs to be present for us to be whole. If the body had little or no diversity then it would look more like an amoeba than what we think of as a real body.

Question: How would you define diversity in today's church?

Challenge: Do some research to see how many parts of the body there really are.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:20-4:9

Day 4: I Corinthians 12:24-26

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Paul goes on to remind us that all the parts of our body are important and one member is not inferior to another. If you break your little toe the entire body hurts. We may be given a number of parts in pairs but if one part of the pair is gone we do not function well. Paul reminds us that it is God who arranged the parts (gave Spiritual gifts to individuals) so we ought not to say one is more important than the other or that we do not need a part. If God has arranged it then we ought to just use it and not gripe.

Question: What do you think Paul means by an inferior member?

Challenge: What do you think Paul means by dissension in the body? What is it called when one part fights against another in our body?

Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-21

Day 5: I Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Paul tells the Corinthian church that they are the body of Christ and all are members of that body. Though he doesn't state it specifically in this verse, I can hear Paul saying, "act like the body of Christ and play your part. Don't worry about how much praise you might get or how little. God wants us to be faithful not successful."

Question: Is Paul referring to the congregation in Corinth or all the churches?

Challenge: What do you see as your part in this body of Christ?

Scripture: Galatians 3:23-4:4

Day 6: I Corinthians 12:28

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

God has given to the church life giving gifts. They are not all the same but all have the same honor attached to them as we faithfully use the gifts God has given to us. Honor comes from use, not possession. After Paul has laid out the gifts that the Corinthians are striving for he ends with the words, "And I will show you a still more excellent way." Love is more powerful and life giving than any of the above mentioned Spiritual gifts.

Question: Why do you think the order (apostles, prophets, and teachers) is important?

Challenge: If you had to guess, what do you think your Spiritual gifts are?

Scripture: I Corinthians 13