

session 12 study guide

the church

message

How do you view “church”? Is it something you look forward to? Something you dread? Do you see yourself as an active participant or as a shadow in the pew? Do you believe that you have a role to play in your body of believers? What if I told you that your church—your youth group—could not be what God intended it to be without you in it . . . that you have something valuable and vital to add to it. Something only *you* can provide. Would you honestly be able to say that you are doing your part?

In the following passage, Paul is writing to the believers in Corinth. Prior to his arrival, Corinth had been a city of loose morals and shady characters. But in a display of God’s power to use the lowliest of things to bring glory to Himself, the church in Corinth became one of the largest churches in the area. However, a few years later, Paul received word that the Corinthians had fallen back into some of their old habits. First Corinthians is Paul’s letter to try to get them back on track, and these verses in particular examine the importance of each person’s role in the Body of Christ.

As you read this passage, keep the following questions in mind: (1) What does the “body” represent in this passage? (2) What happens if one of the parts of the body doesn’t do its job?

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 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.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 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. 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. 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? But in

fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

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!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

dig

1. Why is the Church called "the body of Christ"?

2. In the analogy in the passage, what happens to a part if it decides it doesn't want to be a member of the body anymore? What are the consequences for the body as a whole?

3. How are the parts related to each other?

4. What comfort can we gain from the fact that God “has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be” (v. 18)?

5. What does Paul say about the importance and treatment of various body parts (see vv. 22-24)? How does this relate to the Church?

6. How is the body strengthened by being made up of different parts?

apply

1. Think about your church. List all the roles—paid or volunteer—that people play at your church.

2. There are a number of passages in the Bible that discuss spiritual gifts. Look up the following and create a partial list of some of the spiritual gifts mentioned in these passages.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30

Romans 12:4-8

1 Corinthians 12:4-10

3. Think about your own gifts and talents—things that you are naturally good at or naturally drawn to. What spiritual gifts do you believe you have? (Note: Sometimes it can be difficult to ascribe spiritual gifts to yourself. If you and your group feel comfortable, ask others to suggest the spiritual gifts they see exhibited in you.)

4. It can be tempting to view this passage as just a feel-good, everyone-is-special passage. But it is more than that. Not only is Paul stating that every role in the Body of Christ is of value, but he is also saying that every role is essential. There is no room for passivity. The eye must see; the ear must hear. Now read Matthew 25:14-30. Who does the master reward in this story? Why?

5. Explain the analogy between the servants and the talents and us and our spiritual gifts. What is the lesson?

6. Are you actively fulfilling your role in the youth group? In your church? In the Body of Christ?
In what ways?

reflect

1. Describe your views of church. Is it something you enjoy? Something you value?

2. What is the purpose of church?

3. How do people discover what spirituals gifts they have?

4. If you see yourself as a passive member of the Body, what is keeping you from getting involved?

5. Based on this Scripture passage in 1 Corinthians, what is the result—for you personally and for the Church as a whole—if you just sit on the sidelines and not participate?

6. Where or in what ways do you feel called to be involved as an active member of the Body of Christ?

meditation



Just as each of us has one body with many members,
and these members do not all have the same function,
so in Christ we who are many form one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.

ROMANS 12:4-5