

Be Members of One Another
Romans 12:3-6a

When I was David's age I spent hours putting together model planes and ships. I would save my money, go to the store and browse all the models on the shelf, make a selection, go home and begin the process of transforming all those parts into the picture that was on the box.

All the parts were fixed to a plastic frame designed to keep them from breaking. If there was only two connecting points to the frame the piece could be carefully twisted to separate it from the frame. If there were more than two connecting points a sharp knife was necessary to slice the part from the frame. With the dexterity of a surgeon, a careful stroke of the knife was necessary so as not to cut the piece needed and to avoid marking up the card table on which the operation was being performed. A little dab of glue was then applied and the piece joined at the proper location.

Every part was necessary if you wanted it to look like the picture on the box.

As I was shaving this week I thought about the razor I was using. Take away the handle and it becomes difficult to shave with just the razor cartridge. What if you had a handle but didn't have the cartridge? Or what if you had the handle and cartridge but no blades or what if there was a handle and blades but no cartridge to hold the blades?

How about your car?
Or the toaster?
Or the computer?
Or a flashlight?

Have you ever purchased an item with some assembly required only to find in the process that a piece was missing? You may remember the frustration you felt.

From simple items to the most complex ones each designer has built that item in such a way that all the components are necessary for it to function properly.

Now you may not think that heated seats in your car are necessary, in July, in Florida, but that luxury becomes a necessity in January, even in Florida when temperatures drop.

Paul has spent 11 chapters in his letter to the Romans explaining man's condition. He is a great sinner deserving a great judgment. However, man doesn't have to remain in that lost, condemned condition because there is a great God who has a great love for mankind. His great love motivated Him to send His great Son as a great Savior to offer us a great salvation with a great inheritance.

We are sinners, enemies with God who deserve death. God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still His enemies He sent His Son to die for us so that by admission of our sin and need of a Savior through faith we can be forgiven and receive eternal life.

Chapter 12 is a transition from doctrine to the practical response of what happens once we are saved. We not only enter into a new relationship with God we also enter into a new relationship with others. Chapter 12 is a big picture overview of those relationships and the change that should take place in the person of faith.

The "therefore" that opens verse 1 calls us to consider that since we are in a new relationship with God because of His mercy we are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that is both holy and pleasing to Him. Such daily devotion is considered an act of worship that transforms us, according to verse 2, from attraction to the world because our mind has been renewed to discern what pleases God – obedience to His will and Word. Paul then lays out what this change looks like. It's our topic for today.

Turn to Romans 12:3-6a. I've expanded the passage a bit to encompass more of the context and content of what I want to discuss with you today and to prompt our discussion during Adult Impact. As we launch into the one another series, our topic for today is to consider that we are members of one another and what that looks like. Today and this entire series is all about relationships.

If you get only one thing out of today's message it is this important point: *The degree or depth of our relationship with God WILL determine the degree or depth of our relationship with one another in the body of Christ.* All the one another passages hinge on our relationship with God. Or we could say it this way: how we treat others hinges on our relationship with God.

If I am not loving or compassionate toward, or forgiving of, or praying or caring for, or submitting or kind to, or patient with and the list goes on, then I need only look at my relationship with the Lord as the underlying reason for not obeying the one another commands.

Now if there is a second point I want to convey today and throughout this series it would be this: *The one another passages are not suggestions to consider but commands to obey.* It's not optional either in the command given or to whom it is given. I can't willfully choose to dismiss one particular command and neither can I willfully choose those to whom I will exercise a command. I'll forgive this person but not that person. I'll be kind to this person but not that person.

Let's repeat that key idea: *The degree or depth of our relationship with God WILL determine the degree or depth of our relationship with one another in the body of Christ. The one another passages are not suggestions to consider but commands to obey.*

We are to be members of one another.

I. MEMBERSHIP INTO THE BODY

People have a variety of ideas about membership into the body of Christ.

Some think if you're a card carrying member of a church or denomination then you're a member of the body.

Others think that because you're parents are members that entitles you to membership.

Still others view good deeds or generosity to the needy as essential components for membership.

The truth is there is only one requirement that guarantees membership. Paul very clearly spells out how membership is obtained. It is a very simple requirement. Notice from verse 5 how admittance into this membership is obtained.

A. Admittance into Membership– v. 5

Did you catch it? It's two words at the beginning of the verse – “in Christ”. Admittance into the body of Christ comes through salvation. You must be in Christ. Anything else may be a nice, feel good gesture, but they fall far short of the requirement to become part of the body of Christ.

I have a membership to a local gym. Because I pay dues to that gym I am given a key fob that when waved over the access pad opens the door and grants me certain rights and privileges. I can use any of the equipment in the gym any day of the week, any time of the day, for as many times as I want. Membership gives me unlimited admittance.

You may have a membership to some other organization that also gives you certain privileges that are not available to others who are not members. Those privileges come at a cost and generally are renewed annually or semi-annually. Some memberships are guaranteed for a life time. You pay a fee and you become a member for as long as you are alive. I have a lifetime membership to the NRA. The fee was paid once.

Membership into the body of Christ was paid once, by Christ Himself and is applied to those who believe on Him as Savior.

Now just like benefits we receive with a membership, so there are benefits to membership in Christ.

I Corinthians 1:4 – in Christ we receive grace

Romans 3:24 – in Christ we have redemption

Ephesians 4:32 – in Christ we have forgiveness of sin

Galatians 2:7 – in Christ we are justified

Romans 8:1 – in Christ there is no condemnation

Romans 6:23 – in Christ we have eternal life

II Corinthians 5:17 – in Christ we are a new creation

Philippians 4:19 – in Christ God supplies all our needs

Ephesians 1:3 – in Christ we have every spiritual blessing of heaven

Colossians 1:28 – in Christ we will be presented to God perfect

Romans 8:32 – in Christ we cannot be separated from God's love

John 15:7 – in Christ we have prayer answered

As individual members of the body of Christ we have these as benefits. We share these benefits with everyone who is part of the body of Christ. He paid for our admittance, our membership through His shed blood and we receive it by faith. You cannot be admitted into the body of Christ without faith in Christ.

Are you a member of the body of Christ?

If so, then consider the arrangement of members.

B. The Arrangement of Membership – vs. 4-5

The world we live in, indeed the universe we live in is remarkably complex. Science continues to unravel new truth about this amazing universe, which in turn leads them to ask additional questions. For a long time Scientists believed that a

single cell organism was very simple. But they have discovered that it's not simple at all, but something very complex. The person who is willing to look at creation through the lens of a Creator/Designer God will conclude as did the Psalmist centuries ago that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are not the compilation of random cells coming together forged out of the primordial soup of evolution. Every part of the body is necessary and unique and complex and relies on the other parts to function.

My twin brother has taught anatomy and physiology at both the High school and College levels for 35 years. The muscular and skeletal designs alone are beyond incredible how they work together to provide substance, structure, support, protection, and movement. Every bone, every muscle, every tendon and ligament has a function, a purpose for which God designed it. When we look at the cellular level and consider the design that is coded into each cell or even each DNA strand so that in development there is not some random process that occurs, but something that makes me unique and unlike anyone or anything else. I stand before you as a form, one body, but underneath we can't see the billions of cells ceaselessly working together.

Dr. Paul Brand provides tremendous insight into the complexities of the human body.

“Chemically my cells are almost alike, but visually and functionally they are as different as the animals in a zoo. Red blood cells, discs resembling Lifesaver candies, voyage through my blood loaded with oxygen to feed the other cells. Muscle cells, which absorb so much of that nourishment, are sleek and supple, full of coiled energy. Cartilage cells with shiny black nuclei look like bunches of black-eyed peas glued tightly together for strength. Fat cells seem lazy and leaden, like bulging white plastic garbage bags jammed together. Bone cells live in rigid structures that exude strength. Cut in cross section, bones resemble tree rings, overlapping strength with strength, offering

impliability and sturdiness. In contrast, skin cells form undulating patterns of softness and texture that rise and dip, giving shape and beauty to our bodies. They curve and jut at unpredictable angles so that every person's fingerprint – not to mention his or her face – is unique.

The king of cells is the nerve cell. It has an aura of wisdom and complexity about it. Spider-like, it branches out and unities the body with a computer network of dazzling sophistication. Its axons, "wires" carrying distant messages to and from the human brain, can reach a yard in length.

My body employs a bewildering zoo of cells, none of which individually resembles the larger body. Just so, Christ's Body comprises an unlikely assortment of humans. Unlikely is precisely the right word, for we are decidedly unlike one another and the One we follow.

The body of Christ, like our own bodies, is composed of individual, unlike cells that are knit together to form one Body. He is the whole thing, and the joy of the Body increases as individual cells realize they can be diverse without becoming isolated outposts."

Folks, just as the physical body has been arranged by our Creator, so the spiritual body, the body of Christ is arranged by the One who brought us into this unique relationship that we call the body of Christ. Any single part does not make or look like the body. It takes all the parts to form the body. The arrangement of the body is by His design. And within that body every part not only has a unique design, it also has a unique function. Paul describes it like this: each member belongs to all the others. We fit together for strength, support and movement. And God is the one who has arranged us in the body for a specific function, a specific purpose. That purpose is for the common good of the body, for the express purpose of benefitting others in the body.
I Corinthians 12:7-27

I hope you realize the important part you have in the body of Christ. Every one of you is necessary for this body of believers as part of Fellowship Bible Church located at 2500 Hartland Road to function for the benefit of one another.

Because we are in a relationship with Christ, we are therefore in a relationship with those who are also in Christ. We are members of one another.

To ignore it is to ignore a command.

To ignore it is to abandon others for whom you have a responsibility.

To ignore it is to undermine the purpose for which you were placed in the body of Christ, to question the wisdom of God who designed you for a specific role within the body.

To ignore it is to call unimportant the role God has for you in the body.

To ignore it is to disrupt unity in the body.

As we learned from Ephesians 4:16 last week that "From Him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Just like membership in some organizations requires its members to perform certain duties, so every member in the body of Christ has work to do.

Membership into the body is through admittance by the blood of Christ. Once admitted we are uniquely arranged as God sees fit for the benefit of the body.

Let's consider briefly the mechanics of the body of which there are three identified.

II. THE MECHANICS OF THE BODY – vs. 3-6a

The first body mechanics, and by that I mean the how not the what, the first is humility.

A. The Mechanics of Humility – v. 3

If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times, there is no "I" in team.

Paul makes it abundantly clear that we are to have a proper view of who we are in relation to the body of Christ. He was crystal clear when he wrote to the church in Corinth about how they were behaving in relation to their spiritual gifts.

He had to remind them that God is the one who gifts a person to minister within the body.

He had to remind them that we don't get to choose our spiritual gift, it's been chosen for us.

He had to remind them that every gift in the body of Christ is important and that they weren't to flaunt their gift or pursue a showier gift.

Just as membership into the body of Christ requires salvation found only in Christ, so membership in the body of Christ requires a sober assessment.

"Do not think too highly" literally means to think over or in other words, have too high a valuation of who you are. We should never think that we are God's gift to the body, that it just couldn't function without me.

In the same vein it not only is wrong to have too high an opinion about your value in the body of Christ, it is also wrong to belittle someone else's ministry in the body as being less important.

We are to exhibit humility as we exercise our role in the body of Christ. That's why Paul illustrated to the Corinthians the absurdity in thinking that an eye didn't need the hand or that the head didn't need the foot. We must have a correct estimation of ourselves in relationship to the whole body.

That's one problem. But another problem also exists and that is those who think too little of their position in the body. They consider themselves and their role as being of little importance in the body. That person may then feel their ministry isn't important or because it isn't noticed they may just simply decide not to do their part. We may decide

not to use that gift out of jealousy or resentment, or embarrassment or even because we just don't care.

Somewhat related to that is a third problem and that is when someone claims a gift or ministry they don't have, especially one that seems important or has more of the spotlight. It's dishonest and minimizes God's sovereignty in placing the right person in the right ministry in the body.

God has given each person in the body a part, a ministry as His overall plan to benefit one another. We must exhibit humility.

B. The Mechanics of Individuality – vs. 4-5

It speaks to a specific role in the body. There are a couple of words within the passage that remind us of individuality – words like "each" and "many" and "each member". They remind us that while we are one body, we are unique members within that body. We don't lose our identity, especially when there are others who may function in a very similar role to ours.

C. The Mechanics of Harmony

That said, we must understand that even though we are individuals within the body each with a unique function, the body is not made up of one individual or one type of function. Paul again reminds us that we form one body. We are to work together. There are to be no loners, no mavericks in ministry. We aren't to work alone, but in cooperation, in harmony with the other members of the body, some with similar ministry responsibilities or gifts, others which may not seem to fit well together can and do.

My eye is different in form and function to my hand yet both need to work together if I'm going to pick up the donut and get it to my mouth.

My foot does not at all look like an ear, but both need to work together when I hear the train whistle and I'm standing on the tracks.

Humility, individuality and harmony are all a part of the mechanics of the body.

Let me close with a final thought about being members of one another by speaking to the ministry of the body.

III. THE MINISTRY OF THE BODY – v. 5

I want to underscore the word “belongs” in verse 5. There is an overarching principle that implies relationship with and service to each other. The questions you will discuss in the next hour are designed to help you wrestle with your role, responsibility, commitment, and faithfulness in service to others in the body of Christ.

You will define and discuss what it means to be a member of the body of Christ.

What does being a part of the body of Christ mean to you personally?

How have you been built up by the body of Christ? Why is unity so important for the body of Christ to function properly?

How does our church specifically exhibit this characteristic?

How does this aid spiritual growth?

How does our church encourage the use of spiritual gifts?

How does our church hinder the use of spiritual gifts?

How are you contributing to the body of Christ?

John MacArthur writes rather pointedly “This passage destroys the notion that you can be fully committed to Christ and remain inactive in His service.”

When you boil it all down, we can conclude the following: If you love Him – you will obey Him. If you obey Him – you will serve Him. If you aren’t sure where you fit into the body, ask the Lord where He has placed you and then become engaged in the body.

Each of us in the body of Christ is purposefully and perfectly been placed there by the Lord to be of benefit to others in the body as members of one another. We are His hands and His feet in ministry.

After WWII, a group of German students volunteered to help rebuild an English cathedral that had been severely damaged by German bombs. As work progressed, they became concerned about a large statue of Jesus, whose arms were outstretched and beneath which was the inscription: “Come unto Me.” They had particular difficulty trying to restore the hands, which had been completely destroyed. After much discussion, they decided to let the hands remain missing and changed the inscription to: “Christ has no hands but ours.”

Christ has placed us in the world to function as His body, members of one another. Through how we interact and minister to one another the watching world will either be drawn to or repelled by what they see.

Let me end with how I started: *The degree or depth of our relationship with God WILL determine the degree or depth of our relationship with one another in the body of Christ.*

Have you entered the body of Christ through salvation?

Are you engaged with others in the body of Christ doing what God designed you to do?

How are you contributing to the body as a member?