

Gathering pt3

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Gathering / Ephesians 1:15–23; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26

Here is the church, here is the steeple...

Can you finish that little rhyme?

Growing up in a more traditional church we recited that all the time. And we heard constantly that we needed to “behave” when we were at “church.” We could not run. Needed to talk softly. Sit still. No hats. Dress nice. The list goes on and many of you could add to it...

So imagine my surprise when I got to college to learn to be a “pastor” and one of the first things they started telling us was that the church wasn’t a building, but something else. That’s a hard switch for an 18 year old kid. Then they had the audacity to use the Bible to prove it.

When we talk about the church and that word ekklesia keeps coming up- gathered ones- all of a sudden the idea of what a church is takes on a whole new meaning. It becomes less about the specialness of a place, and more about the uniqueness of a people. Which makes sense if you look at the totality of Scripture as God loves to call out His unique people for Himself.

So this morning, I want to show you in scripture how a church comes together- what happens when the church is a people and not a building.

So let me start by showing you where the idea of the Church as a Body of believers takes root in scripture. Turn with me to [Ephesians 1:15-23](#).

This passage is all about Jesus- who as we have established is the Head of the church and the reason it exists- and the passage is about saying who Jesus is and what He has done. Now look at the last 2 verses...

“...the church...which is His Body...”

It is here that Paul gives the church a name that sticks to this day. The Church is the Body of Christ. And He is the Head. Thinking about last week, we know that the Church cannot be the Church without Jesus, and here we have a similar analogy- the body can live without a finger or a hand or a limb...but it cannot live without a head...it dies.

So here Paul connects the church to Jesus as the head is connected to the body, but what makes up this body? Paul expands on this in a different letter using the same language, but giving us a fuller picture.

Turn with me to [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#).

In this passage Paul begins to unpack what makes up the church- members- people who are committed to Jesus and to the local body of believers.

And there are some things Paul says here that we need to hear and embrace to understand what this Body- this church- is to be like

First, we are united as a single body and the Spirit is the one who does the uniting- v12b-14-

We do not surrender our uniqueness when we become a part of the Body (more on that in a minute, but we surrender our independence, for an interdependence) We are connected, united, by the Spirit no matter where we came from and we cannot do it on our own! (v14) (Gospel presentation here)

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

the analogy of the body is an apt metaphor of the reality that the church is the body of Christ constituted by the Spirit (12:27). Believers are immersed by/in one Spirit into one body (12:13). Believers are, in fact, the body of Christ (12:27). This is not Paul's first use of "body" language in the letter to describe the corporate realities of believers in relation to Christ, to other believers, and to others

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

God has arranged the body as he pleased (12:18), and he has combined the parts of the body for the purpose of unity and mutual concern of members of the body for one another

Second, everyone is not the same in the Body and that is OK! v15-17

We all have our gifts and talents and roles and we aren't to spend our time wishing we had a different one. We are to seek to be the best we can be in our role! (early days when Ron saw the finances...) The Church would not function well if it were a bunch of people who were all alike...in fact it would fail miserably. The strength of the Body is in its diversity!

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

There is no insignificant, unimportant, or inconsequential member of the body. Garland explains, "The failure of one little valve can shut down the whole bodily system. **The implication is that there is no unimportant gift or person in the body of Christ.**"

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

If they were all one part, where would the body be?" In other words, if the whole body were only one part, then not only are other vital functions missing, there is no body at all, only a body part. Garland suggests that the "application may or not have been obvious to the

Corinthians. A church full of only glossolalists would be no less freakish.”

Third, God arranges the people in a church intentionally! v 18-20

God brings to a church people they need. He arranges a Body to be most effective in their context for His glory. When we need people, God provides them (Anthony and Linda stepping in to Feed His Sheep)

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

Paul is careful to stress that God placed “each one” of the members in the body “just as he wanted them to be.” Each member of the body has its own function according to God’s design. *The emphasis on “each one” and the placement of the members in the body according to God’s pleasure*

Fourth, no matter our evaluation of their necessity or their worthiness EVERY person in a church has a place and a way to serve. - v21-24a-

We don’t devalue another person because we think we, or our role, are superior to theirs. That’s not only not our place, but it is offensive to God. People are in the church for a reason and when they have a calling, we are not to judge their “worthiness” to assume that calling. We should seek to encourage one another on to do the good works Jesus has called us to do- and not to force people into pigeon holes defined by others. And not assess people according to worldly standards of “worthiness” deeming them fit or unfit to be parts of the Body based on some arbitrary evaluation. *(Call back to Paul’s conversation about the Lord’s Supper earlier in the book and the treatment of the poor)*

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

the main consideration is the need that members of the body have for one another with an emphasis on the weaker, less honorable, and unpresentable members of the body. The shameful treatment of the poor at the Lord's Supper by the more distinguished and honorable members of the church

The members of the Body need one another! We need each person in here because they contribute to the church- whether they know it or now.

And- those who some may view as "weaker" - newer to the faith, struggling with sin, not in a position to serve due to other circumstances- they are **INDISPENSABLE** because they are contributing in ways that the Lord sees and we may not perceive until later! In fact, God may give them greater honor because of their perceived low condition!

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

Third, and relatedly, God gives greater honor to the members that lack it according to his design (12:24b). God has combined, or "mixed together," the members of the body for this very purpose. This is essentially a restatement of 12:18, that God put the members in the body as he pleased

Fifth, this distribution of roles should not lead to division. -v24b-26

When jealousy and dissension and backbiting settle into a church God is not pleased. When someone is called to a ministry it may mean part of what I am doing is diminished or I have to share in the work. Praise God! The importance of your place in the Body is not defined by your role or title, it is defined by your obedience.

1 Corinthians (3) One Body, Many Members (12:12–31)

Here, however, Paul adds a clarifying purpose statement concerning the divine blending of the body: “so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (12:25). Collins notes that the compound purpose clause emphasizes what it means for there to be no division in the body. **“In place of division there should exist mutual concern of the members for one another.”**²⁷¹ **The unity of the church is one of the primary themes of the letter**

When we seek to do otherwise, we are contributing to separating the Body from the Head. You are damaging the Church. *And before you say, well then I should leave, I would say no you should repent. Because all your departure is going to do is to deprive the Body of someone God has sent to serve.* Instead, we should seek to be reconciled and to be mended, so we can serve the Lord together- as His people- the Church.

Which is why Paul ends this section saying “that the member should have the same care for one another.” - If you are struggling to care for someone in the church- not to help them but to show them love, mercy, grace, compassion, etc then the questions needs to be asked- What is wrong with you? Why are you ignoring the explicit command of God to love those in the Body?

And finally, Paul concludes with vs 26- we all suffer and are honored together. We hurt together and we celebrate together. We are a Body and we are at our strongest when we are united together in love for the sake of Jesus.