

EVERYDAY CHURCH: Transforming Lives in Communityⁱ
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

WELCOME:

Good morning, Trinity! It is always so good to see you and worship with you. And I want to say a special welcome to our guests with us this morning. We are thrilled you have joined us today.

We love to connect with guests. You can help us know about your time with us today in a couple of different ways. You can text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword to that number, you will be sent a link back that is safe to click on. It will take you to a short form. When you fill out and submit that form, it notifies us and we look forward to the opportunity to connect with you.

Or you can stop by Guest Connect located in the main lobby just outside the worship center. We have a team of people that would love to meet you and give you a small gift as a token of thanks for you being here with us today. Even if you text in, stop by Guest Connect and pick up your gift. We are so glad you are here today.

THANKSGIVING BOXES:

I want to also say a huge THANK YOU, Church Family, for taking us up on the challenge to distribute 200 Thanksgiving boxes! Each box will feed a family up to 6. So, by taking 200 boxes, our church is providing a Thanksgiving meal for 1,200 people! It's obvious that this church loves its community.

Now, by way of reminder, we are asking that if you picked up a box that you return it with the items listed on the flyer by this Wednesday, November 20. When you return the box, be sure to check off your name on the sign-up sheet. Our missions team will go through the boxes and send text message reminders about returning boxes. So, if your name is not checked off, you'll get a loving reminder from our Missions Minister, Brittany.

We are also working with a donor to supply turkeys. It is our plan to purchase additional turkeys that are not donated to be able to provide a turkey with every box! So, we want to be sure to match up the total number of boxes with number of turkeys needed. All that to say that getting the boxes in by Wednesday helps us accomplish that.

And mark your calendar for Sunday, November 24 beginning at 2pm. We need volunteers to help with distributing the boxes. We will need to make sure boxes are filled and moved outside for distribution. We will start distributing the boxes at 4pm. Last year was a blast, and I believe we finished in an hour or so, even in the rain! I just love serving alongside you. You guys are an awesome church!

SERIES INTRODUCTION:

Today we are in part three of a teaching series we've called, "Everyday Church: Refocusing on the Vision of The Church." We've been looking at the example of the first church and how the call on our lives is really all about leveraging the everyday of our lives. We talked about how prayer was foundational and how it fueled the launch of the Church. We discussed the importance of seeing corporate worship services as halftime, not gametime. We talked about how The Church is to be driven by a clear and biblical vision. And last week we zoomed in on the topic of worship and the role that corporate and private worship plays in being an everyday church.

Today, we are looking at the topic of Biblical community. An everyday church is a church that transforms lives. And the vehicle by which The Lord does that is in community.

So, I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to the letter of 1 Corinthians. We are going to be in chapter 12 this morning. Let me set the stage for our study this morning.

BACKGROUND TEACHING:ⁱⁱ

Paul planted the church in Corinth, and he spent a significant amount of time ministering in and through this church. And when he moved on to launch other churches in other cities, Paul wrote letters back and forth to the Corinthians.

And it is important to note that 1 Corinthians is not the first letter he wrote to this church. More than likely, there were a few letters written between Paul and the leaders in Corinth. And the exchange of letters, plus word Paul received from one of the members, revealed that the church was dealing with a ton of issues. You know, 1 Corinthians makes any Pastor feel normal. Every church has issues. Right? Because every church is made up of imperfect people.

And boy was there a laundry list of challenging issues the church in Corinth was trying to manage. They were dealing with divisions, self-promotion,

rampant immorality, who should be leaders in the church, and the abuse of spiritual gifts. Just a few issues, huh?

And as Paul was writing to provide Biblical guidance to the leadership of the church, he talks about the powerful aspect of a Biblical community. It was vitally important for the Corinthians to realize the power and purpose of living in community with one another. In fact, it would prove to be transformational for the people and their pursuit to be growing disciples of Jesus.

So, in chapter 12, Paul uses the brilliant illustration of the human body and relate that to The Church being the Body of Christ. And when believers live in Biblical community, they are able to be a living testimony to one another, aid in the spiritual development of one another, and accomplish a work of God together. And that's where we pick up our study this morning.

MESSAGE:

I want to examine three aspects to Biblical community. And I use the term "Biblical" to describe community on purpose. Because there are many different communities. In public discourse we hear about racial communities, various identity communities, and even local communities. But within the Church, those communities give way to a Biblical community. And a Biblical community is larger than one's affinity to anything else. And for the purpose of this message, I'm not wanting to address community in general. As a church, we need to focus on the Biblical components to a community called to make disciples.

And let me say right off the bat, community in the Church is not the end game. In other words, fellowshiping with one another, although very important, is not the ultimate goal. Remember, the goal, the task, given to us by Jesus is to make disciples. Now, community is the vehicle by which we accomplish that goal. Again, another reason to use the term "Biblical" to describe community.

The best way we, at Trinity, develop Biblical community is through our Bible Study Groups. And we call them Bible Study Groups (BSGs) for a reason. In our groups, in our community, the Bible is central. We do not have book clubs, you understand. I'm not saying those are bad things to be a part of, but when it comes the Biblical community within the church, we study one Book, the Bible.

So, when we talk about Biblical community, we are talking about community being the vehicle by which we make disciples of Jesus. That's the target.

Because the truth is that while there are many great books out there, even Christian books, the only book that has the power to transform is the Bible. Which is why one of our strategy points is transforming lives in community. So, with that said, what are the three aspects to Biblical community? Well, let's first look at, ...

1) The Dynamics.

When I say "dynamics" I'm referring to the makeup of Biblical community. Paul makes reference to a couple of dynamics that make up a Biblical community. Look with me at verses 12 through 14 of 1 Corinthians 12. Paul says...

¹²For 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. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

The two different dynamics Paul refers to in a Biblical community is diversity and unity. Let's first examine the dynamic of...

A) Diversity.

Again, the illustration of the human body here is brilliant. There are many members, parts, to our personal body. The different members look different, act different, and function different. The concept that Paul is driving at is the diversity of the people that made up the Corinthian church.

He goes on to give a couple specific examples of diversity in the Corinthian church. In verse 13 he mentions racial diversity. He says there are Jews and there are Greeks living in community with one another. He also says there is socioeconomic diversity. He says slaves, literally translated servants, and the free. In the first century world, these drastic differences could in no way live in community with one another.

Think about it for a second. You had the Jews that would go all the way around Samaria so that they wouldn't come into contact with a Samaritan. The Jews treated the Gentiles with a certain disdain, and vice versa. The wealthy promoted themselves and treated everyone else as lowly. And these distinctions were evident in the Church in Corinth, hence the reason Paul is addressing the wrong approach.

But throughout the New Testament the concept of diversity in community is a key defining characteristic in God's Church. In Acts, Peter has dinner with a Gentile. Paul and Barnabas ministered to the Gentiles in Antioch. In Ephesians we see the church presented as a diverse people. Diversity demonstrates the beauty of God. A Biblical community is one that is diverse. And an everyday church is one that recognizes and celebrates the diversity with the church.

You know, to me one of the devastating things to see are churches with certain ethnic distinctions. Now, I understand culture and even language barriers and the need for multiple types of churches. But if we continue to draw lines based on racial distinctions here and now, we're not going to like heaven much. I believe God's church is meant to be a microcosm of Heaven, a reflection of the glory of Heaven and the diversity of its citizens.

But in addition to the dynamic of diversity, there is...

B) Unity.

In verse 12 Paul says the many diverse members make up one body. And then again in verse 14 Paul says that the one body is made up of different parts. And the unity within the diversity hinges on verse 13. Paul says, "***13For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.***" Twice in one verse Paul says, "one Spirit. The unity amid the diversity is accomplished by nothing other than the Holy Spirit of God. It is God that brings diversity into unity while maintaining the diversity. Only God can do that.

The principle here meaning that **unity does not mean uniformity**. In an everyday church that enjoys Biblical community, we are unified by something much larger than politics, opinions, feelings, and life experiences. We are unified in The Holy Spirit.

Paul is saying that even though we are all different, we are all the same in that we all need saving, and we have been, by God's grace, baptized into one body of believers. And Paul does not have water baptism in mind when he says this. He is talking about the common immersion all believers have in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1 teaches that when we believe and trust Jesus as Lord, the Spirit immediately takes up residence in us. And in that way, we are baptized by the Spirit into one body.

Again, the illustration Paul uses here is the human body. Did you know that your body is made up of about 36 trillion cells?ⁱⁱⁱ And there are many different types of cells in your body. There are skin cells, muscle cells, nerve cells, blood cells, bone cells, stems cells, and in my case, there are a bunch of fat cells.^{iv} But even though there are different types of cells, they all share something in common. Within each of the cells that make up our body is a nucleus. And in that nucleus is DNA.^v And the DNA of each cell gives instructions as to how that cell is to operate. And every cell, no matter which one of the different types of cells you have, shares that common root.

When it comes to the Church, the Body of Christ, we all share a common DNA. While we are many and different, we all carry the same set of instructions. We all share the indwelling of The Holy Spirit. And just like our human body, though it is diverse, it is unified.

So, we see the dynamics of a Biblical community. Secondly, Paul mentions...

2) The Dysfunction.

I already described to you that the church Paul is writing to is experiencing dysfunction. The body of Christ is designed to have different parts all functioning together in unity. But when there is a part of our body not functioning correctly there is dysfunction. Paul describes a few dysfunctions: devaluing, demeaning, and division. And these three things are like a cancer in the Body of Christ.

Let's first look at...

A) Devaluing.

In verses 14 through 20 reveals how the Corinthians were devaluing their role in the church. And what I want to point out is that it really is self-devaluing. Look at those verses with me.

Verse 14. ***14For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot should 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. 16And if the ear should 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. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of***

them, as he chose. ¹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The example Paul gives is of those that feel excluded from the body. As to say, “Because I don’t have a certain spiritual gift, I guess I’m not really part of the body of Christ.” That is a type of dysfunction that Paul is pointing to. Devaluing.

Do you see the self-devaluing? “Because I am not... I do not belong.” It is a giant mistake to see your role in the church as less than other roles. And I would go further to say that position is actually an attack on God because verse 18 says that God is the one that arranges the body of Christ, gifts each of us, for a purpose.

Now, it is easy for us to say, “Well, hands and eyes seem more important than kneecaps and toes.” Of course, we wouldn’t say it that way, it’s just the example Paul uses. We might say, “Well, I don’t have the gift of teaching, so my role in the church is less important than those that teach.” That’s the error Paul is warning against. If you are in Christ, and this is your church home, you are a member of the body of Christ and your role is vitally important.

ILLUSTRATION: Cathy’s gallbladder

We have recently discovered the truth of this in our family. My wife, Cathy, had a gallbladder attack a few weeks ago. It ultimately led to her needing to have it removed. Nobody ever thinks about their gallbladder until it doesn’t work well. And when it is removed, there is an adjustment that the body has to make.

Listen, if you are the gallbladder in our church body, we need you to function as the gallbladder! Every part of the body of Christ is absolutely vital. Don’t devalue your role because when you do, it leads to dysfunction in the church.

The second dysfunction Paul mentions is...

B) Demeaning.

You and I cannot devalue our role and we absolutely cannot demean another’s role. That leads to dysfunction. And that’s what Paul is getting at in verses 21 through 24. Let’s look at it together.

²¹The 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.”** ²²**On the contrary, the parts of the**

body that **seem to be weaker are indispensable,** ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it. Paul is saying, those of you that have, quote, “bigger roles” in the church cannot discount and demean those that have, quote, “lesser roles.” Every member has to view one another as vital. If not, there will be dysfunction.

And I love what Paul points out here. He says that the parts of the body of Christ that seem to be weaker are actually the ones that are indispensable. And those that serve in less honorable positions are actually treated with greater honor.

And you know, that’s the case in our human bodies as well. For example, think about the parts of our bodies that are not seen and the value they are assigned. Our hearts are not exposed and visible, but without a heart, they body does not live. Same with the lungs and the liver and our brains.

That’s what God is saying. The unseen in the church are in many ways the most valuable. I could not preach without prayer warriors. Our staff could not lead without volunteers that provide safety and security. So, the point being that we cannot devalue our role, nor can we demean any role that is not our role. That leads to dysfunction in the body of Christ.

A third dysfunction is...

C) Division.

Paul says very clearly in verse 25, ²⁵**that there may be no division in the body.** In other words, we are to protect the wholeness of our fellowship. We are to defend one another to the point that we are not dismembered. I’m convinced that the greatest way the enemy works within the Church, the body of Christ, is by promoting and creating division. We are to evict the devil and embrace and defend one another.

So, on the topic of Biblical community, we’ve looked at the dynamics and the dysfunction. Thirdly, finally, let’s look at...

3) The Design.

God has designed Biblical community to be for our good and our development as a disciple of Christ. And we see that played out in verses 25 through 27.

Paul says, ***“25that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”***

We, as a fellowship of believers, are to have a mutual respect and care for one another. Listen, we are a team. We're team Trinity! As we pursue being an everyday church, we will care for one another, suffer with one another, and rejoice with one another.

You know, that's the case with our physical bodies as well. Have you ever stubbed your toe in the middle of the night? It summons the reaction of your entire body. When you stub your toe, your arms and hands spring into action to hold and comfort your toe. Your face reacts by contorting itself. And your brain fires as it keeps your mouth from saying choice words. The whole body comes to the aid of your toe.

So it is with the body of Christ. When you encounter challenging days, your small group will surround you and support you and care for you. That's an extension of God's grace. Providing people that love, care, and help you grow in your faith.

Can I share an observation with you, though? When we do not work to become connected in the Church, we cannot expect The Church to be there for us. It's a two-way street. In other words, if we live life as a disconnected toe, the body doesn't respond to a disconnected toe! Yes, the Church is charged to care for one another, but if one as not made themselves a part of the one another, there's nothing there to care for. Does that make sense? That's why Paul says what he says in verse 27. You are part of the body of Christ. And as a result, we must be a part of it.

Again, the greatest way we can be this kind of church is by everyone belonging to a small group. If you are not connected in a small group, you are a dislocated body part. And I know there are some valid reasons people give for not being involved in a small group. I've heard them all. I don't have the time. We just have too much going on in our lives. I'm a private person. Other people are weird. I get it. But you're weird, too! I'm kidding. Kind of.

But no, seriously, you need to get plugged into a group. If there is not a group that fits you and your stage of life, we'll help you start one! It's really not rocket science. You can visit with Pastor Jeff today and let's start the conversation.

You know, I don't know how it happened, but Cathy and I's group has changed. We are now the old people in our group! And it hit us like a ton of bricks one night that we were meeting. All the people in our group are young couples that have little babies. And that dawned on us when they were talking about something they were dealing with and Cathy and I looked at each other and said, "We dealt with that 15 years ago!" The couples in our group have been married 3 to 5 years or even less! We're going on 23 years. Talk about feeling out of place.

We sometimes go out to eat after group on Sunday nights. We're putting tables together, we use all the highchairs in the restaurant, and it looks like a tornado went through the restaurant when we go to leave. But it's awesome! We wouldn't have it any other way.

And guess how we do our group. We each take turns leading. And Church Family, you'd be so proud of what God is doing in and through all these young couples here. They love Jesus. They are hungry for His Word. They think deeply and theologically. And this has done my soul good. The Church is in good hands for the future. God is raising up a generation that loves and follows Jesus! And you know what? I would miss out on that if I wasn't connected in our group. I'm telling you. If you are not in a small group, you're missing out on the best thing about Church.

CONCLUSION:

Well, I am way short on time. And there is so much more than I can say on this subject. But know the dynamics of the family that God has created in The Church. Let's do our part to avoid the dysfunctions. And let's rejoice in the design of Biblical community for our good.

If you're here today and you have not trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.....

Perhaps you need prayer...

[PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 1984. Craig Blomberg, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Press: Grand Rapids, 1994; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: 1 Corinthians 12: Diversity and Unity in Spiritual Gifts*, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-12/>; Skip Heitzig, "Expound: 1 Corinthians 12:11-13:13," message taught at Calvary Albuquerque, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIEWXGBn8Go>.

ⁱⁱ Developed from Blomberg, pages 21-23.

ⁱⁱⁱ Emily Cooke, "How many cells are in the human body? New study provides an answer," article published by Live Science, September 20, 2023, accessed online: <https://www.livescience.com/health/anatomy/how-many-cells-are-in-the-human-body-new-study-provides-an-answer#>.

^{iv} Beckman Coulter Life Sciences, "Cell Types," article published by Beckman Coulter, accessed online: <https://www.beckman.com/resources/cell-types#:~:text=Based%20on%20where%20they%20are,sex%20cells%2C%20and%20cancer%20cells.>

^v MedlinePlus Genetics, "Help Me Understand Genetics: Cells and DNA," article published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine at The National Institutes of Health and Human Services, accessed online: <https://medlineplus.gov/download/genetics/understanding/basics.pdf>.