

10-20-24 Confronting Conflict

Week 2

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–26

Big Idea of the Message: Our differences can be sources of division in the church, but by the grace of God, they can also be our greatest strength.

Application Point: Live in the reality of the unity that Christ has made and do so with love.

Coffee lovers raise your hand. Those who don't like coffee raise their hand.

Who prefers Coke over Pepsi? Pepsi over coke?

Those who like Batman over Superman? The right choice is Superman, of course.

Oreos over chocolate chip cookies? Chocolate chip cookies over Oreos?

Red Socks or Yankee's? Bills or Patriots?

Toilet paper underneath (beard) or over the top (mullet)? How about it being just left on the back of the toilet, on the ledge or on top of the roller?

Those few silly examples show us how divided we can be. And the things I asked were trivial, silly and non-threatening. I didn't ask anything culturally, politically or theological. That could have started a war! Even in church amongst lifelong friends.

Continuing what we started last week, we must strive for Christlikeness over anything else.

When it comes to culture, I don't agree with a lot of what is said to be right, and it's ok for me to take a stand and teach my family the contrary. It's even ok to talk about it with others that disagree, but I must do it in a Christ honoring way.

If we are believers, followers of Jesus, born-again; His righteousness, His ways, His testimony through our lives matters more than our opinions, and thoughts.

When it comes to political, cultural, and social things it is ok to test the waters and share your opinion, but we must be careful that we don't use Christ as a weapon. Theologically, there are so many issues that many of us disagree on, but we must strive to continue to CHOSE to love each other in the face of the differences. Not only CHOSE to love but strive/learn to appreciate them.

The subject of unity and division in the church is covered constantly in the New Testament. If we ever feel like we are in a unique time of division in the church, all we must do is read the Epistles to remember that disagreements, difficulties, and divisions have always been a huge factor in the church.

Brethren, we been redeemed by Christ and have experienced glimpses of the new creation we are awaiting, but we still live in the "in between" time when sin infects our families, communities, and churches.

Paul will use the metaphor of the church as a body in this passage, and in the context of that metaphor, it's safe to say that the church has always had something like an autoimmune disease. When someone has an autoimmune disease, their body's immune system attacks healthy cells instead of fulfilling its natural purpose of warding off disease.

Unfortunately, we have seen the same thing happen in the church: we misidentify our real enemy, attack one another, and act like anything that doesn't look like us is a "foreign" cell.

There are certainly times when we need correction and confrontation of sin, but much of our conflict is more like an autoimmune disease than a healthy immune response to a real threat.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

1. The Church is a diverse group striving (daily) for unity.

- **Read verses 12-13.**
- Unity: the quality or state of not being multiple: oneness. A condition of harmony.
- The human body is made up of different parts that work together in harmony (unity).
- The Church is the bride of Christ and functions as a human body, made up of different parts functioning together in unity.
- The Church is unified by One Spirit. The Holy Ghost is the glue for the body of believers.
- Paul tells us that **"by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (v. 13a)**. When you trust in or trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you were given a place in His body, and you were identified with Him. You're a new person; you have a new identity.
- Because Jesus is the Son of God, you are also a child of God.
- Because Jesus has eternal life, you also have eternal life.
- Because Jesus is righteous, you have also been declared to be righteous.
- Because Jesus was crucified, you are considered to have been crucified with Christ.
- Because Jesus rose from the dead, you will also rise from the dead.
- Because Jesus is the heir to the kingdom, you are also a co-heir to the kingdom.
- The baptism of the Spirit of what Paul is talking about is a once and for all event in the life of a Christian, it takes place at the very moment we are converted. At the moment one becomes a born-again follower of Jesus Christ.
- Born-again followers are diverse, but One Spirit unifies them in Christ. We all come from different back grounds, different likes and dislikes, but we must strive and fight for unity.
- We are unified in a way that goes beyond all boundaries. **"whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (v.13b)**
- Today's prejudices, in America don't compare to the prejudice that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles in Paul's time. Jews wouldn't even eat at the same table with the Gentiles.
- Because of Jesus: there's no such thing as one church for Jews and another for Gentiles.
- There's no such thing as one church for slaves and another for free people.
- There's no such thing as one church for the upper class and another for homeless people.
- There's no such thing as one church for whites and another for blacks.
- There's no such thing as one church for conservatives and another for liberal.

- God must be honored, and our hearts will find deeper satisfaction as we seek to love people just as Christ loves us. We've all been baptized into the same body. We're all united in Christ. The church is the only place of true equality.
- Christ's church is diversified, which is a strength that is used to bring others in, and we must strive to keep our unity in mission, spirit and mindset.

2. The Church striving for unity is perfect in its differences.

- **Read verses 14-19.**
- Have you ever considered that it's good to be different?
- Most people like to be the same. We constantly look at the latest fashions so that we can buy clothes that are in style, so we can look like someone else. When you hear someone say, "They're different," usually it's because they don't quite measure up.
- God's people are different and distinct from one another and that's a good thing. Just like your body is made up of many different parts, the body of Christ is made up of many different members.
- Have you ever known someone who insisted that you must fit into their mold? We have some churches like that. They want you to dress like them, talk like them, comb your hair like them and use the spiritual gift that they tell you to use and, if you don't, then they think that something is wrong with you.
- There were Corinthian believers who had bought into this lie. They thought that, because they didn't have certain spiritual gifts, they weren't part of the body of Christ. Or that certain spiritual gifts were of more importance.
- A healthy body has many different parts that support many different functions. It's not enough for the church to support one function and to ignore the rest, to do that would be to cripple the church.
- God didn't create a crippled church. He has given the church an entire body, with all its members in working order.
- God is the One who has assigned the various functions to the different parts of the body. That means when you take people who are different and try to make them the same, you are fighting against God's design.

3. The Church body is made up of independent individuals who are intentional at being interdependent.

- **Read verses 20-26.**
- We live in an age of independence. Our society bombards us with the philosophy of doing your own thing.
- Christianity, however, is not a religion of independence. It's a relationship of interdependence. You enter that relationship through the dependence on Jesus Christ and the work He's already done.
- Once you become a part of the body of Christ, you begin to experience an interdependence with other members of the body as well.

- Interdependence means; the state of being dependent upon one another: mutual dependence (example of plant life, they need our carbon dioxide, and we need their oxygen)
- It is not codependency; dependence on the needs of or on control by another.
- **“And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you...” (v.21)**
- Independence isn’t a part of God’s plan for His people. He doesn’t say, oh, you don’t want to fellowship with other believers. That’s okay, we have this ‘Do It Yourself’ plan that allows you to walk only with Me.
- There’s no such thing as a self-sufficient Christian. I can’t do it without you, and you can’t do it without me.
- **“No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” (v. 22)**
- There are some parts of our bodies that, at first glance, may seem unimportant. When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, the first thing you see is your face. You may not ever pay attention to your feet or your knees. Heck, you probably don’t even think about your spleen, but that doesn’t mean that these parts aren’t important.
- The same is true of the body of Christ, there are no unimportant parts. Another thing to think about is that often it’s the most neglected or dishonored part of the body that would be the deadliest if it ever stopped working. (If our biliary system (liver, gallbladder, and small intestines shuts down, we are done!)
- There are no unimportant people in God’s church, we are all necessary, that is how He designed it.
- **“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (v. 26)**
- When someone in the church is hurting, everyone should be hurting.
- I stubbed my pinky toe. My toe/foot wasn’t the only thing that felt the pain. I lifted my foot up and hopped on the other foot, my eyes started to water, and my mouth made it known that I was in pain. My mind went into defensive mode and wanted to punch my bed.
- The same ought to be true when someone hurts in the church, everyone ought to respond.
- The unity of the body should also be seen in good times. When something good happens to one member, then it should make us all happy. We are called to be supporters of one another.

Conclusion

I could go on and talk about the provision for spiritual gifts in **verses 27-31**, but I’ll sum it up by saying that these gifts are only a means to demonstrate our love for one another and for the Lord.

It’s not the gift that’s important, it’s our love that is important. There are many gifts within the church, but we are more effective when we appreciate each other’s uniqueness by living and working in unity.

Maybe this morning God has convicted your heart for treating others poorly because they are different from you. Remember, being different is God’s design. When we look down on others because they’re not like us, then we’re looking down on God. It’s up to us to embrace God’s design

by showing love to everyone, regardless of how we may feel about them. Ask God to change your heart.

- 1. The Church is a diverse group striving (daily) for unity.**
- 2. The Church striving for unity is perfect in its differences.**
- 3. The Church body is made up of independent individuals who are intentional at being interdependent.**

Today could be the day when you decide to fit into God's plan for your life. For some of you, that may mean accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. For others, it may mean asking God to forgive you for the areas I've discussed this morning where you've fallen short. And for some, you may be looking for a place to call home. God wants you to find a place where you can fit in and get busy doing His work.