

God on Film: Working as One
Sermon 6-4-17
Pastor Curtis Dehmey

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

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 the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would 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 would 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 the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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.” ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Message:

(Play at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2zClvZBQx8>) This is Providence Church! Today is a special day in the life of the church. When we baptize and receive members into the church it is one of the most joyous and exciting occasions. Because it's lifegiving to be reminded of our faith in Christ as others publicly profess their faith before all of us and join us in following Christ together. As you saw in the video, the body of Christ at Providence came together. Imagine if no one wanted to build. What would happen? Imagine if we had willing people to build, but no one had any building expertise and tried to put that roof on that home. I can only imagine the leaks that would come through. Imagine trying to build that roof without anyone willing to finance the project.

You would have willing builders. You would have people with building expertise. But no materials. People might bring what they have laying around at home. Maybe some random plywood and shingles, but incomplete building materials to rebuild the roof. Imagine getting to the point where you tear off the old roof, but don't have any materials to replace it. What a disaster! But, thanks be to God, that's not what happened. Providence Church had a complete body working together. The abdomen. The arms. The hands. The legs. The feet. They were all working together. No one was limp. If one had decided to not function, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to get the job done. And as our last verse in our passage displays, one member was suffering and we all suffered with them. Where they struggled, the other members of the body picked them up and rejoiced in the rebuilding of this roof.

One of the interesting pieces of Paul's passage before us today is how he isn't saying that we are not yet the body of Christ. That we are somehow incomplete. That we need this particular person. Or these particular people. Rather, Paul is affirming that the Corinthian community is already the body of Christ. What he seems to be encouraging is that they just need to act more like the body of Christ. Maybe a little more self-belief. That they have what they need. Starting in verse 12, "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 the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many." His assumption is that the body already has all the members. Not to say that more members can't contribute, but that we have what we need to be followers of Christ together. We have enough. Because if you are a member of Providence Church, you have been baptized at one point or time and became a member this body of believers. Through your confession of faith in Jesus Christ and your public proclamation of faith through baptism you have all that you need before you. You have the Spirit to guide you. You have the body of believers who can guide you in the in ups and downs of life. You also have a group of people that you can serve and give towards as service to Christ. You have what you need.

The problem is, that we often discard the members that we view as weaker. Or the ones that we don't believe can contribute. Or that we think are less honorable. We say to that member or group of members in so many words, "I have no need of you." And we self-inflict wounds that wouldn't otherwise be present. Starting in verse 22, "²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members

do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” Unfortunately, I’ve experienced this “I have no need of you” in the church. And I was reminded of this as I was thinking about baptizing the youth today. As much as I loved my home church and the many people who raised me up in my faith, I always felt like a junior member. I became baptized and a member. But it was more like, “Isn’t he cute getting baptized?” When I would bring an idea to the table with my fellow youth for doing something different in the church, I would get that same type of attitude in so many words, “Oh...isn’t he cute bringing these ideas? He’ll learn some day that these ideas don’t work...” Do you hear the condescension? I was viewed as a lesser member who didn’t have what it takes to contribute the real stuff to the church. Or I wasn’t grown-up enough. Or mature enough in my faith. Of course, the congregation wanted to wear my baptism as a badge of honor and bragging about baptizing youth, but didn’t actually view me as a valuable contributor to the body of believers. For much of my youth and young adult life, I’ve felt like I’ve had to fight to have a legitimate voice in the church. Almost being ashamed of my youthfulness. Yes, I’m sure I have much to learn. But that doesn’t mean that I don’t have valuable things to contribute now. I worked through much of this in my time in chaplaincy. I got triggered one day when a doctor pushed my button unintentionally commenting “You’re pretty young to be a chaplain.” I originally interpreted this as “You shouldn’t be a chaplain at this age. You don’t have enough life experience to contribute.” Hearing that shaming voice from the church. Through many conversations with my supervisors, they helped me to interpret that passing comment differently. That this doctor was saying, “Wow! That’s impressive that you’re a chaplain at your age.” I’m getting on my soapbox here, but hear me out. Through my experience, you can see how valuable it can be to view each member as a valuable member. No matter where they are at in their life. Because even the longest tenured church member, can be the most immature Christian. But they are still valuable to the body.

The youth that are getting baptized today, are not junior or lesser members. They are full-members of Providence Church. That means that they deserve a legitimate voice at the table. They will have things to say and contribute to the direction and development of this church. They may even help you develop and mature more in your faith. Likewise, they need you. They need you to be there for them through their ups and downs. They need you to encourage them in their faith development. That together we can act more like the body of Christ together.

In the video clip that I am about to show from the movie “Coach Carter” it’s about this idea of lifting up a member of the team who has suffered. The movie takes place in the ghetto of Richmond, California. Like many ghetto situations, the hope of a life beyond their youth and high school was very slim. These teens were historically involved in gangs and violence. But they wanted to play basketball. Coach Carter reluctantly agreed to coach this team. But he didn’t take it easy on them. Timo, the teammate who is heaved over and heavily breathing, quit the team at one point because he didn’t like the demands of the coach. He got into a gang until a loved one was shot and killed. Timo begged to return to the team and his penance was to do all the physical conditioning he missed in his time away from the team in a limited amount of time. After finding out that Timo didn’t complete the physical conditioning to return to the team, see how his teammates respond... (Play at <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/coach-carter/ill-do-push-ups>)

“²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” When we choose to be part of this body of Christ at Providence Church, we choose to journey with the church through all the ups and downs. I think of it similar to a marriage. When we vow or make a covenant with our spouse, it isn’t just about the self anymore. The decisions you make have consequences. You’re not just considering what you want. You are considering what the other wants. As mamma once told me, relationships are about give and take. At times, you will need to take a lot. You will need to be comforted. You will need someone to speak the truth-in-love into your life. At other times, the other will need you to step-up and even over-extend yourself to help the other in need. But if you are always taking or you are always giving, they are unhealthy in their extreme and for long periods of time. But we all have our seasons. Sometimes we suffer. Sometimes we experience great joy. Sometimes we have abundance. In all these things, this is the beauty of the body of believers. That we are not alone. That we all need each other. And most of all, we need Jesus Christ as the head of the church and our life. That Jesus is the ultimate answer. That Jesus is the ultimate light. And that Jesus is one that unifies each and every one of us regardless of age, sex, occupation, income level and ethnicity. Jesus is the one we all know as our savior. Jesus is the savior of our sins. Jesus is the one that reconciles us unto him. Let’s continue to be the body of Christ through all the ups and downs. Caring and encouraging each other, through Jesus Christ, on this earth. Instilling the Love of Jesus in Every Heart. Amen.