

One Body with Many Parts

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 **12** The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. **13** Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, ^[fn5] some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. ^[fn6]

14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. **15** If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? **17** If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. **19** How strange a body would be if it had only one part! **20** Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. **21** The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. **23** And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, **24** while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. **25** This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. **26** If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. **28** Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,

second are prophets,

third are teachers,

then those who do miracles,

those who have the gift of healing,

those who can help others,

those who have the gift of leadership,

those who speak in unknown languages.

29 Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? **30** Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! **31** So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.

But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

Paul tells us we need every member of the body to participate in the life of the church, and when one member suffers the whole body suffers. - The church is the people of Jesus - other metaphors in the bible for the church - family - flock - living stones of a new temple - branches on a vine - olive tree - a field of crops - a harvest - a holy priesthood - a city

Plural - interdependent - sum is greater than the parts.

Synonym = Community - together as one unit - buzz word - good word

CHURCH - The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe the biblical sacraments of baptism and Communion, are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scatter to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God's glory and their joy.

We want to see as many lives as possible saved and transformed by Jesus.

We can, and will see lives transformed by Jesus if we live as the Body of Christ.

We were created for more, we have been redeemed for more, and we are empowered for more, than an individual Christian Life - where most interaction is superficial and most activity is separate from the body.

Community is not about us; it is about God.

The people of God gathering and scattering for Jesus fame - is an instrument of worship, a weapon against sin, and a tool for evangelism.

As I have said before - The Christian life is not hanging out on a playground - it is getting engaged on the battleground.

We have peace with God through Jesus and know the peace of God in our hearts - but when it comes to the fight for the eternal destiny of lost souls - there is a battle that wages on.

1Pe 5:8 - Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1Pe 2:11 - Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

1Ti 6:12 - Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Every day there are casualties of this war and people who remain prisoners of war.

Are we going to fight?

Luk 17:33 - Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Life ought to be a passionate pursuit of God - a hatred of sin in the believer's life and an strong desire for the fame of Jesus by Sharing the gospel with a fallen world.

Jhn 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Abundant life is empowered by the Spirit, exalts the Son, and glorifies the Father.

Our mission is to glorify God by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to bring people to Jesus, and then teach and train them so their knowledge and love of Christ grows.

Mat 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [fn] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

THE FOUNDATION

Theological background of what community is and God's purpose through it, we will address the motivation behind having community groups in your church and why they are essential.

DEFINED BY THE CROSS

1 Peter 2:9-12 - 9 But you are not like that, for you are **a chosen people**. You are **royal priests**, [fn6] **a holy nation**, God's very **own possession**. As a result, **you can show others the goodness of God**, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people.

Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy." [fn7]

11 Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 **Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.** [fn8]

I want this for the church. This is who we are in Christ because of what Jesus has accomplished on the cross and through his resurrection.

I want us to be a people who proclaim the excellence of who Jesus and who we are in Him, in word and deed.

Personal and corporate transformation, brings people to the cross.

The world has never recovered since Jesus came and "The world will not recover from the community of God's people living lives to glorify Jesus."

We are called to proclaim the kingdom of God the same way God has always used: His people.

Are we willing to count the cost, repent, and experience the blessing of community?

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Mat 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

Mat 7:25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Mat 7:26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Mat 7:27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

The Word of God is how we lay a solid foundation of faithfulness. We are called to hear his words, be changed by them, and to live out of the convictions brought by the Holy Spirit. He is telling us to build our lives on the foundation of faith and obedience in him, through the living Word of Scripture.

THE GOAL

Body Life, Family Life, Building Life, Flock Life - Community takes sacrifice and intentionality, our view of community must be bigger than a way to belong.

We need to see the eternal purpose of the Church so that we can be like what we see in Acts 2.

A GOOD THING BROKEN

On the cross, the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - the Trinity was momentarily broken, when Jesus became sin for us.

Sin always separates what God joins together.

The first thing that Adam and Eve did in response to their rebellion was hide from God. (Gen 3:8)

God intended for Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, thereby building communities that would glorify him. Instead, sin led to murder in amongst their kids.

Jesus death on the cross shows us the consequence of the sins of independence, selfishness, rivalry, jealousy, oppression, blame shifting, gossip, backbiting, neglect, isolation, pride, apathy, and every other perversion that destroys community.

A community of God's people should reflect the nature of God - GRACE

A community that is marked more by sin than by grace and claims to be a community formed by God misrepresents the Creator.

Second, it denies grace by choosing an impoverished and deprived life. The community God creates is good because it reflects him; it is good for his people.

We all suffer from the isolation that sin produces.

The sin that alienates us from one another is what put Jesus on the cross.

Jesus experienced the worst isolation and the worst evil—separation from God the Father.

Jesu was relationally severed from the eternal community of the Trinity.

In trade, he gave us the greatest good, **reconciliation to God and others, making community possible.**

BUILT ON THE CROSS

The cross is central to building the body of Christ. If the church - If we are going to be a light - a city on a hill - in contrast to the brokenness and isolation in the world, then we must be a community - a family - together that is transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In Ephesians 2:15b–22, we see the intentionality behind the cross in building (or rebuilding) the community of God: He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. 16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. 18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

A Temple for the Lord

19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Believers are a community built on the cornerstone of Jesus - because we have all been reconciled to God through Him.

Through Christ we are fellow citizens and members of one household reconciled to each other through the cross.

We are saved to be a community, not a church of individuals.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ."

In Christ that we are united together like a family who shares the bloodline of Jesus.

Jesus gives us the ability to experience life as God intended, in real community with him and one another.

In a world of people searching for belonging, the cross is a beacon of hope. We belong to one another because we have been united in Christ. The purpose of such community is to display the love of God for the world.

Ephesians 2:7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

This is the purpose of community is to be a witness (noun not verb).

Living together in community, reconciled and united by the cross, is a tangible - hands and feet - demonstration of the grace of God.

Community is a declaration of the overwhelming love of God, a real life proclamation of the reconciling work of the cross.

This is an incredibly compelling reason to build community groups within our church.

Community groups are a living illustration of the gospel and its power to save.

CREATED FOR COMMUNITY

The need for community is part of who we are; it is part of our design.

When Jesus reconciled us to the Father, he established for us a **renewed** identity. We have been restored to be image bearers of God, of humans were originally designed.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings [fn2] in our image, to be like us.

Our our intended identity is to resemble God. We are image bearers of God. We exist as a living reflection of God.

God exists in an eternal relationship within the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God by his very nature is a relational being, and he creates us as relational beings to represent him to all of creation.

That is why God said in Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

God emphasizes in His word that we cannot image God's relational nature in isolation.

By God's grace, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, he made true community possible.

Jesus restored the image of God that was marred by sin. Jesus made it possible for us to reflect the relational nature of God through life in a body.

When we live in the family of God it is a declaration of the gospel, we announce that Jesus has restored what sin had broken, and we get to experience life as God intended.

CREATED TO GLORIFY GOD

Being an image bearer is not only a description of who we are; it is also a description of why we are.

We are created as a reflection of God (who we are) to reflect God to all of creation (why we are).

Humans are made to proclaim the glory of God to the world.

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” - Westminster Shorter Catechism

We Glorify God when we receive, believe, and celebrate what has been done through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Exodus 34:6-7 The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. 7 I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. [fn3] I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty.

This is the nature we are to reflect in Christ-centered community.

We should be merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Address sin with compassion and patience and are quick to restore the repentant.

Colossians 3:12-17: 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

This is a picture of a community reflecting the attributes of God because of what Jesus has done.

This picture is dramatically different than the way the world handles conflict. When Christ reconciled us to one another on the cross, he made such a reflection possible.

Reflecting the image of God was a unique gift from God to mankind. Sin resulted in losing this gift. Jesus purchased and restores this precious gift through the cross.

Now we exalt Jesus, we glorify the Father and fulfill our call as image bearers to proclaim the greatness of God.

We are image bearers of a Trinitarian God who have been redeemed by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Our lives in community are a proclamation of who God is and what God has done through Jesus our Savior.

INSPIRED BY HIS GLORY

Motivation comes when we see the beauty, the splendor, and the magnificence of our God.

A clear view of God puts life in perspective. It is simultaneously terrifying and motivating. When we see God clearly, we understand that there is nothing more important than worshiping him and lifting up his name.

Isaiah saw the glory of God in the temple and he was a mess. He was so aware of his sin and the sin of his people that he thought he would die in the midst of God. (Isaiah 6)

See God high and lifted up changed Isaiah and the way he lived his life.

He was willing to do anything to proclaim the majesty of the Father.

When asked who would go to proclaim the truth of God, Isaiah I will go. No questions asked.

Men like Moses, David, Peter, and Paul - had similar experiences

2 Tim 2:8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

The death and resurrection of Jesus motivated Paul to live a surrendered life to the will of the Father. The grace of God sustained Paul through suffering and pain. Paul was willing to "endure anything" for the chance to be a part of God's saving work in the world. We want to be a people who have such a clear view of Jesus that our temporal circumstances do not make us waiver from our call to glorify God.

EMPOWERED BY HIS GRACE

God's glory is empowered by his grace. Isaiah was right to be afraid in the presence of God.

God in his grace cleansed him of his sin so that he could respond to God's call.

God gives us the ability to respond through his grace.

We have been reconciled so that we can image him to the world, and he sends us the Holy Spirit to empower us to such a life.

2 Peter 1:3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence."

This is God's promise for transformational community.

What does a body of believers inspired by the glory of God and empowered by grace look like?

A community that has been transformed by the gospel reflects the nature of God.

Peter paints us a picture - 1 Peter 2:9–12: you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, [fn6] a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people.

Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy." [fn7]

11 Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

We are being built up as a spiritual house of God.

This then is a picture of the church. It is a community of people transformed by the gospel.

We have a new identity that comes from our faith in Christ and binds us together. Christ has purchased this identity, so we are already "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession."

We simply need to be what Jesus has already secured for us in his death and resurrection.

Notice then, that this identity is corporate rather than individual. While my personal identity is in Jesus, Peter makes it clear that we have a communal identity, as well.

Christianity is not an individual sport. We are part of a team.

We have to be more than a collection of individuals who occasionally gather together. We need a corporate sense of our identity. A gospel-centered community will find their identity in Jesus individually and corporately.

Peter gives us the reason for which God made us a community. He says it is "that you may proclaim the excellencies" of the one who saved us.

This is the purpose of community. We are to worship Jesus as a people and declare the good news that a Savior has come.

Sanctification is a result of the gospel being reality in community.

We are to be sanctified by living lives together that are honoring to God and marked by growth and maturation.

A life-giving community is one that is continuously being transformed by the gospel as a people.

By speaking the gospel to one another and living it together, we participate in a corporate sanctification process.

Lastly, Peter tells us to protect our witness among our neighbors.

Peter expects the community to be seen by those who have yet to meet Jesus.

Honorable conduct, or holiness, is not required to earn our righteousness; instead, it is an outworking of the gospel work in us that testifies to the power of the cross.

Jesus makes this point to his disciples during the Last Supper when he tells them, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Jesus calls us to love one another in ways that can be seen by all men so that they know we live this way because of Jesus.

Our primary purpose in community is not that our needs are being met, but that Jesus would be lifted up. It is not that we aren't blessed by the love we share for one another, but that we experience our greatest joy when Jesus is most glorified.

The witness of the Jesus community is more powerful than an individual witness.

Living in light of the gospel is much harder in community where people sin against you.

Experiencing a people who confess their sins against one another, repent, and forgive is foreign to the world. Communities that live in this way, transformed by the gospel, will not only have a good reputation among our neighbors, but also we will point them to hope in Jesus.

COMMUNITY IS NOT OPTIONAL

Community groups are essential to the Christian life because we were created for community. We were built to function in relationship with one another and with God.

Conclusion - community life is an essential part of every Christian's life. Community is our response to reconciliation.

Living grace-filled lives in a community marked by humility and love, which seeks to reconcile one to another and broken lives to God, is the perfect means for proclaiming the Gospel.

We have community groups because we have seen the glory of God and we have been given the grace to live our lives to exalt the Christ. We have community groups because we have been reconciled to God and one another. We once were not a people but now we are a people of God's own possession. We have community groups as a proclamation of the goodness of our God and testimony to the completed work of the cross.