

INTRODUCTION

There are basically three pictures of the church in the New Testament. The church is pictured as a bride and Jesus is the bridegroom. But not everybody has a bride. Some of you can't relate to what it is to be a bride or to have a bride. I don't know what it is to be a bride myself. Some of you are not married or perhaps will never get married; you can't relate to that. Also the church is pictured in the New Testament not only as a bride, it is also pictured as a building in which Jesus is the cornerstone the foundation and we are all living stones. But there are some of you who have never built a building. I've never built a building. There may be some of you who have never owned your own building, so you may not really understand construction. The third picture of the church in the New Testament is that of a human body. That is a better picture than a bride or a building, because every one of us has a body. Did everybody here bring your body with you tonight? You understand what it is to have a body and that's why when the New Testament is trying to teach us what the church is like, we see this beautiful metaphor.

1 Corinthians 12:12. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don't need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don't need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is not just talking about a human body here. He is talking about the church. So I want us to learn three things about a church body that is in shape.

I. CLAIM OUR UNITY AS A BODY

Number one: We should claim our unity. We should claim our unity as a body! Verse 12 says the body is a unit. That's where we get the word *unity*. This is more than just a metaphor; it is a deep spiritual truth. When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, He did not begin to exist. Jesus had always existed before Bethlehem. But in Bethlehem he took on a body and for thirty-three years Jesus walked on planet earth in a physical body. The Bible says God was manifested in the flesh, in Jesus dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily. When Jesus was on earth for thirty-three

years, you could see him, you could touch him, you could hug him, you could listen to him and you could smell him. He was in a body. You know what happened to the Lord Jesus. He was betrayed, he was crucified, he was killed, put in a tomb and after three days and three nights he came back alive with a new kind of body—but it was a body. Then after forty days after appearing to over five hundred people, he ascended up into heaven. The Bible says, “He was glorified!” and he had a glorified body when he ascended into heaven.

That body, the glorified body of Jesus, is still at the right hand of God, the Father but did you know the Lord Jesus Christ has a body right now on planet earth? It is a body you can see, it is a body you can hear, it is a body you can touch, and yes, for some of us it is a body you can smell. I’m talking about THIS body. This is the body of Jesus Christ he left behind: The church.

*Christ has no hands but our hands
To do his work today
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in his way.
He has no voice but our voice
To tell men how he died.
He has no heart but our heart
To lead them to his side.*

Unknown

Now, the body of Christ already is a unit. It is unity! Some people go around saying, “Oh, We have to create unity! We have to do something to compose or produce unity in our church!” No, unity is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. We can’t create unity. All we can do is claim the unity that is already there.

1. Functional unity

Paul says two things about this unity. First, it is a functional unity. In other words, we function together as one body. It means there are different parts to the body. Every part of the body has a different function. That’s the beauty of it. We’ll talk about that when we talk about the diversity. This hand of mine is a part of the unit of my body. This foot is a part of the unit of my body. When you become a Christian, you become a part of the body of Christ. There are some people whose names are on the church roll who really are not a part of the body of Christ. They are like my watch. This watch is an attachment to my body but it is an artificial attachment. It is something that can be taken off and put back on. My shoe is not a part of my body. It is an attachment to my body. It can be taken off and put back on. There are some people who have a superficial attachment to the church. That’s why they never show up. They might bloom at Easter like a lily or that’s why they might come at various times, but because their heart is not in the church, because they are not serving the Lord through the church, because they are not giving regularly to the church, they think they are a part of the body. Well, it is not our job to say whether they are or not but it is our job to understand that there are those who are parts of the body and then there are those who are like shoes and watches and hats—mere attachments to the body of Christ. Which one are you? Are you a part of the body of Christ or are you simply

attached artificially to the body?

2. Spiritual unity

Number two, there is spiritual unity. That speaks of the one Spirit. Look at verse 13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized in one body.” Unity is created by the Holy Spirit. It is the unity of the Spirit. You hear talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What is the baptism it is talking about In Ephesians 4, “There is one body, one Lord, one baptism”? I don’t think it is talking about water baptism? I think it is talking about Spirit baptism.

When you became a Christian, when you were born into the family of God, when you were born again, the Holy Spirit baptized you, immersed you into the body of Christ. *Immerse* means “to plunge into or to dip.” If I were taking some kind of medicine and I shot it into my veins, I would be putting it in there and it would become a part of me. Isn’t that different from pouring water on my arm? The difference is injecting it and pouring it on. When you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit *injected* you, immersed you into the body. If you have been born again, you are part of the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as the *filling* of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 13, “we have all been baptized.” In the Greek language it’s what is called the aorist tense; it means it is a one-time action, already happened, past tense. When you became a Christian, you were once-and-for-all immersed into the body of Christ. It doesn’t happen continually. Ephesians 5:18 says, “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” That is in the present tense, which means it is something that must keep on happening repeatedly. Every Christian has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ—but that’s not the same thing as being filled with the Spirit. So what about our unity? Look at Ephesians 4:3. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Now the Spirit has created the unity. Our job is to keep the unity. So, let’s claim our unity.

II. CELEBRATE OUR DIVERSITY!

Number two, let us celebrate our diversity! We are one unit but we are all different kinds of people. Aren’t you glad we are not all alike? I’m so glad God put the body together the way he did. In fact, when Paul is talking about the actual anatomy of the human body, he says God put the members of the body together as it pleased him. Can you imagine what would have happened if some human engineer had designed the body? There is no telling what would have happened. Somebody once said, “Aren’t you glad that when God made the human body, he made your nose pointing down instead of pointing up so that every time it rained you wouldn’t get rain in your nose? He put the parts of the body right where they are supposed to be.

That’s like the guy who got tired of parting his hair from side to side. He decided he wanted to part it from front to back. That was all right until people started walking up and whispering things in his nose. God designed everything in the human body for a certain place, exactly where it is supposed to be. Have you ever noticed he put your eyes on top of your mouth? What if your eyes were down here and your mouth was up here? Every time you ate bread, you would get crumbs in your eyes. He put your body together in a special way. This is what he is talking about

the ear is not like the eye, the foot is not like the hand. He created the body to be diverse!

1. We are different from each other

Notice two things here. Number one: We are all different from each other. For that reason we cannot complain and we cannot be jealous. The context of this whole study is spiritual gifts and here is the application: God has given me certain spiritual gifts. We're different. That's our diversity. The carnal tendency is for me to be jealous of another with specific gifts God has given him, but when I realize the diversity of the gifts, I understand others are not like me and I am not like them. In fact, nobody is exactly like me and nobody is exactly like you. We are all different and that is for a purpose. That is the divine design of God.

Paul kind of talks about this in verse 15 and he almost gets funny. He talks about the foot. “Can you imagine a foot complaining?” Can you imagine all of a sudden your foot starts talking to you one day and your foot says to you, “I'm tired of this mess! I'm tired of staying down here in a dirty, old sock all the time. I want to be a hand!” You say, “Okay. Be a hand for a while.” How would you like to spend a day grabbing everything with your foot? Can you imagine trying to drink a cup of coffee with your foot? The foot is not designed to be a hand. Can you imagine your foot talking to you and complaining one day and saying, “I'm tired of being a foot. I want to be an eye! I want to see!” Well, the only thing your foot would see would be the inside of a dirty, old sock, right? Paul says, “Listen. The foot can't say that!” When you look at somebody in the body of Christ who has a different gift from you, don't be jealous of them and don't say, “I wish I were like them!” Instead, celebrate the diversity in the body and know that God has gifted you in a different way. We're all different and let's thank God for our diversity.

2. We are dependent upon each other

Number two, we are dependent upon each other. Your eye needs your ear. The foot may complain and say, “Hey, I'm tired of being a foot. I'm not very important.” But could you imagine what trouble I would be having tonight if I didn't have a foot or if I didn't have two feet? I couldn't stand here and preach to you. So, we are all dependent upon each other. I need you and you need me. If you have been through Henry Blackaby's study “Experiencing God,” he describes this in the best way possible when he says, “Can you imagine walking down train tracks? You are right in the middle of a train track and you are walking along. You look as far as you can see and you see absolutely nothing but from behind you a freight train is approaching you. Your ears say to you, “Hey, dummy. A train is coming!” but your eyes say, “I don't see a train. I don't believe you.” Your body starts feeling the shake and the rumble of the tracks and they say to you, “Hey, dummy. There's a train coming! You had better get off the tracks.” Your eyes say, “I don't see a train! I'm looking all the way down the track and I don't see a train!” You can even smell the cinders burning in the approaching train, but if the eyes say, “I don't see a train!” You see your eyes need your ears and need your feelings and need your smell and all your senses. Henry Blackaby says, “If your eyes don't listen to the ears, you are going to be as flat as a pancake pretty quick!” What does that mean to the body of Christ? What it means is nobody is absolutely authoritative in the body of Christ. We need each other. I may be an eye and you may be an ear, but, brother, I need you and you need me! We need each other. That's the diversity of the body. Everybody is important. So, we celebrate our diversity.

III. CONCENTRATE ON HARMONY

Number three: We concentrate on harmony. We claim our unity. We celebrate our diversity. We’re all different, but dependent, and number three we concentrate on harmony. Look at God’s purpose in verse 25, “So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.” That phrase, “equal concern” has the idea of harmony. I Peter 3:8 says, “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.” Have you ever thought about how different the people of Green Acres Baptist Church are? We are as different as the different parts of your body. We have got some long hairs we have got some short hairs we have got some no hairs. Some folks like soothing classical music and they love the great old hymns of the faith and we have some guys who love DC Talk—but they are all parts of the body. Some want a very dignified experience of worship and we have some who really want to let it all hang out and just worship the Lord. Who’s right? Everybody is right! We are all different parts of the body. We are here to live together and to work together. Some women who wear earrings and we have a few guys who wear earrings. We have some guys that can’t stand that other guys wear earrings. Guess what? You love those guys who have an earring in their ear, because they are part of the body of Christ. You find anywhere that it says they can’t wear it, we’ll jerk it out in a hurry. We are all different and that’s the beauty of the body of Christ, in that we are all so diverse, we can live in harmony.

Have you ever put a stone wall together with mortar? I never have, but I’ve seen it done. You can have all different size stones but a good brick mason can take those different size and shapes of stones and build a straight wall and when that wall is finished, it will be a thing of beauty. How does he do it? He puts mortar between the stones. If there is a stone over here with an indentation and another with a protrusion, he puts them together. He puts a little mortar between them and they balance each other out. Isn’t that a beautiful picture of the body of Christ? I’m not like you, but where I’m weak, you may be strong and the mortar is the Holy Spirit that binds us together and smoothes out the rough edges. Thank God that what the Holy Spirit does.

1. In a healthy body, every part knows its job

Let me give you some signs as we finish of a healthy body and of course we are talking about a healthy church. Number one: In a healthy body every part knows its job. When my body is healthy, my hand is not over here to the side saying, “What am I supposed to be doing?” My hand knows it’s part of the body and it knows what it is supposed to be doing. When my body is healthy, my foot does not say, “I don’t know what I’m supposed to be doing. What am I supposed to do next?” No my foot knows it is supposed to stand still right now. Every part of the body knows its job. Paul talks about what we consider insignificant members of the body. Some people say, “Well, if every part of the body has a job, why in the world did God even create a little toe? What in the world could be the function of a little toe?” God gave you a little toe so you could find a bedpost in the dark at night when you go to the bathroom. Every part has a purpose. How would you like cracking your nose on that thing every night? That’s the job of your little toe! Every part knows its job. Let’s move from a body to a church. Do you know your job? Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? For you to be a part of this body and not know

what your spiritual gifts are and not to use them is like what we call an uncoordinated, spastic body—a part that does not know its job.

2. In a healthy body, all parts are equally important

Number two: In a healthy body all parts are equally important. You many go for two or three days without even thinking about your little toe. But as I said earlier, all you have to do is stub it on that bedpost and suddenly that little toe becomes a very important part of your body. You are thinking about it as you are holding that it is very important to you. If you had to have surgery on a toe, you suddenly you are going to treat that toe as an important part of the body! You think you can get along without it, but let it start hurting and you will begin to pay attention to it. In the body of Christ all members are equal. There is no such thing as a big shot or a VIP in the body of Christ. Sometimes members walk around with some kind of a snotty, snobby attitude. “I’m a deacon in this church” or “I’m on the staff of this church.” or “I’ve been teaching Sunday School in this church for forty years!” as if they are more important than somebody who has joined the body of Christ last week. Anytime someone has that attitude you know they are not in fellowship with the head of the body. ALL parts of the body are equally important.

3. In a healthy body, stronger parts assist weaker parts

Number three: Stronger parts assist weaker parts. That’s what Paul is talking about. We protect the parts that seem to be less prominent; we care for them. Your eyeball does not have tissue as strong as the tissue on your arm. But have you ever noticed if glass suddenly breaks in front of you, what’s the first thing you protect? The weaker parts of your body are protected by the stronger parts. In the body of Christ there are some who are weak members. Not everybody in the body of Christ is exactly where they ought to be and what they ought to be, there are some weaker members. So what do we do? Do we cut them off? Do we get rid of them? Do we ignore them? No we rally to help them. That goes along with this next point and I want to give this point and tell you a story.

4. In a healthy body, healthy parts help the hurting parts

Number four: Healthy parts help the hurting parts, just as the strong parts assist the weaker parts. About six years ago when I was living in Birmingham, it was on a Saturday and our house had a driveway that went underneath to a garage. There was a retaining wall by the driveway probably about eight or ten feet high. I was in a hurry, because I had to catch a plane to come to Dallas to begin a revival at a church, so I was mowing the grass as fast as I could. I had done it many, many times before and had never had a problem but I came to that retaining wall and made a great turn and for some reason lost my balance! I had a quick enough mind to let go of the lawnmower so I didn’t pull it over with me, but I just fell down to that concrete driveway about ten feet below. Halfway down I’m thinking, “Well, this is just like jumping off a wall,” but I got all twisted up and let’s just say I fell “funny,” not ha-ha funny, just kind of unusual funny. I hit my head on the concrete. That was the last thing that hit and it knocked me out. I don’t know how long, but I was out for a little while seeing stars and my first thought was, “I hope nobody saw me do that!” But I was lying there and I felt of my head and it was all sticky and the blood was rolling down. I got up and head was hurting and my leg was hurting. You know how men do

when they want a lot of sympathy...I went dragging into the house like this. “Ooohhh!” While I was lying down there in the driveway hoping nobody saw me, my next thought was, “Why doesn’t somebody come and help me?” I wanted to say, “Help! I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!” Well, my wife took me to the doctor and he met us at the office and checked me. He didn’t think I had a concussion or anything, but he didn’t know how to turn on his x-ray machine to check my arm. He’s the doctor he wasn’t the nurse.

So, I had to get on a plane about two hours later to go to Garland to preach a revival. I was preaching that whole week and my arm was killing me! I found out later when I went back to Alabama it was broken. So I had preached all week with a broken arm! I’ll never forget that first morning at that church I tried to be real friendly and I didn’t want to make a big deal out of my injuries. I had a big bandage up here on my head but the first guy that met me that day I tried to hold out my hand. Well you know these people who don’t shake hands they kind of twist your hand like this that’s what he did. “I’m glad to meet you!” I just know I heard bones in there going Slurrrrrrrpppp! That really started it off bad. I just want you to know that whole week I ended up preaching left-handed! That whole week I spent that time taking care of this arm. I quit shaking hands with people and I just said, “I’m sorry. My arm’s hurt,” and I shook with my left hand. Do you know what? All the rest of my body started making allowances for my broken arm. I started guarding it. I started sleeping a certain way. You may not think about your arm a whole lot until you break it. When you break it, guess what? The rest of your body stays up at night to take care of it. “If you’re going to stay up, we might as well stay up with you too.” I didn’t have any pain pills. I didn’t have anything—I was just there hurting. All I knew was I had an injured part of my body and the rest of my body was trying to take care of it. When I got back home, Jenni and Laura Grace had drawn one of these outlines of a man lying on the sidewalk like a crime scene. But I took care of that hurting part of my body.

Now let’s quit talking about the body and let’s make the application to the church. When there is a hurting part of the body of Christ we all ought to care for it. We all ought to go out of our way to that person or those persons and just say, “I don’t know the whole story, but it’s obvious you are hurting and I’m here to help you.” Do you know the difference between an organization and an organism? An organism is alive, and in an organism when there is a hurting part, all the other parts rush to help it—even your body. Do you know what happens to your white blood cells? They go to the site of an injury and start providing protection from infection. That’s how the body operates. In an organization—let’s say a business, just a pure organization—when there is a weak part of the organization, what do you do? Cut it off! Downsize, get rid of that weakness so you can raise your profit margin. That’s the difference between an organization and an organism. Is the church an organization or an organism? We are an organism. We need to be an organized organism but when there are hurting members, we give them love we give them concern we give them attention. That’s exactly what Paul was talking about in Galatians 6:1 when he said, “If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”

5. In a healthy body, there is coordination and growth

Finally, in a healthy body there is coordination and growth. In a healthy body all your muscles are operating in tone and of course, in the body of Christ who is the brain, the head? It’s Jesus. And when your brain sends a message down your neural pathways to a part of your body, it

responds—there is coordination. But when there is some kind of a problem there, if there is a breakdown between the brain and that part of the body, the body is not coordinated; it is sick. If you as a part of the body of Christ are not receiving message from Christ the head and moving and coordinating with the rest of the body, you are hurting the whole body of Christ. Christians who say, “I don’t have to do anything in the church. I can just come and be a spectator. I can just come and sit.” What does that say about them? It says when they take that attitude they are hurting the whole body. Everybody has a job and there is coordination and there is growth.

CONCLUSION

Are any of you still wearing the same clothes you were wearing when you were five years old? Probably not. You can’t get in them can you? Because something happened to your body. It grew. The problem for some of us is that it is still growing right? There is growth in a healthy body and in any body of Christ that is healthy and coordinated there will be growth. That’s one way you know God is blessing the church, when there is growth, when he is adding to the body every day those people who should be saved. What should we do as a church? Let’s claim the unity we already have; let’s celebrate our diversity.

I’m glad you are different from me and you be glad I’m different from you. Then let’s concentrate on our harmony together!

OUTLINE

I. CLAIM OUR UNITY AS A BODY

1. Functional unity
2. Spiritual unity

II. CELEBRATE OUR DIVERSITY!

1. We are different from each other
2. We are dependent upon each other

III. CONCENTRATE ON HARMONY

In a healthy body...

1. Every part knows its job
2. All parts are equally important
3. Stronger parts assist weaker parts
4. Healthy parts help the hurting parts
5. There is coordination and growth



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes