

The Essentials: The Church

Session 9: BODY

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Opening Collect

Together: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Opening Thought

Understanding the church as the body of Christ is one of the most preeminent ways to describe the church within the scriptures and in the Christian tradition. This figure involves several important components: first, the church belongs to Christ, not simply on a nominal level, but in some mysterious, real, and fundamental way. We are not simply *connected* to Christ, rather we are *in* him. Second, we are connected to one another in a similar way. We belong to one another. Traditionally, this has meant a whole host of things—we care for one another, we express humility toward one another, we have a responsibility toward one another, we have a duty to remain together, and separation from one another does a kind of real damage to all of us. The church is the body of Christ, and thus we have more than a corporate relation to one another within an organization, we are united in an organic, real, and indisputable way whether we recognize it or not.

Discussion:

1. It's common to describe our participation in a church as being a "member." How does being Christ's body change the way you think about being in the church?
2. If we are really Christ's own body, what might that say about how Jesus values us? How does that make you feel?
3. Since we belong together as members of one body, what do you think that means in terms of our responsibility to one another? What does it look like to commit to one another?
4. Paul describes different parts of the body as having different gifts. Share with your group what you think some of your own gifts might be. How might you use them within the body of Christ?

Check in and Closing Prayer

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

¹² For 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. ¹³ For 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.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If 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. ¹⁶ And 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. ¹⁷ If 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? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

²¹ The 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, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.