

Unity, Diversity and Dependency in the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Key Lenses for Understanding

- v. 17 – “Lead the life that the Lord has assigned”
- v. 35 – “To secure your undivided devotion to the Lord”
- These verses are the lenses that help us understand the passage.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

The unifying work of Christ and the Spirit

A – The body is one

B – and has many members

C – all the many members form one body

D – So also is Christ

C' – in one Spirit we were baptized into one body

B' – whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free (diversity)

A' – and all were made to drink of one Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

The unifying work of Christ and the Spirit

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.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The Diversity and Dependency God intentionally Creates

- **God made you the way you are on purpose, for His purposes vs 14-20**
 - We should not feel any less useful or valued because made us different than someone else.
 - This set of verses encourages those who feel lesser about their place in the church. “What good am I if I don’t have a flashy or front-facing gift?”
 - God has arranged you to meet a need, to fit a purpose.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The Diversity and Dependency God intentionally Creates

- **God Made you Dependent on the rest of the church vs 21-26**
 - Independence and self-sufficiency are contrary to the way God designed us
 - We need each other to fulfill God's mission
 - God has gifted some of you with roles that may be less noticed than others but are just as vital and even desirable.
 - The covered parts here are specifically alluding to the sexual parts of the body

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The Diversity and Dependency God intentionally Creates

- **God Made you Dependent on the rest of the church vs 21-26**
 - When the church is operating as God intends, there is no division, the members care for one another, and they share both in suffering and in rejoicing.
 - In generosity and mercy, we look out for and come along side those who struggle or suffer.
 - With humility and genuine love for others, we rejoice when someone else does well or gets credit.

1 Corinthians 12:27–31

We must all, collectively and individually, take responsibility for the body of Christ

- Apostles have direct, commissioned authority to go out and spread the message of Jesus Christ.
- Prophets – a timely biblical word for the church.
- Teachers – the ability to help people learn, understand and apply the Bible.
- Miracle, healing and helping all help support the body as a whole and show God's love.
- Gifts wisdom and tongues also help direct individuals and the body as a whole.

Here are **practical steps** any reader can take when encountering apparent contradictions:

- Read the wider context.
- Check the original language or multiple translations.
- Consider the author's purpose and audience.
- Distinguish descriptive vs. prescriptive.
- Trace key themes across the letter.
- Use Scripture to interpret Scripture.
- Hold tension humbly.

Let us desire to edify the Body of Christ with whatever God has given us to serve with.

Am I humble yet proactive in seeking to serve?

Am I growing in the gifts given to me?

Am I seeking how I can edify the Body of Christ?

You will not truly be fulfilled until you are living into who God has created you to be.