

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study Series – Part 1

“I am a Church Member”

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I AM A CHURCH MEMBER



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INTRODUCTION

Based on our research of 557 churches from 2004 to 2010, nine out of ten churches in America are declining or growing at a pace that is slower than that of their communities. Simply stated, churches are losing ground in their own backyards.

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We can blame it on the churches, the hypocritical members, and the uncaring pastors. Lots of Christians are doing that. But I am proposing that we who are church members need to look in the mirror. I am suggesting that congregations across America are weak because many of us church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ.

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We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, and to care for us.

We don't like the hypocrites in the church, but we fail to see our own hypocrisies.

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God did not give us local churches to become country clubs where membership means we have privileges and perks. He placed us in churches to serve, to care for others, to pray for leaders, to learn, to teach, to give, and, in some cases, to die for the sake of the gospel.

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Many churches are weak because we have members who have turned the meaning of membership upside down. It's time to get it right. It's time to become a church member as God intended. It's time to give instead of being entitled.

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I WILL BE A FUNCTIONING CHURCH MEMBER

Biblical Principle

God expects us to be actively involved in the body life of the church.

Biblical Passage in Focus

I Corinthians 12:12-31

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Life Impact and Lesson Goals

This lesson is designed to help you understand biblical membership in the body life of the church by:

- Examining the biblical concept of body life in the church
- Examining the functions of members in the body life of the church
- Examining the relationship between the members in the body life of the church
 - Examining the necessity of unity in the body life of the church
 - Examining the necessity of diversity in the body life of the church
- Examining the motivation for all that is said and done in the body life of the church

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Lesson Outline

Each Member is **Indispensable** (I Corinthians 12:12-20)

Each Member is **Interdependent** (I Corinthians 12: 21-27)

Each Member is **Interconnected** (I Corinthians 12: 27-31); (I Corinthians 13:1-7)

Each Member is **Involved** (I Corinthians 12:12-26)

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Friends, the individual members of our bodies must work together so that we can live full and productive lives in this world. Every limb, organ and cell that makes up our bodies must participate properly or we will be crippled and our bodies will shut down. Scripture likens the church to a body with many members and as the body of Christ we too must work together to accomplish the will of God in the world and in one another lives. The apostle Paul in addressing the gift confusing that was tearing the Corinthian church apart uses the body metaphor to illustrate what it means to be a member of the body life of the church. Over the next several weeks we will explore what it means to be a member of the body of Christ biblically. First let's look at:

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Lesson Historical Setting

Paul has been addressing a number of issues plaguing the Corinthian congregation ranging from divisions, sexual immorality, marital problems, incest, idolatry, pride communion issues and spiritual gifts misunderstanding and questions about the resurrection of Christ. However, in I Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul is dealing with the division that resulted from the Corinthians misunderstanding of the place and purpose of spiritual gifts within the church. To illustrate their place and purpose within the congregation and to foster unity among them, Paul employed the body metaphor to demonstrate their need for one another and what it means to members of one body.

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Lesson Commentary and Application

Each Member is **Indispensable** (I Corinthians 12:12-20)

Membership means we are **Vital** Parts of the Whole – (vv. 12-13).

We are Vital Parts of the Whole because of our Oneness with the Savior- (v.12).

We are Vital Parts of the Whole because of our Oneness in the Spirit- (v.13)

We all experienced the Baptism of the Spirit- (v.13a)

We all experienced the Bestowal of the Spirit- (v.13b)

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Lesson Commentary and Application

Each Member is **Indispensable** (I Corinthians 12:12-20)

Membership means we are **Varied** Parts of the Whole- (vv. 14-20)

We are Varied in **Ability-** (vv.15-16)

We are Varied in **Activity-** (v.17)

We are Varied in **Arrangement-** (vv. 18-20)

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Lesson Commentary and Application

Each Member is **Indispensable** (I Corinthians 12:12-20)

Membership means we are **Valued** Parts of the Whole- (vv. 15-16; 21-26)

Each member is not to **Underestimate** his or her Value – (vv.15-16)

Each member is not to **Overestimate** his or her Value - (vv. 21-26)

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Each Member is **Interdependent** (I Corinthians 12: 21-27)

Just as the various systems of our material and physical bodies depend on one another to function properly, so is true of the members who make up the fellowship of the church. The hand depends on the feet and the feet depend on the hand. The eyes depend on the ears and the ears depend on the eyes. So God has set it up in the body life of the church. We need each other because no one member has everything that he or she needs to function whole and healthy. No one has all the gifts to operate independently. Nor does one member have all the resources to make disciples out of the people groups of the world. But we do possess all the gifts and resources as the body of Christ to transform people into the image of Jesus Christ.

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And in verses 21-27, Paul speaks of the fellowship of the body's members in terms of their interdependence and he cites the reasons and rational for their interdependence upon one another. If dust flies in the eyes, they eyes can't say they have no need of the hands assistance. When driving a car, the hands nor the feet can say to the eyes, we have no need of you. Likewise, those who have the gifts of service can't say to those who have the gifts of speaking, we don't need you. What good is having a wait staff without cooks or vice-versa? **So, what makes us interdependent?**

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Our Diversity of Gifts makes us Interdependent – (vv.21-25a)

In verses 21-25, Paul speaks about several attitudes that should be absent from the fellowship because of their potential threat to our interdependence.

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Contention threatens our Interdependence – (vv. 21-24)

Just because one person possesses the service gift and lacks the speaking gift doesn't mean he or she is less valuable. Nor should it lead to bickering and contention in the body of Christ. Diversity doesn't make us enemies; it simply makes us unique.

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Contempt threatens our Interdependence – (vv. 22-24)

In verses 22-24, Paul warns the Corinthian Church about judging other members of the body by their appearance (22). The tongue is small and not much to look at, but it is a powerful instrument that can be used to build up or tear down. (James 3:1-9) D. L Moody was not much to look at nor was he polished, but people of all status, walks of life and means came to hear him preach. Paul warned them not to judge by the applause some members received (23-24).

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Those body parts that are displayed like the hands and the face have no greater value or honor just because they are visible for all to see. Nor are those body parts that are covered up by clothing and skin any less valuable or honored. Those body parts that are covered by skin and clothing have a special honor all their own. A body can get along without a leg, a hand or an arm, but it can't get along without a liver, kidneys or a heart. And often we bestow more applause and honor on seen rather than the unseen. If the truth be told, the unseen parts are more vital. "Vital Organs"

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Conceit threatens our Interdependence – (vv. 23-25a)

Conceit, pride and self-importance is the root cause of contention and contempt within the body life of the church.

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Design of God makes us Interdependent – (vv.25b-27)

- God designed the body for Mutual ***Accord*** - (vv.25-26a)
- God designed the body for Mutual ***Affection*** - (v.25b)
- God designed the body for Mutual ***Acclaim*** - (v.26b)
- God designed the body for Mutual ***Alignment*** - (v.27)

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Each Member is Interconnected (I Corinthians 12: 27-31; 13:1-7)

Each member is **Interconnected** because of **God** – (vv. 27-28a)

- God **Personally** Interconnects **Members** of the Body – (vv. 21-24)
- God **Providentially** Interconnects **Members** of the Body – (v. 27b)

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Each Member is Interconnected because of their **Gift(s)** – (28b-31)

- Every member has a **Divinely Assigned** gift – (v. 28a)
- Every member has a **Different Assigned** gift – (v. 29)
- Every member is **Dependent** on **Another's** gift – (v. 30)

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Each member is Interconnected because of **Grace** – (vv. 31; 13:1-7)

- Grace is the **Better** Gift – (v. 12:31)
- Grace is the **Basis** for all Gifts – (vv. 13:1-3)
- Grace is the **Building** Gift – (vv. 4-7)

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Each Member is Involved (I Corinthians 12:12-26)

- A. Each member should be Involved in the Membership of the body – (Acts 2:42-47)
- B. Each member should be Involved in the Ministry of the body – (I Peter 4:10)
- C. Each member should be Involved in the Maturation of the body – (Ephesians 4:11-13)
- D. Each member should be Involved in the Multiplication of the body – (I Timothy 2:2)
- E. Each member should be involved in the Management of the body – (I Cor. 16:1-2)
- F. Each member should be involved in the Mission of the body – (Matthew 28:19-20)

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Questions?