

Our physical body was designed to best function following three essential principles.

The principle of **diversity**

The principle of **unity**

The principle of **mutuality**

God designed the body of Christ to function on those same three principles. In fact the most informative and most used illustration of the church is the “Body of Christ” with Christ as the controlling head. The problem is the body doesn’t always follow the direction of the head and it does not always appreciate the three fundamental principles necessary for effective impact for Christ.

Just a thought I had this week. The Trinity also operates on these three principles. The Trinity operates as a unity – they all share the same essence. There is diversity of function by each of the members. Each of the members supports the other members and without any of the members you no longer have a Trinity.

The Holy Spirit inspired the writes of Scripture to address the issues of relationships. Remember that these three principles are as natural and necessary to the body of Christ as they are in our physical bodies. You don’t have to learn them. They occur naturally as designed by God. Only the disease of sin and selfishness causes dysfunction in the harmonious working of the members of our body.

The healthy operation of relationships in the body of Christ draws attention to the gospel in a self-centered and broken world. The Holy Spirit issued numerous directives related to our relationship with other members of the body in the form of “one another” commands.

PROMOTE AND PRESERVE UNITY

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER” (Don’t be indifferent to one another)

“RECEIVE AND GREET ONE ANOTHER”

“DO GOOD AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER”

“AGREE AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER”

“HONOR ONE ANOTHER”

“FORBEAR AND FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER”

To round out the one another passages related to promoting and preserving unity, there a few prohibitions; things God instructs us NOT to do.

“DON’T JUDGE ONE ANOTHER”

“DON’T BE EMBITTERED AGAINST ONE ANOTHER”

“DON’T PROVOKE ONE ANOTHER”

God designed the body to operate in unity.

He gifts individuals to equip the members to serve one another until unity in the faith is achieved.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

It is this unity that inspires belief in the deity of Christ.

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. John 17:20-21

The second principle of the body is diversity.

Promote and preserve unity.

Celebrate Diversity.

Diversity comes into play mostly in the area of ministry and function.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Not everyone has the same capabilities. Not everyone serves in the same ministry.

Sunday School teacher, prayer, praise team, service to members, office work, bookkeeping, maintenance, giving, encouragement, elders, trustees, evangelism, visitation, missions, and the list goes on and on.

Then there is a whole list of ministries not directly connected to what we would consider "church ministry" or "sacred" ministry.

I want to take a moment to validate those who serve in that category.

Ship yard workers, bankers, salespeople, restaurant workers, business men and women, mechanics, doctors, lawyers, medical professionals, government workers, farmers, clerical, retirees.

God gifts and calls every follower of Jesus Christ into some ministry.

CALLING

The word vocation comes from the Latin "vocare". The early church considered only those in full time ministry were called. They divided up people in those who took the perfect calling – clergy and there rest took the permitted way – secular calling. Erroneous view of the world that only the spiritual thing matters.

1 Cor 7 addresses the question about what circumstance of life is better to serve the Lord.

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. 1 Cor 7:17-24

Everyone is called.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Ephesians 4:28

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Three simultaneous callings

Highest calling – union with Christ

Common Callings –things that all Christians are called to do at all times and places

Specific Callings – Husband/wife, parent, teacher, baker, programmer.

These callings place us in a position to develop our walk with God and impact our world. Serve God wherever you are. We have been taught that all that matters is the mission. The only thing that counts is the spiritual. Yet to God, every specific calling matters. God can be glorified in every calling. (Even in eating and drinking).

These callings can change or be taken away. We must never put our value on our specific calling. Our identity must come from our highest calling of relationship with Christ. We can only identify our specific calling when our highest calling is squared away. Only sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit will enable us to identify our specific callings.

Not everyone experiences the same results.

We often consider those with the greatest impact as a success. God doesn't call us to be great. He calls us to be faithful. To each He has given a measure of faith.

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. Romans 12:3

Jesus ended up with a small group of followers after preaching to thousands. John the Baptist drew huge crowds but ended up being executed in obscurity. There have been numerous pastors who developed huge ministries only to wind up losing it all because they forgot the central focus.

Not everyone will have the impact of a Billy Graham or a Chuck Swindoll. Not everyone will have a global or even national impact. Not everyone will win hundreds to Jesus. Many will finish their ministry in relative obscurity but will be greeted in eternity with, "Well done good and faithful servant!" Everyone contributes to the whole as God's called and gifted instrument in this world to, with one voice, glorify the God and father of Lord Jesus Christ.

For the body is not one member, but many. 1 Corinthians 12:14

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be?

But now there are many members, but one body. 1 Corinthians 12:18-20

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:8-11

The point here is serving one another to the glory of God. Whether it is a serving gift or a speaking gift, we are to use it to serve the body. Four passages address the diversity of gifts appear in Romans 12, I Cor 12, Eph 4 and 1 Peter 4.

God instructs every believer to do most of the activities mentioned in these four passages. But God implants a higher level of capacity and desire in specific members. Each member will exercise their diverse gift in a particular context or ministry and experience varying levels of results according to the working of the Holy Spirit.

God is in charge and distributes gifts, assigns ministry and generates effects. That leaves NO room for jealousy or pride.

All the glory goes to God. The Holy Spirit gifts as He wills. The Holy Spirit places as He wills. The Holy Spirit brings about results as He wills. Unfortunately some people rely on natural talent to try to bring about supernatural results and take personal credit.

Then the LORD said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. Zechariah 4:6

And when I (Paul) came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

We don't want people's faith to rest on us. We are merely sign posts point the way to life in the Spirit. We have taught on spiritual gifting before but will take just a moment for review. First, according to the quote from Peter's letter, the gifts can be divided into two basic categories.

Those who speak -- Those who serve

Paul's list in Romans suggests a basic eight gifts.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:4-8

Paul expands the kind of things that build the body in his letter to the Corinthians.

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11

The central factor in the exercise of gifts in the body is not the gift itself but the demonstration of love by means of your gifting. The exercise of a gift without genuine love will not have the desired effect or benefit to the body and will be devoid of reward. The purpose of the gifts is the growth of the body; body building. Too many try to use their gifting for personal kingdom building. We are to focus on **building up** of the body of Christ.

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

Encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification (building) according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Jude 1:20-21

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Romans 14:19

Just as the various members of our physical body contribute to the growth of the body, so the various gifted members of the body serve to facilitate the growth of the body. As we saw earlier, it is the proper working of the parts that brings about growth.

Teach and exhort one another (Explain God's truth and perspective)

Admonish one another (put truth into the mind, remind one another of truth)

Encourage one another (come along side)

Build one another
Speak to one another
Serve one another with your special gifting

Consider your gifting. Consider your ministry. Consider how the Holy Spirit is using you to affect the growth of the body.

Are we more concerned about our growth and comfort or the growth of the body of Christ? Often it includes self-sacrifice, discomfort, difficult tasks, exhaustion, time, energy, investment of personal resources. Always it includes investment in people.

You were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13

Jesus made it clear the only tangible way of ministering to Him is to minister to people.

The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:40

Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:34

Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' Matthew 25:45