

## **SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:**

A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

### **III. MAINTAINING PROPER DIET & EXERCISE**

#### **D.) ROLES & EQUIPMENT (Offices & Gifts)**

## **“THE OPTIONS MENU” (1 Cor. 12:12-31)**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Beginning in 1844, the French author Alexandre Dumas created an adventurous story that featured a team of characters that have epitomized what it means to be a team up to this very day. The Three Musketeers featured not three, but four men who learned and proved that they could only accomplish their heart's desire by working together as one unit with different parts. Of course, long before Alexandre Dumas, this principle had already been compellingly presented to the world in God's Holy Scripture.

### **A.) ALL FOR ONE & ONE FOR ALL (vv. 12-14)**

- **Think for a moment about your physical body.** Even though you are one single individual your body is made up of countless components and elements. Some you could live without. Some you couldn't. Some could be missing or misfiring and you wouldn't easily notice. Others, if missing or malfunctioning, would immediately set off all the 'bells and whistles.' They each represent a huge variety of functions and importance. Yet, your body is only truly complete and able to reach it's full potential when all of the parts are present and functioning in a manner that is both healthy and in accordance with it's God-given role.
- **ALL the parts of the body – though immensely diverse – function for the benefit and purpose of the One Whole. At the same time and for the same reason, the One Body must display great concern and care for each and every part lest the whole should malfunction, fail and/or suffer.**
- In his letter to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul takes this commonly understood metaphor and applies it to them.
- First & foremost, he emphasizes how this dynamic is true of Christ Himself – Emmanuel, God With Us and in the flesh.
- Then, having gotten their attention and curiosity, Paul connects this to the relationship of all redeemed believers in Jesus. This amazing Truth is that all those we believe and put their faith in Him as the Messiah are His functional Body! He is the head, the nerve and control center, and His redeemed are empowered through His salvation and Spirit to function as the parts that make up His Body.
- **The link that knits all of these parts together is baptism in the one Spirit.** This is a reference to the reality of which our water baptism symbolizes – cleansing and rebirth through faith in the gift of Christ's sacrificial work on the cross on our behalf. Through Christ and His grace, those who have genuinely believed have been spiritual re-born as different parts that together in Christ form One Body.
- *Literally, Scripture says that they have each been immersed into the One Body. In either words, not just part of us , but ALL of us are made to be but a part of His Body!*
- **“whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free”** Taken specifically, they represent the two greatest distinctions in the First Century. Taken generally, these contrasts represent the two major distinctions that separate people in any time and culture – race/religion and social status.

- ALL earthly distinctions – physical, ethnic, social, economic are obliterated in Christ. *We were each different in . . . , but now we are all simply His.*
- **Illustration (use as object lesson): Consider a powdered lemonade mix.** Individually, each crystal represents a unique, sweet-sour combination of elements. However, if you pour (immerse) the right amount into a jug of pure water, add the right amount of sugar, and stir thoroughly you will have a new Whole (lemonade) in which the individual parts seamlessly blend together into a whole that is entirely different from the parts. First, they were born as unique, individual crystals. Then, immersed together in water, they have become inseparable members of a delicious and refreshing drink.
- In the same way, Scripture declares, we were once born unique and separate individuals. But, then, upon our placing our faith in Christ, we have each been immersed in His Spirit and been re-made together as one integrated whole.
- **Remember always, the Body is One and not a group. Yet, don't ever forget that this One is made up of many different parts.**

## B.) ALL ARE **NECESSARY** (vv. 15-24a)

- Earlier, I asked us to imagine the human body as it is. Now, imagine what it would be like according to Paul's further, intentionally absurd, suggestions.
- What if, instead of two eyes and two ears, you had four eyes – two in front and one on each side – and no ears? What if another was just one giant mouth? What if your body was an amazing mass of muscles, but had no heart?
- **Any of these examples would be a monstrosity of ugliness and malfunction!**
- ALL the parts of the human body are necessary to the function, purpose, health and success of the whole!
- **So it is, says God's Word, with the local church as a Body of Christ.**
- The emphasis is upon the different people that make up the Body and how they are viewed in light of their role, ability and position within the whole.
- Some parts are *seen* or *thought of* (mostly by others, sometimes even by themselves) as being weaker, less honorable and therefore less necessary. Scripture, using the example of the human body our Father God so wonderfully knit, makes it clear that there is NO SUCH THING as an unnecessary part of the body and that no part **which fulfills it's function** can be considered less honorable.
- In other words, we make too many erroneous judgments of one another because too often our main concern is how another *appears to us*. That is, to what degree do we personally notice them, or what they do and how that fits into our own personal preference, benefit or function according to how we view and like things.
- That may be the way of the flesh (sin), but it is certainly NOT God's way!!! **God's way is to judge and honor each part according to how it performs it's own God-given place, role and function in the Body.**
- **In church, this means NOT comparing the perceived value of our different spiritual gifts, roles and calling, BUT rather according to our faithfulness in exercising our own unique God-given spiritual gifts within the place and role which God has assigned us.**
- This is equally true and important whether it is an expectation imposed on us by others or by ourselves. As Fee remarks: “... *There can be little question that the disquieting desire on the part of many to be something in the body other than what they are is a plague on our house*” (pg. 610).

- I mean, think about it. Imagine if I decided: “*Hey, these days the worship leader is the 'rock star' of Christendom. I'm going to use my authority as Sr. Pastor to take over as the worship leader and, because she has a much better smile than me, I'll have Amy Gould preach (even though she gets sick just thinking about speaking in public).*” What do you think that combination would do to the reputation and effectiveness of PBC?

### C.) ALL ARE **INTERCONNECTED** (vv. 24b-26)

- ALL parts of the Church are necessary, ALL are in fact interconnected and interdependent as is the mission, health and effectiveness of the whole!
- In fact, contrary to the previous mentioned assumptions, it is those parts of the body which seem to be weaker and most hidden from view that are really the most important. Don't believe me? Where would your pretty face or bulging muscles be without your organs? When God built our bodies, which parts did He leave exposed and which did He make the most provision to protect and preserve?
- So it is in the Church! The Pastor is generally the most visible (and heard) member of the church. Even, perhaps, it's 'public face.' All of this is very important and only one can properly fulfill this role. BUT, what would that 'face' really look like and how would it 'sound' without the support and efforts of countless other parts and cells - such as prayer, encouragement, service, etc.?!
- When just one – ANY one – part suffers then ALL the other parts and the Body itself suffer with it! We say that, but do we really understand it? Believe it? If so, then why are we so quick to undermine, minimize and/or hurt one another – often attacking one part in order to strengthen a different one?
- AND, if we really understand the Body then we should equally recognize that, if one member is successful, so are all members and the Body with it. So, if one is honored then should not all rejoice? Scripture says ABSOLUTELY! This is why we have “Honors Sunday” and expect all in the church to embrace it as an occasion for every member celebration and no place for jealousy, covetousness, or gossip.

### D.) ALL HAVE A **GOD-GIVEN ROLE** (vv. 27-30)

- To put everything together, we all comprise One Body of Christ, and yet we are different members of that Body.
- As different members, we have been created and empowered with different gifts and, with those gifts, assigned to different functions and roles.
- **The question that Almighty God is most concerned with is NOT “what role have you chosen for yourself,” BUT “what are you doing to fulfill the role He has given you?”**

### CONCLUSION: THE **DESIRE** THAT KEEPS ALL **ONE** (v. 31)

- Wow! For us, living in the flesh and a sin-saturated culture, this is still a mighty 'tall order'!
- It's relatively easy to say that we should all accept our own God-given gifts, function and role in the Church and each be faithful in carrying that out just as God intended for us. It's relatively easy to say all of us are really equally valuable, equally necessary and deserving of honor according to our faithfulness and regardless of our specific role. But, 2,000+ yrs. of church history tells us this is not so easy to do.
- Why not?

- Because we continue to exercise our gifts and roles outside of God's context and foundation.
- In the next part of this letter, Scripture emphasizes this context in great detail. It is the context and foundation of Agape Love. With it, the Body will work together in perfect harmony and reach it's full health and potential. Without it . . . well, we know all too well.