

1. There are many _____, but one _____.

2. Every _____ plays a _____.

3. The body is to _____, not _____.

THE ONE THING: _____

in a way that _____.



The Take-Off

If I could give today's teaching a title, it would simply be "Now what?"

There comes a point where we all have to ask ourselves questions like "what do I do with what I've learned?" or "so what's the bottom line?"

That's the whole point of this teaching.

It will be practical, simple, and hopefully - if I do a decent job - easily applicable, even if we don't like the application!

I have 3 main points to make, and then I'll give you the one statement that we need to take away.

We'll spend the majority of our time in 1 Corinthians 12 so you can go ahead and turn there if you'd like.

While you're turning there, let me just throw Colossians 1:24 out for you. When we talk about the church as the body of Jesus, this is where it's found in the Bible. Church stuff is new to so many of us, and the rest of us are quick to throw around phrases that sound odd, but this concept of the church being a body - and specifically, the body of Jesus - is a pretty important one.

I want to make 3 statements today about what the Bible calls the body.

1. There are many parts, but one body (1 Cor. 12:12-20)

Thankfully there are certain passages in Scripture that just make sense

We don't have to explain them, dissect them, or dig into them to figure out the meaning

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 is one of those sections

Basically, Paul says what we intuitively know: your body has different parts

Everyone who has ever looked in a mirror says, "No kidding."

We already know - even those of us who were horrible in science - that a hand isn't a foot and an ear isn't an elbow.

Diversity is what makes the body a body (vv. 17-20)

Many different parts; one awesome body.

2. Every part plays a part (1 Cor. 12:21-26)

While I believe we know this intuitively just like the first point, I don't believe that we really embrace it. Inevitably, we all tend to start thinking our part is a bit better and a bit more important.

While we agree that the look of the body includes variety, we want the life of the body to match the part we play.

This leads to seeing the other parts as dispensable, and verse 22 says that is a dangerous conclusion to draw

The truth is that the only way for the body to function correctly is if all the parts function uniquely

Ill: Waking up with both arms asleep

That silly experience taught me the truth of this statement: it is often the unseen that makes the seen work

Something happened while I was sleeping - some nerve didn't send a message to the brain - and my arms fell asleep and that reality made a simple function almost impossible

Not all parts of this body will always be on display, but all parts of this body are necessary

That's why Paul wrote in verse 25 that each part is given equal concern

Here's what that looks like in a local church body: we never say "Oh, he's just..." or "She's just..."

Nobody is "just" anything because every part plays a part.

Because every part is different and every part is necessary, the third truth is all the more critical...

3. The body is to work together, not drift apart (1 Cor. 12:27-31)

If we aren't intentional about staying together, we will naturally drift apart.

We already know this, because we see it in our relationships

We tend to focus on what we're interested in and what we're doing and eventually what started as a line of people walking together becomes a bunch of individuals kind of going in the same direction but not as tightly as they once were

Paul knew this. He wrote about lots of different gifts and then asked a bunch of questions that all had an unspoken "no" as the answer.

We don't all do the same thing, and it requires work on each of our parts in order to stay together Here's why: whenever two or more people live or work together, there will eventually be gaps between what we expect from each other and what we experience with each other

This third point is all about what we're to do with that gap, and Paul understood that, which is why he followed this with a chapter on love

He writes a lot in 1 Cor. 13:4-7 about how love should act, but verse 7 is where we need to focus (and I got a lot of what follows from a marriage series by Andy Stanley, but it fits here, too)

Paul mentions 4 things that love ALWAYS does, and for many of us it's hard to believe that anyone could always protect, trust, hope, or persevere. In fact, most of us are thinking, "But if you only knew..."

That's the gap. We expected one thing from a spouse, a friend, a local body of believers, and we experienced something different.

As Andy said, we all fill the gap with one of 2 things: we believe the best or we assume the worst. Love believes the best.

Think about the body: if your arm suddenly doesn't move, you don't start yelling at your arm. You go to the doctor because you now something must be wrong if the arm isn't functioning properly. You investigate. You believe the best about your arm ("It's not like my arm to not move.").

The same in a local body.

We're not surprised by the gaps. We simply see them as opportunity to throw heaps of grace at people who probably need it more than ever before.

We fill the gaps in a way that brings us back together and provides grace for healing.

The Landing

- Now, I told you that I'd give you the one statement that kind of sums up the whole thing, the "if you only remember one thing, make sure it's this" statement, and here it is:
- When it comes to body life, we need to fill the gaps in a way that wraps
- So, what's next? It's time for all of us to begin to ask the Lord if this is the body we're called to; the place where we can dig our heels in and serve; the place where we can give and receive grace and fill the gaps in a way that wraps.
- That's what The Gathering is about, and if that's what you're about, then you'll want this to be your place, too.
- In a few weeks, you will have the opportunity to make that next step. The chance to move past just knowing what's at our core to being able to say it's at your core, too.
- This body will be better, because this body will be made up of different and necessary parts that work hard at functioning to their full potential.
- And that is the body of Christ at her best.