

**Gathering Question:**

Imagine the ideal church in the ideal city with the ideal people as members. In what ways would the members of that ideal church serve and work together as the Body of Christ? Why does Paul use the metaphor of a body to describe the Church? Is it a good metaphor?

## **God's Plan for the Church**

After three chapters of solid instruction on the foundational truths from God concerning the church, Paul takes a rather dramatic turn, shifting the emphasis from doctrine to duty, from principles to practice, from beliefs to behavior. He has described to us all the blessings, honors, and privileges of being a child of God. Now he reminds believers of the obligations that come with being a member of God's family.

Paul first explains to the Ephesians that he wants them to live up to the calling they have received from Christ. Believers that are committed to the glory of God will live in such a way that will make unity in the church a priority, but unity cannot exist unless every member does his or her part. God has given gifts to every member of the Body of Christ and he expects each member to use their gifts to build up the Body of Christ for the glory of God. Not only are the members of the Body to be unified, the message of the Body should also be one message—"one hope... one Lord, one faith, one baptism...."

The human body is one of the most amazing organic creations of God. While it is marvelously diverse and complex, it is at the same time unified. The parts of our human bodies have unparalleled harmony and interrelatedness. When that harmony and inner unity breaks down, our bodies become ill and do not function as they should.

It is the same with the Body of Christ. Just as the human body has connective tissues, muscles, bones, internal organs, ligaments, the Body of Christ is made up of members with a tremendous diversity of gifts and responsibilities but they are all responsible to each other so that the Body can function as it should. No member detached from the Body can exist. Lungs cannot lie on a table outside of a person's body and help the person to breathe. Our lungs must be connected to the Body for them to function at all. When every part of the Body is connected and is functioning as it should then the Body grows and is healthy.

## **Read and Reflect**

Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 12:4-18

1. Paul begins this section by urging believers to “walk worthy of the calling they have received.” Describe or even make a list of what it means to walk worthy.

2. Paul encourages believers also to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” What would make every effort include? Is there a limit? What are the limits?

3. What does maturity in the Body of Christ look like? What does immaturity look like?

4. Think about your relationships in the Body. What, if anything, has kept you from unity with other members in the Body? What would it look like for you to “walk worthy of your calling” in those relationships?

5. What obstacles can impede the spiritual growth and maturing of an individual Christian? Of a whole congregation?

6. In your opinion, when there are a large number of different spiritual gifts present among the members of the church, does it help the church be more unified or does it more often tend to spark controversy and disunity?