

Unity of the Body

By Scott Moller

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
(Ephesians 4:2 NIV)

You have probably heard the well known quote, “No man is an island,” by John Donne, a seventeenth-century English clergyman and writer. Donne was trying to convey the interconnection and dependence that each person has with other people. Certainly, at birth, each one of us was dependent on others for our very survival. Beyond that, throughout our lives, each of us receives and gives assistance and care.

In Scripture, God teaches us that Believers are also to be interdependent with one another. One of the most familiar teachings by the Apostle Paul is that all Believers form one “body.” Paul states: *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:12a). Again Paul states: *“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it”* (1 Corinthians 12:26-27).

This analogy is very useful in helping us understand how Believers are to function together. It is obvious to us that the individual parts of our physical bodies are useless by themselves. Likewise, Paul wants Christians to understand that they are not separate from one another. Christians are really connected to one another, so much so, that when one suffers all suffer, and when one rejoices, all rejoice.

Sadly, many Christians do not act as if they are part of the “Body of Christ.” In fact, many Christians function as if they are completely independent of the Church. This harms both the Believer and the Church alike. The Church is harmed because it has to function without all of its parts. This is much like a physical body that is missing an arm or leg. It still functions, but it is obviously incomplete and limited in its abilities. The individual Believer is harmed because the person is operating without his intended support and accountability structure. This weakens the Believer and limits his fruitfulness.

God established the Church as a body for our benefit and His glory. God knows that the life of a Christian in this world will be difficult and often discouraging. A properly functioning Church will be a place of sanctuary and encouragement for the believer. The Church also is to be a place of loving instruction and accountability to help keep us on the right track.

Most of all, God receives the glory when Believers operate in unity within the Church. The work of the Church is a group-effort by Spirit-filled Believers – not any one individual. God should always receive the credit for the work of the Church and not individuals. In addition, unity within the Church helps point people to Christ. Drawing people to Christ is the ultimate goal of the Church, which should be our focus. We should take great care to be Biblically unified within the Church for the glory of God.

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”
(1 Corinthians 10:31)