

*The Body
Of
Christ*



The Body of Christ

If you were to describe our congregation to someone else, what words would you tell them? Would you describe our building, would you tell about our elders and deacons? Would you talk about the members that attend here? As long as I'm asking questions, is this what Jesus wanted when he established the church? Did he want us to be

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who we are today? There's a really good picture of what Jesus wanted his church to look like in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6: "4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same

Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

One of the ways God describes his church is that we are tools in his hands. No more and no less. Each one of us is capable of doing work for the church that people sitting next to us can't do. They might want to do it, they might have a heart willing to do it, but God did not give them that capability. God did not give them that responsibility. What he gave to them is different than what he gave to you. Paul writes that this is something to celebrate, that we are different from each other. He's writing to a group



Volume 32 - Number 5- Sept/Oct 2013
BC is published every other month. Send all inquiries, address changes and subscriptions to the editor: Scott Gage, PO Box 3425, Fayetteville, AR 72702-3425 Voice & Fax 479-521-6809 Email: Lsgage129@cs.com

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High-Tech Meeting

A rancher was standing at his fence watching his herd when up came a new BMW. The car stopped and the man inside-wearing a \$700 suit, \$200 sunglasses and a \$10,000 gold watch-asked the rancher, "If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf?"

"Sure", said the rancher.

The man parked his car, connected his laptop computer to his cell phone and surfed to an internet NASA page where he called up a Global Positioning satellite to get an exact fix on his location. He scanned the area in an ultra high resolution photo, exported the image to a processing center in Germany, and within seconds got a message that the data has been received and stored.

He then used his Blackberry to access an MS-SQL database through an ODBC e-mail connection to a spreadsheet, and a few minutes later printed out a 150-page report on his miniaturized HP LaserJet printer.

"You have exactly 1,586 cows and calves," he said.

"That's right. I guess you can take one of my calves," said the rancher.

Then the rancher responded, "If I tell you what you do for a living, will you give me back my calf?"

The man replied, "Okay, why not?"

"You're a U. S. Congressman," said the rancher.

"Wow! That's right! How did you guess that?" the man exclaimed.

"Didn't need to guess," said the rancher: "You showed up uninvited, wanted to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I didn't ask. You tried to show me how much smarter you are than I am and you don't know a thing about cattle.

"This is a herd of sheep. Now give me back my dog."

...Via e-mail

had grown up far too fast in this very house, and whose voice had grown fainter and fainter over the years. In the utter silence of the attic, the words of a guileless six-year-old worked their magic and carried the old man back to a time almost totally forgotten.

Entry after entry stirred a sentimental hunger in his heart like the longing a gardener feels in the winter for the fragrance of spring flowers. But it was accompanied by the painful memory that his son's simple recollections of those days were far different from his own. But how different?

Reminded that he had kept a daily journal of his business activities over the years, he closed his son's journal and turned to leave, having forgotten the cherished photo that originally triggered his search. Hunched over to keep from bumping his head on the rafters, the old man stepped to the wooden stairway and made his descent, then headed down a carpeted stairway that led to the den.

Opening a glass cabinet door, he reached in and pulled out

an old business journal. Turning, he sat down at his desk and placed the two journals beside each other. His was leather-bound and engraved neatly with his name in gold, while his son's was tattered and the name "Jimmy" had been nearly scuffed from its surface. He ran a long skinny finger over the letters, as though he could restore what had been worn away with time and use.

As he opened his journal, the old man's eyes fell upon an inscription that stood out because it was so brief in comparison to other days. In his own neat handwriting were these words:

Wasted the whole day fishing with Jimmy. Didn't catch a thing.

With a deep sigh and a shaking hand, he took Jimmy's journal and found the boy's entry for the same day, June 4. Large scrawling letters, pressed deeply into the paper, read:

Went fishing with my dad. Best day of my life.

(via WALKTHETALK.com)
Elk Ave Bulletin

of people that were arguing that they should be more like me. We still have that today. We still have members of our church who look at others and think that they should be more like them, and because they're not like them they are wrong. But that's not biblical. People are different. It is the same spirit that gives them the gifts they have. There are different kinds of service. There are different kinds of ways we offer ourselves to God. And we are acceptable to God because he made us that way.

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1Corinthians 12:7-11: "7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another

gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

In the first century some people spoke in tongues and some didn't; some worked miracles and some did not. Does God say that that is wrong that some didn't? NO. God says I made it that way. God spread different gifts to different people but as a whole we do his work. He says this gift that has been given to you is for the common good in verse seven. That means what you have as a gift from God is for everybody else. It's possible that God has given you the ability to make great deals of money. There are some people that have the Midas touch and everything they do makes money. Some of us think, "I wish I had that gift." Let me say to you seriously, don't

wish for something that God did not give to you. He gave you what he intended for you to have. A person that has the ability to make money wasn't given that gift so they can have a bigger house and a fancier car than everybody else; God says that gift was given for the common good, for the good of everyone else in the church. And with that gift comes the responsibility that you share that with God's church.

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Not everyone can teach. Not everyone can be a comforter. Not everyone can be a peace-maker. Whatever gift you have God gave it to you to bless someone else. He never intended for you to keep it to yourself or for you to be puffed up and proud that you can do things others cannot. God says he distributed those gifts as he determined. He made the decision on what was needed and he gave it to one of us so that we would use it for the rest of us.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27: "12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 Now if the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need

you to share with us. You will answer to him for whether or not you did that. God put us here on purpose, whether you believe that or not. No matter what your gift is we need that gift in this congregation. You're not less important than anyone else in this congregation. You are different

than anyone else in this congregation and that is good. God meant for it to be that way.

...Rick Crooks

Oklahoma City, OK

Castles Built On Sand

In the faint light of the attic, an old man, tall and stooped, bent his great frame and made his way to a stack of boxes that sat near one of the little half-windows. Brushing aside a wisp of cobwebs, he tilted the top box toward the light and began to carefully lift out one old photograph album after another. Eyes once bright but now dim searched longingly for the source that had drawn him here.

It began with the fond recollection of the love of his life, long gone, and somewhere in these albums was a photo of her he hoped to rediscover. Silent as a mouse, he patiently opened the long buried treasures and soon was lost in a sea of memories. Although his world had not stopped

spinning when his wife left it, the past was more alive in his heart than his present loneliness.

Setting aside one of the dusty albums, he pulled from the box what appeared to be a journal from his grown son's childhood. He couldn't recall ever having seen it before, or that his son had ever kept a journal. Why did Elizabeth always save the children's old junk? He wondered, shaking his white head.

Opening the yellowed pages, he glanced over a short reading, and his lips curved in an unconscious smile. Even his eyes brightened as he read the words that spoke clear and sweet to his soul. It was the voice of the little boy who

what he means, each one of us has a gift, has something to contribute to the body of Christ. Take for instance apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. These men of God pour out the grace of God teachings. Teaching that has a specific purpose. That purpose is not to fill your mind but to busy your hands. These men were given to the church to prepare God's people for work. When these pastors and teachers and evangelists do their job and the members respond in works of service what happens? The body of Christ is built up. It grows spiritually mature, because each member is doing the job God wanted them to do. And when that happens we will reach a unity in the faith, a unity in the knowledge of God, and we will become mature, "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

If this church, in this town, is what God wants, we will be doing the same work that Jesus did. We should attain to the full measure of Christ. How do we get there? How do we do the work that Jesus

did? We do it together. When each one of us finds out what we're supposed to do, and we do it. Don't tell me that it is insignificant. God said it is not.

That purpose is not to fill your mind but to busy your hands.

I'm right-handed. I do almost everything right-handed. I throw right-handed. But you know what? I catch with my left hand. When I open a jar I use my right hand, but my left hand holds the jar. I pour my coffee with my right hand, but my left hand holds the cup. And don't even get me started about tying my shoes with one hand. Did you ever try to tie your shoes with one hand?

It's kind of silly to say that I'm right-handed. My left hand is almost always involved. Do you think this is a right-handed church and you're a left hand, so that must mean you're not important? We can't live without you. God put you here for a reason. He gave you gifts for

you!' 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

You and I might be as different as an eye is from a foot, but we are part of one and the same body. And we have our function as part of the body of Christ. God says there are those that we might think are weaker, but don't treat them as weaker, because they are indispensable. God has blessed you with a gift meant to be used for his church, your part is not to sell your-

self short, don't think that you're not important. God put you in this congregation, you're part of his body and he says you are indispensable. We are one body. We suffer together. We rejoice together. God said there is not a lesser gift and there's not a greater gift among us. He has made it very clear that not one of us is more important than the others. He's also made it clear that he put us together for a reason. What reason is that? That we are to take care of one another and build each other up. We build each other up with the gifts that he gave us.

He has made it very clear that not one of us is more important than the others.

Romans 12:3-8: "3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members

do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Because we belong to each other we have a debt to each other. We owe each other God’s grace.

He said in verse five each member belongs to all the others. Because we belong to each other we have a debt to each other. We owe each other God’s grace. That gift that has been given to you by God Paul says is given by grace. If it’s a gift of teaching or giving or compassion or singing or cooking, Paul says these gifts are God’s grace.

If you don’t share that gift with me God says you are withholding from me his grace, grace that he meant for me to have. You owe to every member of this body the gifts that God gave to you. God says each member of the body has its part. My right hand doesn’t just do what’s good for my right hand. If I’ve got a thorn in my foot and my right hand doesn’t say that it’s not its problem, my right hand goes to work and removes the thorn from my foot, even though it doesn’t hurt the hand. Every part goes to work to alleviate suffering. My left hand reaches into the medicine cabinet to get the Neosporin. And just like there’s no division in your body every member of God’s body is concerned about the whole. How would you describe your congregation? God describes it just as the scriptures above portray it.

I’m not saying that large congregations are bad, but how are you concerned about the members of that congregation when you don’t even know their names? You don’t even know they are hurting. You don’t even know what gifts

they have to share with you. God put us together for the common good. We each belong to one another. We owe each other God’s grace. God has called each of us to serve one another. Paul says that God gave me by grace the ability to teach you and that’s what I’m doing.

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Ephesians 4:4-6:”4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Paul said we need to understand that we are united. And he lists seven things that unite us. He goes on in verse seven to say that to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. What is grace? It is unmerited favor. I’ve known that since I was 10. And that’s true. Grace saves us, and that’s true. But

grace is more than that. God gives us grace because we are members of his church. We are members of his body. To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

Ephesians 4:11-16: “11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Paul gives us an example of