**ONE Church – UNITY I Corinthians 12:12-31**

ONE CHURCH series paragraph: Jesus Christ came to earth – lived, died, rose again and ascended to heaven – to establish a new community called the Church. The Church consists of all people everywhere who are trusting and following Jesus Christ. Though there are many different local gatherings of Jesus' followers around the world, He still has only one Church, and He is the Church’s one focus. Jesus gives us our identity. Jesus gives us gifts by the Holy Spirit. Jesus makes us unified and dependent on one another in His Body. And Jesus calls us into His mission to make disciples. Come be reminded how great it is to be part of Jesus' One Church at New Life.

**INTRO - E pluribus unum – Latin for "Out of many, one" – is a traditional motto of the United States, appearing on the Great Seal, approved by an Act of Congress in 1782**. (Wikipedia) This motto was proposed for the first Great Seal by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson in 1776. A latin phrase meaning "One from many," the phrase offered a strong statement of the American determination to form a single nation from a collection of states. Over the years, "E Pluribus Unum" has also served as a reminder of America's bold attempt to make one unified nation of people from many different backgrounds and beliefs. The challenge of seeking unity while respecting diversity has played a critical role in shaping our history, our literature, and our national character. (assumption.edu)

In a similar but more significant way, God has created the Church, the Body of Christ, to be “out of many, one”. We have different cultures and ethnicities, different families and traditions, different back stories and conversion stories, But in the midst of all these differences, the true Church of Jesus is unified by God Himself – We are one in Jesus!

First part of I Cor 12 speaks about the Gifting of the Church. But last part emphasizes the UNITY of the Church.

Through the Holy Spirit – All believers are UNITED as essential, interdependent members of ONE Body of Christ, gifted and equipped to carry out God’s will. Many parts -> ONE Body of Christ!

*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[c] 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.*

**Many parts are all united by the Holy Spirit to form the one Body of Christ. (12-14)**

Vs 12 is summary of 1-11. Body = soma, sound and whole human body. 18x in this chapter! Many parts form just one singular body. \*\*\*Human body has 206 bones, 78 organs (brain, lungs, heart, kidney, liver, etc…). All 1 body!

Vs 13 We were all (every single follower of Jesus) Baptized by/ with / in one Spirit. This is speaking of salvation, not believers baptism (as a sign after conversion). Look at the salvific Spirit baptism from Titus 3.

*Titus 3:* ***4****But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,****5****he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.****He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6****whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

Baptized (immersed) by the Spirit. AND given the one Spirit to drink. The Holy Spirit is given – He a gift of God. Jesus said in John 14: 16-18 the Spirit is God’s confirmation that we are not orphans – we are not alone. And before Jesus ascended to heaven he told the disciples in Acts 1 to wait until they received the gift the Father promised – who was the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is an amazing gift of God!

Drinking means we take something in and it becomes part of us. Food gives us energy and health. The Holy Spirit is not food but the 3rd person of the Trinity – eternally existent all powerful God of the universe – who now comes to indwell every single person who trusts Jesus by faith – He gives us the power of God as we “drink” Him in.

Verse 13 Earthly labels are secondary to being IN CHRIST/ in the Body/ by the Spirit

* Ethnic labels (Jews or Gentiles) are not our primary ID – for us black, white, Hispanic, Asian, etc…
* Social status/economic labels (slave or free) – drop outs, educated, rich, poor, etc…

Vs 14 – restate big idea… Even so, the one Body (human and Body of Christ) is not made up of one part, but many parts.

*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.*

**The many parts of the one Body of Christ are placed by God Himself and essential to one another. (15-19)** (The grace antidote to self-belittling, wrong thinking) Each part is essential! Your part is essential! DIVERSITY WITH BELONGING, ACCEPTANCE

Because I am not\_\_\_\_\_, I do not belong. This is not true. You are not \_\_\_\_, but that does not mean you do not belong to the body. You still belong to the Body and what you ARE, not what you are not, is essential to the body. So feeling badly about what you ARE, and getting discouraged doesn’t change the fact of what you ARE – but it may mean you become lazy about your role, it may mean you are not functioning as a very effective \_\_\_\_\_\_. Please don’t do that in the body of Christ. We are different parts but we all belong and are all essential.

\*Vs 15-16 Our feelings about ourselves do not dictate reality. True in this area, true in all areas. God is the author of what is true, the author of reality.

Vs 17 IF the whole body were eye/ear, etc… where would the rest of the Body be? Different parts with different functions are absolutely essential to make up the complete Body of Christ.

Vs 18 Placed by God – all the diverse parts of the Body - every one of them – have been placed by God just as He wanted them to be. God tempered the Body together. He chose you and appointed you and placed you here. Don’t belittle what God has made important – your part and your placement. **Don’t depreciate yourself!!**

Vs 19 Without diversity of parts, could not form the Body. Vs 20 So each part is essential – many parts in One Body.

\*\*Like a person standing with a work crew, with a tool bag, wearing blindfold and saying – I’m not part of the work crew. Let’s check. YES, you are part of the work crew. And look, you have tools to be used too, just different tools than other people. Your tools are absolutely vital to this project being completed. You are essential!

*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!” 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.*

**The many parts of the one Body of Christ are unified through humble interdependence, careful honor and shared concern (21-26) (Grace antidote to self-sufficient pride)**

Previous paragraph addressed the individual who felt that he/she did not belong. Wrong teaching, wrong thinking, insecurity about one’s personal assignment from God. This person needs God’s Word to be built up. God gives grace to the humble. God is saying you do matter! Every part is essential.

But this paragraph is about a different issue that someone might face. Instead of thinking too low of yourself, this shows someone thinking too highly of themselves.

**Humble Interdependence Vs 21** From a prideful attitude, someone might say to another “I don’t need you!”. Eye says to the hand – I don’t need you. Head says to the feet – I don’t need you. We need a humble view of ourselves.

*\*Romans 12: 3 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.*

Vs 22 The parts of the Body that seem to be weaker are indispensable! A believer may seem weak in Christ, may be timid, may be fragile – God says every part is vital to the mission of the church moving forward. We should treat each believer with the respect – Every part needs every other part; We need you and you need us to be the mature Body.

**Careful Honor Vs 23** The part of the Body we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. The parts of the Body that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty. Vs 24 The presentable parts need no special treatment.

A believer may be seen by others as fringe, or someone to merely tolerate, or even someone to hide away from the rest of the church – we don’t talk about them. We love them, but we don’t want to talk about them.

But remember that God has put the body together! God gives greater honor to the parts that lacked it. God wants us to be careful – not acting like the world and overly highlighting the parts that are excellent and presentable and all put together. Instead, we are to be like God and carefully exalt those who would otherwise be overlooked by the world, and not operate according to any kind of “best image” criteria.

**Shared Concern Vs 25** God’s design for the Body is that there is no division in the Body, but that all the parts have equal concern for each other. Vs 26 (For example) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it! \*\*This is like Philippians 2 Not looking only into my interests but also to the interests of others.

\*Issues of grief, people losing loved ones, people losing job… Incidents of racism or injustice in greater society – we grieve with those who grieve. And issues of joy – simple things like birthdays, anniversaries, promotions graduations; and deeper steps of discipleship like baptism, growing in godliness, establishing habits of seeking God, healthy marriages and families... Celebrate together!! **Don’t depreciate others!!**

*27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues[d]? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.*

**The many parts of the one Body of Christ are fully equipped and gifted by God (27-31)**

Vs 27 Notice repetition of singular to plural. You all (plural) are the Body of Christ (singular). Each one (individuals) of you all (plural) is a part of it (One Body)

Vs 28 God has placed in the church these offices of leadership and equipping – **Apostles** (authoritative send ones), **Prophets** (those who speak God’s word and make clear God’s will), **Teachers** (those who instruct, correct, rebuke, train God’s people to maturity with the Word of God). Like Eph 4 – Offices to equip God’s people for works of service.

THEN gifts – miracles, gifts of healing, helping, guidance, different kinds of tongues. Also part of healthy Church.

Question to emphasize diversity: Are all apostles, prophets, or teachers? NO! Do all have gifts of healing, or speaking in tongue, or interpreting tongues? NO! Vs 31 But we are to desire the greater gifts (that bless others).

**Through the Holy Spirit – All believers are UNITED as essential, interdependent members of ONE Body of Christ, gifted and equipped to carry out God’s will.**

Are you part of the Body of Christ? (SALVATION) Do you humbly recognize your essential status? Do you honor the essential status of every other part? How can you promote the UNITY of the Spirit in the Body this week?