

Series: Debunking Lies that Disrupt Intergenerational Community

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 (App to get lesson/slides, ask questions. Color Pg)

In this series, we're debunking untruths we've come to believe that disrupt intergenerational spiritual formation. We're doing the uncomfortable work of unlearning, which can feel clumsy like an introvert trying to make small talk! We've discussed Satan being "*the father of lies*" (cf. John 8:44) who employs a variety of warfare (e.g., spiritual, physical, psychological) to **trick every generation into forgetting what God deems essential**. We've dug into how **Church is a family before we're anything else** and unpacked the term "*family*" to find **We have much to relearn after being born again**. From *Romans 12* we found out that **Informed Worship erodes our exclusivity and comfort** and that **Every child of God has been gifted to contribute**. Last time, we studied 1 Corinthians 12 to discover that **Spirit-led churches will continually grow and change**. Today, we'll dip our toes into the waters of this...

BIG IDEA: The Spirit makes us better together in Christ.

Various forms of "*in Christ*" appear 160+ times in New Testament books. 2 Corinthians 5 defines it as becoming a new creation, and Ephesians 2 says it happens by grace through faith. So, being in Christ makes us part of a new humanity. Today's text illustrates the point using a *body* metaphor. Check out *1 Corinthians 12:12* which says: ***Just as the (human) body is one and has many members (parts), and all the members (parts) of the (human) body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ***. We might have expected the last word to be church, but instead it's the Greek title for the Jewish Messiah--**Christ**. This suggests the church is extraordinary, not ordinary--we belong to Christ and are as united with Him as **body parts**, yet we aren't literally Jesus. In Galatians 2:20 this writer said, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.*" To be in Christ, then, is to live by faith. I am me and you are you, but this faith-union miraculously transforms and reconciles us to function as one new body with many parts. Apostle Paul, therefore, didn't choose a random *body* metaphor--he was articulating a

supernatural phenomenon where people of various ages, stages, colors, creeds and giftings are reborn into a new kind of humanity whose head is the Messiah-Christ Jesus. Noticing links between these verses, 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Psalm 8, Professor NT Wright (p. 159) said: *“For him to choose this image of a human body to express what those who belong to the Messiah have now become, and how they are to live, is deep with significance. The church is to be the place where, together, we learn how to be God’s genuinely human beings (who) worship and serve him by reflecting his image in the world.”*

Verse 13 says [We get into Christ by being baptize with the Spirit](#). The text says: ***For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*** John the Baptizer said: *“I have baptized you with water, but Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”* (cf. Mark 1:8). So, after His resurrection, Jesus became the **baptizer** who makes us **members of His body** by **baptizing, plunging, or causing us to drink** of His **Spirit**. These mixed metaphors express how we’re born again and sustained by Christ’s **Spirit** (cf. John 3), [the changemaker promised in Old Testament texts](#) like Ezekiel 36:26 where God said: *“I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.”*, and Jeremiah 31:33-34 where He said: *“I will be their God, and they shall be my people...for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.”* God’s **Spirit** makes the church extraordinary--distinct individuals interwoven for the common good...the least to the greatest, the youngest to the oldest, different races (**Jews/Greeks**), different classes (**slave/free**). Not just some, but ALL **Spirit baptized** at conversion.

Now, some say that mustering up more faith leads to a “**2nd baptism of the Spirit**”, but knowing Jesus said: *“Abide in me”* (cf. John 15), Paul told struggling believers to keep **drinking** from (being nourished by) the **Spirit** by whom they were weaned with spiritual milk (cf. 1 Peter 2:2). So, when we experience seasons of weak faith, it’s not that we need to be “**re-saved or re-baptized in the Spirit**”, rather we just need connection! That’s our [takeaway from verse 13](#): **Body parts need connection to receive life**. So, for instance, to say: *“I’ll attend/return to church after I deal with some things”* is like trying to heal a severed **hand** or **foot** without nourishment from

the body. Using the human body as an illustration, this *1 Corinthians 12:14-20* text is brimming with takeaways like this from verse 14: *We're never enough on our own*. Look where it says: ***For the body does not consist of one member but of many.*** No believer is an individual ***body of Christ***. Salvation is more than a personal relationship with Jesus--it's immersion into a new humanity (***body***) based on interdependence, not independence. Maybe we can be Christians without going to church, but we won't be healthy if we're disconnected from ***Christ's*** life-giving ***body!***

Moreover, what makes Christ's ***body*** remarkable is its diversity, not the greatness of specific ***parts***. The world is lousy with allegedly great people who claim to need no one but lacks folks who genuinely love and work with one another to address ongoing inequities and injustices. Professor Craig Blomberg (p. 255) reminds us "*The most dynamic evangelistic power of the gospel comes when the world is forced to sit up and take notice that people are loving each other in ways it cannot account for with humanistic presuppositions.*" While we know this to be true, our insecurities often keep us from fully participating in the new humanity. So, remember this takeaway from verses 15-16: *God determines our value, not us*. Let's read the text: ***If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.*** While we don't determine our own value, it's our job to point out the God-given value we see in others. Learning to see one another through the Spirit's eyes helps us become a body that loves itself by caring for each of our necessary and Christ-like parts. God says all ***members*** matter, none are dispensable, and ***we are always better together***, but that's easy to forget in an age of "*celebrity pastors*", famous Christian bands, and celebrating October as "*Pastor appreciation month*." While it's a nice gesture, consider how Paul told us to view church leaders in 1 Corinthians 4:1, "*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*" Every group needs leaders, but overemphasizing them can make other ***parts of the body*** feel inconsequential to our collective work and betrays the point made in ***verses 17-20: If the whole body were an eye, where***

would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

This will be our final takeaway from verses 17-20: *Our gifts are not for going rogue*. No matter how gifted you think you are, try to remember our **BIG IDEA: The Spirit makes us better together in Christ**. According to Ephesians 4, leaders are supposed to equip the body *parts* and make room for them to participate. Perhaps the reason so many churches have closed and are seen as irrelevant is their failure to incorporate every *part*. Scripture says we're dysfunctional without all our *parts*, so why keep repeating the error of showcasing the same few folks every Sunday and sending some parts of our body to separate worship spaces? Don't mishear me...there are appropriate times for activities at home and in other small groups, just not during our Sunday morning gathering!

At Landmark, we aim to identify and involve gifted people. We do this by building relationships and utilizing diagnostic tools like gift and personality tests to learn how we're wired. Ultimately though, the *Spirit* of God decides and sometimes overrides aspects of who we are. It might take us a while, but our gifts will become evident as we hang out and sharpen one another with honest feedback so none of us are running around like “*Thing*” from the Adams Family! Like children, we need time with family to be nourished, grow up, and make mistakes--all while learning how to love and be loved. So, our methods and how a church is organized matters! That's why, instead of just hearing me every Sunday, we have other male and female voices teach, read, sing, pray, and announce. If you think that makes life easier for me, you've likely never delegated! We're committed to this church methodology, not because it's easier but because God says it's better! It won't make us grow big and fast, but it will certainly help us become happier and healthier. We also strive to include an army of non-speakers and behind-the-scenes folks. So, the more you let us get to know you, the more we can include you to improve the function of our *body*. Of course, this means our services might veer from the historic church liturgies we love. One example to wrap up is how we've expanded the end of service sendoff

(benediction) into a “*Sunday to Monday Connection*.” It honors the tradition of being sent out as lights to where we live, work, learn, serve, and play while also being a great place to showcase *many members of the body*. As you ponder all this with your people this week, remember that wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you don’t have to work through anything alone. Please reach out.

Sunday to Monday Connection: We are an intergenerational people, united with Christ through faith, brought together to serve the body of Christ, specifically this local church. We all bring different skills, views and experiences to make up a diverse family of believers. Like all families, we challenge, encourage, and lean into each other, this is accomplished by belonging, believing and growing through change as we put off the old and embrace the new.

- **Question:** Have you ever wondered how your skills fit into the church body? If you don't know, be sure to speak with Krista@Landmarkcares.org, who has earned here certification as a Gallup Strength Coach and is skilled in other diagnostic testing.
- **Next Step:** This week as you meet with your people, ask them to help you think of specific ways you could use your skills to strengthen our church body.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. Read and discuss how 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Psalm 8 (humans being put in authority over the world) relate with 1 Corinthians 12 and even Genesis 1-2. Be sure to revisit and discuss the NT Wright quote above. What seems to be happening with those who are in Jesus the Messiah-Christ?
2. Our paragraph on verse 12 states, “*We belong to Christ and are as united with Him as **body parts**, yet we’re not literally Jesus.*” In what ways does Galatians 2:20 bring clarity to this statement? How might this realization keep us from being puffed up or being too individually minded?
3. Why must we learn to value ourselves the way God does, and if not seeing my value doesn’t make me matter less...how can it otherwise harm me and the church?
4. Consider listening to and discussing [this podcast episode](#).

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Context:** “Chapter 12 thus insists on the need for diversity of gifts within the unity of the body. Chapter 13 stresses that without love the gifts are worthless. Chapter 14 then focuses on two of the more controversial gifts—prophecy and tongues—telling the Corinthians to prefer the former to the latter because of

its more immediate intelligibility (vv. 1–25) and giving guidelines for the use of each so as to promote order in the church (vv. 26–40).” (Blomberg, 242)

- **We need organized religion:** “All of Paul’s emphasis on unity within diversity calls into question the behavior of growing numbers of Americans who claim to be religious, believe in God and even Christ, and yet drop out of organized church life or at least fade to its periphery. In a land still heavily influenced by a heritage of rugged individualism, believers need to work ever harder to demonstrate that Christianity is not a merely personal religion but fundamentally corporate. Even evangelical language for conversion betrays this bias: a ‘personal relationship with Jesus Christ.’ That is the necessary starting point, but we dare not stop until that relationship leads to intimate interpersonal relationships with other Christians.” (Blomberg, 254)
- **Second blessing:** “Not some ‘deeper-life’ experience, as it continues to be in classic Pentecostal circles. But this does not mean that Christians cannot or should not seek fresh, invigorating experiences of God, to bring them to new levels of maturity throughout their lives. Noncharismatics need to acknowledge this more often. Yet if we want to be scriptural, we will follow Luke’s lead and refer to these events as repeated ‘fillings’ of the Spirit (cf., e.g., Acts 4:8, 31; 9:17).” (Blomberg, 255)
- **Every member matters:** “In all of this, however, we must beware of continuing to play down the significance of the ‘behind the scenes’ people. Ours is an age that delights to exalt Christian celebrities, to demand that our pastors entertain, have charismatic personalities, and display more spiritual gifts than any one Bible character ever had! Little wonder that burn-out from full-time ministry seems to be at an all-time high and that moral failure often results from the stress. We need to relearn the model of servant leadership (recall under chapter 4) and to allow our leaders and ourselves to spend the majority of time doing those things at which we excel.” (Blomberg, 256-257)
- **No rogue body parts:** Paul does not argue that the differences between the various body parts mean that church members who have received diverse gifts should be free to do whatever they feel their gifting enables or “allows” them to do. The purpose of each body part is to function in accord with the others. If or when the parts do not, they cease to be one body. A limb must fulfill its assigned purpose in the body or it will itself cease to be a limb and consequently leave the rest of the body impaired. (Vang, 173)

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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