

I have to say that I have never been happier about seeing something on a computer than I was on Thursday. Gale Lane our secretary found a little clip art thing for us that is on the front of the bulletin. It is so good that I almost don't even have to preach! If a picture is worth a thousand words, I wonder how many this little drawing is worth? This little drawing was actually from a program put together by someone else entirely. But that concept is exactly what I wish we could get across for all churches in all places. Because of this, you will leave here today hopefully asking only one question, one that could change every church in every place.

We just heard Paul's famous words from 1 Corinthians. To correct one problem with the English translation we had, it would better say "Now You ALL ( even y'all ) are the body of Christ and individually members of it." Again, YOU does not mean one person, it means all of us together. It is almost always a very big YOU. In the original language here Paul almost shouts the word YOU! It is the first word in the sentence, and it is the big YOU! From there Paul concludes by listing different things that individual people do in the Body of Christ. In his order there are Apostles ( Missionaries ), Prophets, Teachers, Deeds of Power Doers, Healers, Assisters, Leaders, and Tongue Speakers ( BTW Paul lists this **last** because the people in Corinth like this one best! ). What is the problem with Tongue Speakers? No one benefits from what they do. It can and usually is a solo act. Everything else in the list involves the group of us all. Someone speaks in tongues in their private prayer life.

It usually has nothing to do with anyone else, which is far too much like the huge problem we have with American Protestant Christianity. More about that later.

This little picture on the cover is crucially important. If we look closely at the body there we see on the inside one other little body. And when we keep looking, we see that actually there are lots of other little bodies in there too. This drawing is crucial. According to what Paul tells us long ago in his letter to the Corinthians, this is what the Church is supposed to be. Followers of Jesus are not just lone rangers enjoying the spiritual power of God in ecstasy. Followers of Jesus are supposed to be actual living Body Parts! Just as our bodies are made up of so many parts and systems, so it is with the Body of Christ, the Church. It has been asked before: do we need everything in our own body to work properly? Absolutely. In fact, when one little thing goes wrong, it can wipe out everything else. Paul says this again and again, but somehow we have not heard it.

Somewhere along the line, Church became a lifeboat, and then it became a show. People came to worship to see the show, and to eat the Bread of Life. People came mainly to receive. Today, especially in our culture we have to wonder if church has become a transaction. You give your \$20 dues, and the church tries to take care of you. You and your needs are serviced. Paul never speaks this way. Jesus never speaks this way. Jesus says give up your life for the sake of the Gospel, and if you simply try to save your life you will lose it. I hear radio commercials for that smooth talking young Texas preacher in Houston, who tells

you every week that God has a miracle for you and you will receive it soon. This idea is reinforced that we are simply to receive from the church. But I look at our Bible, and I cannot help but fear that that is not correct.

Last August a group of 15 of our people went through 3 sessions of special learning. It took 6 hours total. This thing is called **NETWORK** and I would love to have every person do this. ( BTW I currently have 12 more books so that I would invite 12 more people to do this with me probably in July if possible. ) But last August 15 people of our church did something to figure out more about how they might fit into that drawing on the front of the bulletin. Let's be reminded, Paul would tell us that God carefully knits every one of us together in our Mother's womb, and that we are made with special abilities and talents. We are not all good at the same things, nor are we all bad at the same things. We are in fact different from each other. Now, if we are all different, then it does not make any sense to act like **ONE SIZE FITS ALL**. Anyone in a church could serve on any committee or do any task. Can everyone sing in the choir? Can everyone administrate the church and keep things organized? Can everyone teach? Can everyone care and provide love and mercy? It would be great, but no, people cannot do all of those things. But some can. Well, wouldn't it be great, if for the Body of Christ in this place, we could put "The right people, in the right places, for the right reasons, at the right time." That is the slogan for **NETWORK**. It simply

wants to help measure us to see how God has knit us together, to see how we could be a helpful body part for our church.

I will not name names, but I want to report on some of what we found last August. BTW this measurement tool measures 3 things. 1) it measures what is called spiritual gifts, or talents that God has given us to use for the good of the Church. What did it show for the 15 of us? I will mention the top 2 for each person including myself. 4 of the group had a high gift for Administration, keeping things organized. 7 of the group had a high gift for Hospitality, or wanting other people to feel comfortable and welcome. 3 had the gift of Helps, which means they are in fact wired to help other people in almost any way they can. 6 had what is called Craftsmanship, which means designing, building, and fixing things. 2 of the group had a high score for Intercession, praying for others on a regular basis. Now, doesn't it make sense that these people would be directed to help in our church in a way that matches who God wired them together to be? That is what we are trying to do.

There is another key thing which is measured in this NETWORK thing. It is called Leadership Style, and it is crucial! It seems that all people are wired together to lean in two of four directions. On the one hand we are either PEOPLE oriented or we are TASK oriented. We are naturally drawn to people, or to doing things that need to be done. The other thing measured is this: are we ORGANIZED, or are we UNORGANIZED? This is a crucial thing to know! Most of the people who have done this came out as TASK oriented,

while only 4 of us ( myself included ) came out as PEOPLE oriented. Does that mean that the TASK people don't like people? No. It just means they seem to do best in completing tasks, and making sure those things get done. PEOPLE oriented people don't care as much if the task gets done. They just want to be with people.

I don't want to spend more time with this, but I want to mention how this can be very helpful: We had a few people show that they have a gift for Administration, and they are Task oriented and Structured, which means they are ORGANIZED! Where and how would such people be helpful for a church? It seems to me that they need to be used whenever some big project is being done, and someone needs to make sure that everything is in order, and kept track of, and is completed. Now, I come out as a very People-oriented guy, who is quite UNstructured, which means that YES, my desk is messy. Well, of course it is. It is a thing, not a person, so it is not a high priority for me.

In September we will once again ask people to serve on committees. Is every person automatically fine to serve on a committee? Well, actually NO. Other people would be much better used helping build a Habitat for Humanity House somewhere than to fill out forms! Other people are great at filling out forms and keeping things in order.

I will close this down at this point. Here is the only question I hope that you will take home today and continue to engage: what is your individual role in the Body of Christ? The

body needs each **MEMBER** to function and actually do something that helps the body. What do you do? If you don't know, maybe we can work on that. Wouldn't we be a stronger body of Christ if we were all doing something that helped the Body live and function? We are not just here to be serviced. And our churches would be so much stronger if we were all concerned about the role that we play in the Body of Christ.

Yesterday we learned at our District Spring Conference that from 2016 to 2017, our District churches lost 1,107 members. We accounted for 10 out of the 1,107. Churches are in decline over the entire nation. Maybe it is time for the Body of Christ to be filled with people who have a sense of the role they play for the body, rather than just wondering how they will be serviced. There is still time to listen to Paul. There is still time, in the name of Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**