

We are not simply individuals who have been saved by the grace of God, but believers who have been united together into the Body of Christ and now are to live together as members one of another. The common loaf in the Bread and the Cup (1 Corinthians 10:17) illustrates this truth. Three basic truths explain what it means for believers to live together as the Body of Christ.

- I. **God has designed the church in such a way that believers function together as would parts of a body.** (See Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:1-8.) Three aspects of each believer being part of the body of Christ should be noted from 1 Corinthians 12.
 1. **Inclusiveness:** Christ by His Spirit has formed us into just one body of which each and every believer in Christ is a part. Since Pentecost every true believer in Jesus Christ has been placed into the Body of Christ through being baptized with the Spirit. Whether a believer wants to or not, the believer is connected with all others who are in Christ. The issue for the believer is how he or she will live in light of that truth.
 2. **Unity:** We are united as one body, because we share the same life and have the same head. Being united we affect one another, just as one body part affects the entire body. This is not a matter of choice for true believers, but a truth in which light we must live correctly.
 3. **Diversity:** Although there is just one body, there are many different, unique parts, having different abilities, being used in different ways, accomplishing different things. The diversity is still united in the one Spirit who gives, the one Lord who directs the one God who works the effect. Through diversity more is accomplished than by any single part alone. Believers, as members of a body, are interdependent. Just as a body is united yet made of many parts, so also are believers united in Christ but many individual interdependent parts.
- II. **God has His specific purposes for this design.** (See Ephesians 4:1-16.)
 1. God has designed the church as an interconnected body so that believers might better mature. The concept of maturity is repeated (vv 12, 13, 15, 16). In this context it is the product of joint effort: equipping and serving (v 12), truth-telling in love (v 15), growing and building itself up as each part does its work (v 16). We don't want to remain "infants", untrained, unknowledgeable, easily deceived, and swayed by every novel teaching. To grow beyond infancy we need one another. The flood of (mis)information makes this a danger today at least as great as it was in the early church. To become anchored in the truth happens best when we function together as a body, becoming equipped in the Word and applying the Word in our own lives and in the lives of others.
 2. God has designed the church as an interconnected body for His glory. The construction figure, i.e., the Temple, expresses this clearly. But even that figure in the N.T. is often organic, e.g., people being built on a foundation (Eph 2:19-22) or "living" stones being joined together (1 Peter 2:5). The temple was an understandable figure of God revealing His glorious presence. But Jesus spoke of this without using figurative speech in John 17. Believers being brought to complete unity in Christ, reveal the glory of God to the world around them. We can only fulfil this purpose as we grow together into Christ who is our head.
- III. **God's design places upon us certain responsibilities.** Some are common and broad.
 1. **We need to be together with other believers.** This is the NT pattern (e.g., in Acts 2:42-47). It is commanded (Hebrews 10:24-25). It is necessary in order to fulfil all those commands of mutuality, i.e., to "one another".
 2. **We need to interact with other believers when we are together in a way that fulfils these purposes.** We should not be having meetings merely for the sake of meetings. Leadership in the church needs to evaluate the gatherings of the body to determine if we are fulfilling the divinely given purposes of such gatherings. Individuals need to participate in gatherings of believers intentionally to build up others. Never-the-less not every purpose for the church is or should be accomplished at every meeting.
 3. **We need to become more mindful of others and less self-centered.** See Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:21.)

This goes against our cultural upbringing and our sinful nature. E.g., when we live together as the body of Christ, it is no longer what I get, but what can I give. It is much less if people are understanding me, but rather I am understanding them. If I truly value others more highly than myself, I will be more concerned if they are being understood.

Behind this command to be more mindful of others is our understanding of the body. Our body functions with a proper concern for all the parts. So also should every member of the body of Christ be mindful of others.
 4. **We need to love one another.** A third or more of the occurrences of "one another" commands concerns loving one another. This is the lifestyle to which God has called us, the most excellent way.

God has saved us in Christ for a purpose, to form us into the image of Christ and to display His glory. Both are being accomplished through the Body of Christ. As Paul prayed, to God "be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Eph 3:21 NIV) We believers should be living together as members of the Body of Christ.