

Respect and Honor among Brethren

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Introduction: One of the greatest challenges we face is learning how to work together.

- A. Imagine this scene pictured in prophecy. **(Isa 11:6-9)**
 - 1. This is a prophecy of the peaceful nature of those in the kingdom.
 - 2. From a practical standpoint this was an immensely challenging test of the 1st century church. Imagine Jew and Gentile in the same local church.
- B. A true spiritual barometer of our growing to be like Christ is our attitudes and involvement with each other.
 - 1. Can we come to be close when we have “nothing” in common?
 - 2. We better have one thing in common! **(1 Pt 1:22-23)**
 - 3. There is a godly wisdom that we must pursue to find this.

I. Am I “not of the body”? (1 Cor 12)

- A. We must fight not to separate ourselves in our heart from our brethren. **(1 Cor 12:14-21)**
 - 1. Imagine the figurative scenario given by Paul where a foot concludes he is not a hand therefore is “not of the body”!
 - 2. Additionally the eye may say to the hand “I have no need of you” in effect saying to some that they are “not of the body.”
 - 3. These illustrations should help us clearly see the absurdity of these views. This kind of thinking is a very common temptation.
- B. Ability does not equate to spirituality.
 - 1. A spiritual person does fully develop his God-given potential over time.
 - 2. A person who does not have the more visible abilities must not become envious of others who receive more attention.
 - 3. The most fruitful people I have know in the church often fall into the “less talented” category. One thing they did have was love for others and a lifetime of consistency. Godly mothers are a great example of this.
 - 4. If I can be aware that “God has set the members as He pleased” then I should take what I have and do the best I can!
(1 Cor 12:18; Rom 12:6-8)

II. Pride will always lead to distain and division.

- A. When ability is combined with a lack of spirituality then pride is a great threat. **(1 Tim 3:6)**
 - 1. When I look at my ability and look down on the efforts of others with “lesser ability” then I have a heart problem. You can look on an individual or the efforts of several and label it as “boring” with distain.
 - 2. One real test is your ability to give honor to this “lesser” effort. Proud people cannot give encouragement to their “competitors” **(1 Cor 12:23)**

B. There were those who distained Paul at Cornith. **(2 Cor 10:1-2, 10)**

1. Paul was being put under the microscope based on worldly standards. It is no surprise that Apollos is mentioned. **(Acts 18:24)**
2. Paul used what was likely a figurative example to make an important point about cliques and divisions forming at Cornith. **(1 Cor 1:12; 3:1-7)**
3. Once we separate ourselves from other Christians on this basis, we will have the fruits of the wisdom of Satan: “envy, strife and divisions.”
4. Watch you attitude, your tongue and your associations. Let there be “no schism in the body.” **(1 Cor 12:25)**
5. Schism - **σχίσμα**, ατος, τό literally *split, rift, division*; in a garment *tear, rent* (MT 9.16); figuratively, of doctrinal differences and divided loyalties within a group *schism, division of opinion, discord* (JN 7.43; 1C 12.25)

III. How can I help every member of this body?

A. I must get out of myself and my personal disappointments. **(Phil 2:1-5)**

1. My attitude towards others will be determined by my attitude towards Christ Himself.
2. Pride creeps in when men have an unstable relationship with the Lord.
3. When I cannot handle disappointments then I will have a life of broken relationships and even an inability to work over time with a local church.

B. I must see each of my brethren as I would to see the cross of Christ. This is the one for whom Christ died. **(Rom 14:15)**

1. Jesus told Paul that his persecution of Christians was to Jesus personally.
2. Can we keep reaching out to those who are struggling? **(Rom 12:10)**
3. We do have some amazing encouragers, we need more. Consider the work of Barnabas. **(Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22)**

C. Can I always “start over” in forbearance and forgiveness and never give up on my brothers in Christ? **(James 2:12-13)**

1. I may need to identify my own emotional vulnerability and seek help.
2. We all would do well to be sure our eyes are on the Lord and not on our brethren as if we were the Lord! **(Rom 14:4, 10)**
3. All my relationships must be based on trust and honesty. If I seek a relationship that rebuke and correction cannot be included then I do not want an honest relationship. It will fail.

D. Is the love of God the foundation of my life? **(1 Jn 4:16-21)**

1. The love of God will give you security and confidence.
2. The love of God will free you from fear and instability.
3. The love of God will make you be able to work with “unlovable” brethren!

Conclusion: Are you “of the body?”