

Vital Signs Of A healthy Church

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

I read an excerpt from a book this week called “Courageous Leadership.” In it the author is describing the church when it functions correctly. He says, “There is nothing like the local church when it is working right. Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breathtaking. Its potential is unlimited. It comforts the grieving and heals the broken in the context of community. It builds bridges to the seekers and offers truth to the confused. It provides resources for those in need and opens its arm to the forgotten, the downtrodden, and the disillusioned. Whatever the capacity for human suffering, the church has a greater capacity for healing and wholeness. The radical message of transforming love has been given to the church.”

When you came in this morning you were given a puzzle piece as a reminder that you are a valuable part of Gods picture for the church. Did you know that every snapshot of the church in the New Testament is a group picture? The point is we are all linked together as pieces of a puzzle. And as such, our linkage means that we are bound to “do life together, and care for one another.

Today we are going to look at 5 ways each puzzle piece is unique.

1. Each piece is part of a united whole, but is not uniform.

We see this in verse 14: “Now the body is not made up one part but of many.” The word “many” means abundance or much. How many of you guys every read the Peanuts cartoons in the paper? I have a clip of a cartoon that illustrates my point.

This is a great picture of how the church is to work together. Individually you are not much, but when we’re curled up into a single unit, we form a weapon that is amazing to behold.

2. Each piece is indispensable and not inferior.

In verses 15-16 Paul is addressing those of us who may feel inferior when he said, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body." 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 cease to be part of the body. Paul is saying everyone is valuable and necessary.

Let me illustrate it this way. Let's say you are boarding a plane to Hawaii. As you buckle your seatbelt you smile because you got the deal of a life time on the plane ticket. The pilot then comes on the intercom and says, "This is your captain speaking. The reason your ticket was so much cheaper is that we've done away with people you never see. The maintenance men who service the plane, the navigator who is only needed on foggy nights like tonight and the air traffic controller up in the tower. We also didn't think it was necessary to have those pesky security people checking for weapons. Have a nice flight.

The point is, the small pieces in Gods puzzle called the church are just as important as the more visible ones. No one is inferior because everyone is indispensable. This church will never get off the ground if you and I don't do our part.

3. Each piece is divinely designed, not humanly developed.

God made you just the way He wants you!!!! When we fully grasp this truth, we will experience freedom and joy like we've never had before. He has shaped you for spiritual significance!! Your piece has a place right here in this church!!! Look at verse 18 "But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be." You are not an accident because you are part of Gods awesome arrangement called the Body of Christ."

"Just as He wanted them to be." The word "wanted" means "to delight in." Have you ever thought of that? That God has placed you in the church for His delight and pleasure. So when we refuse to interlock our pieces with others, then we are disobeying God. When we make a commitment to connect with Christ and with His people, then He is pleased beyond measure.

Let me illustrate this point. On the first day of school a first grader went to her newly intergraded school at the height of the segregation storm. When she came home her mom asked everything went. Her daughter said mom I had a black girl sit by me today in class. Her mother asked her how she was able to get through the day. Her daughter said we were both so very scared that we held hands all day long. Isn't it beautiful how young children have the ability to look past how we are different and allow the ways we are the same to draw us together?!!

That's a good word for us today!!!!

Church, Gods dream of a church where black and white, Hispanic and Asian, rich and poor, farmer and business man, couple and single, cop and convict, student and senior citizen, lifelong saint and former sinner can all join hands and celebrate our designed diversity within unfettered unity!!!

New Freedom its time we start being the church God wants us to be. It's time that you start looking at a puzzle piece the way God sees it. Let's get to work!!!