

Adult Teaching Resources

January 23, 2022



Season after Christmas

Psalms 147:1-20—"A Good Beginning"

In Christ We Have ...

Season of Epiphany

Acts 8:4-17 (RCL 8:14-17)—"Amazing Grace"

1 Corinthians 12:1-11—"Amazing Gifts"

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a—"Amazing Oneness"

1 Corinthians 13:1-13—"Amazing Love"

www.nurturingfaith.net

Subscribe to *Nurturing Faith* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.
Find links and videos related to this lesson.

“Amazing Oneness”

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Key Verse

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Opening

After everyone arrives, ask each person to find a partner. Once everyone is settled, ask each person to consider this question:

When you think about all the different parts of the body and the gifts you have for your family, what part of the body do you think you are and how do you use it for the family?

Give everyone time to think and then share with their partner.

Then, ask this question:

When you think about all the different parts of the body and the gifts you have within the community, what part of the body do you think you are and how do you use it for the community?

Give everyone time to think and then share with their partner.

Then, ask this question:

When you think about all the different parts of the body and the gifts you have within the church and the world of faith, what part of the body do you think you are and how do you use it for the church?

Reading the Bible

According to Paul, what does he say about the body and all its parts for the person and with Christ? (just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body)

Who does Paul say is all baptized into one body? (Jews or Greeks, slaves or free)

How many members does the body have? (many)

What does the foot 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.)

What does the ear 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.)

Reading the Bible *continued*

In what fashion did God create the body? (God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose)

What can the eye not say to the hand? (“I have no need of you.”)

What can the head not say to the feet? (“I have no need of you.”)

Which members of the body are indispensable? (the weaker members)

Which members of the body should we clothe we great honor? (those members of the body that we think less honorable)

Which members of the body should be treated with great respect? (our less respectable members)

How has God arranged the body? (giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.)

What happens if one member of the body suffers? (all suffer with it) What happens if one member of the body is honored? (all rejoice together with it.)

What does Paul say the church at Corinth is? (the body of Christ and individually members of it)

What has God appointed in the church? (first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.)

What are the members of the body to strive for? (the greater gifts)

What will God reveal? (a still more excellent way)

Making Connections

When have you experienced a group of people or a team all working together in perfect synchronicity to accomplish a goal? What was the goal? How did they work together to achieve it?

When have you experienced a group of people or a team trying to work together to accomplish a goal but everyone on the group or team was not included in the process? What was the goal? Were they able to achieve their desired outcome?

When have you been a part of a group or team and had something significant to contribute, but been ignored during the process? What could you have contributed? Why do you think you were not included? Did the group or team still reach their goal?

When have you been a part of a group or team and had something significant to contribute, and been counted as an integral member in the process? What did you contribute? How did your contribution affect the outcome? Did the group or team reach their goal?

Making Connections *continued*

What is the most important part of your body? Why do you say that? What is the least important part of your body? Why do you say that?

What different “members of the body” are vital for the life and livelihood of the church? How do those all work together for the body?

Our Lesson Writer reminds us about “an ongoing issue in Corinth, where tongues-speaking had become divisive. Perhaps some members emphasized the beauty or volume of their ecstatic utterances while minimizing gifts such as intelligible words of prophecy or teaching.” Which members of the body can be divisive for today’s church? How can we keep those parts from being divisive?

How do we know the spiritual gifts we have come from God instead of coming from “the world?” Do all gifts used within the church have to be from God? Why do you say that?

How do you define the gift, “apostle?” In what ways does the church need modern-day apostles?

How do you define the gift, “prophet?” In what ways does the church need modern-day prophets?

How do you define the gift, “teacher?” In what ways does the church need modern-day teachers?

How do you define the gift, “healer?” In what ways does the church need modern-day healers?

How do you define the gift, “speaker in tongues?” In what ways does the church need modern-day speakers in tongues?

How do you define the gift, “interpreters of tongues?” In what ways does the church need modern-day interpreters of tongues?

So What?

Ask everyone to find their partner from the beginning of the lesson. Once everyone is settled, ask each person to think about one gift they bring to the body of the church that they are convinced comes from God. Have each couple share their answers to these questions:

What is the gift?

When were you first aware you had it?

How did you become aware of it?

How are you using your gift for the larger body?

How does your gift benefit the larger body?

How do you know this gift is from the Spirit?

Give each couple time to share with each other. Then, ask these questions for continued conversation and discussion:

So What? *continued*

What needs to you see within your church and what gifts could meet those needs?

Who within the church body had those needed gifts?

How can those folks be encouraged to step up and use their gifts for the body?

Give each couple time to share with each other, then open the floor for large group conversation.

The Challenge

This week use the gifts you have for the larger body and do one thing to encourage another church member to use his/her gifts for the body.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you that this ancient letter still speaks truth to us today. Thank you for the gifts you've given each of us. Help us to use them for the body of Christ. Give us the wisdom to know how to reach out to others and encourage them to use their gifts for the body. We need all our parts working together. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Feet and hands—Feet are the lowest part of the body, and generally the dirtiest in a dusty world where everyone wore sandals rather than shoes and socks. Their usefulness is mainly limited to standing, walking, or kicking.

On the other hand (pun intended), human hands with their opposable thumbs are not only more public, but so useful that it’s hard to imagine life without them. Hands can pick up or manipulate objects (handy for eating), put things together, wield a sword or hammer, or perform intricate tasks from writing to making fine jewelry.

Surely hands may seem more valuable than feet, but they are both integral parts of the body that are needed for a full and healthy life.

Ears and eyes—As feet might feel inferior to hands, should ears feel less honored than eyes (v. 16)? If asked to choose, most of us would likely opt for vision over hearing, but we wouldn’t voluntarily give up either one, for both are needful. If we were all eyes, how would we hear? If we were all ears, Paul asked, how would we smell (v. 17)?

All of the senses—and the organs that enable them—are vital parts of the body. Indeed, every organ, bone, nerve, and artery serves the larger whole, and the failure of any one part leads to diminished health or ability. Both individuals and churches are part of the body of Christ, which functions best when all the parts are not only present and accounted for, but working together.

Least honorable parts—Paul’s emphasis on body parts goes so far as to include the “least honorable” of body parts. And what would that be? He was almost certainly thinking of genitalia and excretory organs. The parts we consider to be “weaker” are actually indispensable, he said (v. 22), and we understand why. Can you imagine living without them?

Indeed, Paul said, we implicitly recognize their value because we “clothe with greater honor” the body parts we’d rather hide, so that “our less respectable members are treated with greater respect” (v. 23). God made us that way, he said (v. 24), a reminder that all members of the body are interdependent and therefore mutually needed (v. 25).

Greeks and Romans were known for sometimes competing nude in sports or wrestling matches, but that was the exception rather than the rule: even when stripping down for hard labor, people typically kept their “privates” private.

Apostles—The word “apostle” can bear the generic sense of “messenger,” but it came to be used in the New Testament as a technical term to describe someone who had seen the risen Christ (Gal. 1:16), or who had been called, empowered, and authorized by God to carry on

Digging Deeper *continued*

the work of Christ. Paul considered himself to be an apostle because he believed that he had personally encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8).

Apostles are mentioned first on this list, as in Eph. 4:11. Some writers have argued that the first century believers thought of apostles in the same sense as the Jewish *shaliakh*, one who was sent on a mission by higher authorities and empowered to act in their behalf. Apostles were those who had been with Christ, empowered by Christ, and charged with disseminating the gospel throughout the world.

Prophets—Paul assumed the presence of prophets in the church (1 Cor. 14:29, Eph. 3:5, 1 Thes. 5:20), as did Luke, the author of Acts. According to Luke’s account, prophets often appeared in the early church, and women were included in their number (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:8-10).

Teachers—In Paul’s day, prior to the writing and widespread distribution of the gospels, teachers would have specialized in memorizing oral traditions about Jesus’ teaching, and then passing them on to new believers. In the contemporary church, teachers instruct children, lead Bible studies, or promote discipleship development in other ways.

Healing—The exposure of fraudulent “healings” by some televangelists and a general lack of exposure to someone possessing a true gift of healing have led many Americans to be skeptical that God continues to be active in this way. In some underdeveloped countries, however, Christian workers often speak of miraculous works and healings as par for the course. We cannot be certain why this is so, though some would no doubt point to the presence or lack of faith. Whether it is due to a greater openness to the supernatural in some areas, or whether God may choose to use the miraculous to reveal his presence in certain situations, remains a mystery.

The one thing we can be sure of is that Paul clearly lists both abilities among the gifts one might expect to find in the church, gifts that serve to build up the larger body.

Spiritual gifts—We should note that Paul’s intent is not to give a comprehensive list of gifts, or to delineate the order of their importance. Paul mentions at least 20 different gifts in his various approaches to the subject (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 27-31; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11). Neither the list of gifts nor the order of their appearance is consistent in the various texts. Paul’s discussion is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What is “the body” to which Christians belong?

Paul’s metaphor of the one body having many parts that need to work together comes with a bit of a surprise. As Scott Nash has noted (*1 Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Commentaries [2009], p. 363), one would expect that Paul was thinking of the church. After all, he was writing to a divided church in which some members did not want to associate with other members, or thought themselves better than other members, or imagined that they did not need certain members.

It would seem natural, then, that Paul’s metaphor of a single body made of many interdependent parts would be a reference to the church. The surprise is that Paul looks past the church to which he was writing and applies it to Christ: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (v. 14).

This suggests, Nash says, that Paul’s use of body language implied something more substantial than a metaphor, for Paul goes on to say in v. 27 “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” In vv. 4-11, Paul emphasizes that all are brought into the body (“baptized”) by the Spirit, and all “drink” of the Spirit. Thus, Nash suggests, “Paul’s point is that entrance into the body of Christ involves a complete saturation of the Spirit, inside and out” (p. 363).

Paul’s metaphor, then, is bigger than our participation within a church, or any association of churches, or any denomination. It is to the “body of Christ” in its earthly representation that we belong, a body that includes all of the churches and all their apostles, prophets, and teachers, along various functions with which persons could be enabled: mighty works, healing, service, leadership, and tongues (v. 28; note that in this list, as in vv. 4-11, tongues are last on the list).

This is the way God intended it to be. Different persons blessed with different gifts serve different functions, and all are part—not just of their local church—but of the body of Christ. Working together with mutual respect will make for a happier and more functional church, but it is all in service to Christ.