

FACTORS OF FAITHFULNESS

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

LESSON THREE: Faithful in Fellowship

1 Corinthians 12:12

MAIN POINT

The Bible does not teach lone ranger Christianity but teaches that once we are saved, we are placed into fellowship with the Body of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- Have you ever injured a seemingly unimportant or small part of your body, like a finger or a toe? What did it feel like?
- How did that experience make you appreciate the “lesser” parts of your body?
- How do you think that experience might help in our understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ?

The Church is the Body of Christ. And just like our own bodies, every part of His body is essential. When all the parts of our bodies function in harmony with the others, we live happy, fulfilling, and productive lives. But when even the smallest part ceases to function as it should, it causes a ripple effect throughout the rest of the body. Similarly, in the Body of Christ, we have all been given different gifts and roles for serving others. When the Church functions harmoniously as the Body of Christ, it's a beautiful thing.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

- How does thinking of the Church as the Body of Christ help us understand our purpose as a fellowship of believers?

- How does this help us recognize that our purpose is to do Jesus' will and not our own?

In a body there is a manifested person. We're not our bodies. We live in our bodies, and Jesus lives in His body. And what is the purpose of a body? It is to manifest the person.

What is the purpose of Jesus' body? It is to manifest Him. How is this world going to see the Lord Jesus Christ? He is seen through His body. We represent the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Church and the Church is the visible part of the invisible Christ.

The Church is to have no plans of her own. It is to manifest Jesus' person and to do His bidding. He lives in this body and it belongs to Him. We are not to be doing things for Jesus. He is to be doing things through us.

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:15-19.

- How did Paul address the tendency to think of some parts of Christ's body as more important than others?
- Why is it important for us to understand that no part is greater than any other?
- Look at Paul's question in verse 19. Where would our church be if everyone here had the same gifts?

Paul illustrated his point by giving an absurd image. Imagine a 225-pound eyeball. What if the body were only one gigantic eye or rather a massive ear? It would look like a television satellite dish, but it couldn't smell anything. But how has God set the members? He has placed every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him. If we were all just one organ, there wouldn't be any body, but now there are many members that make up one body. Paul made the point that each part is important and has a role to play.

God made us to have a mutual goal where we cannot operate apart from one another. One member of the body cannot function as it ought apart from the other members of the body. We belong to one another. No person could say, "My hand is so gifted, I'll send it off to do a job by itself. I'll send it over to the bookstore. Hand, go over there and do something for me." A hand does not function apart from the body. The same is true in the Body of Christ. We belong to one another, and when my ministry makes problems for your ministry or your ministry makes problems for

my ministry, either you're wrong or I'm wrong or we're both wrong. We are to be aiming at a mutual goal.

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:20-26.

- Why do you think we are so tempted to compare our gifts or roles in the Church to others'? Why might we consider some roles or gifts to be "weaker" or "less honorable"?
- According to these verses, how is God's view of these roles different? How might we embrace this mindset at our church and in our group?
- Why is it important to suffer with someone in the body who suffers and to rejoice with those who rejoice? What makes this difficult in our setting?

Paul said when one member suffers, every member suffers. When one member rejoices, all rejoice. The Body of Christ is inseparably connected. Someone might say, "Well, I want to be a Christian, but I don't want to have anything to do with the Church." That's like saying, "I want to love the head, but I don't want to love the body. I want to love the groom, but I don't want to love the bride. I want to love the foundation, but I don't want to love the building." Jesus and the Church are not identical, but they are inseparable.

Every Christian is important to fellow believers individually as well as to the Church as a whole. Because of this interdependency of believers who make up the Body of Christ, what happens to the strongest or the weakest happens to the whole of the community. As the Body of Christ, we show that our community cares for its own as we take care of and uplift the weakest member of our congregation. A vibrant and vital community is one that cares for its members who otherwise might be overlooked.

APPLICATION

Help your group members identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- Given what you've learned about how crucial each member of our church is, are there any roles you've been called to that you feel you could do a better job of fulfilling as a part of the church body?
- What are some practical ways we can better embrace those who are suffering as well as those who are rejoicing within our church body?

- What can you do to more consistently serve at our church and join in serving the community?
- What are some specific things we can ask God to accomplish through our church body and our group?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God for the ability to be a body of truly functioning members. Thank Him for His many blessings and gifts and pray that He will help each believer live with a fresh commitment to make the most of every opportunity. Pray that the members of your group will honor God by serving the Church with the gifts He has given.