

Serving the Body of Christ -- Understanding What Makes for a Healthy Church
1 Corinthians 12:1-30

When we read about “church growth” today, the ideas often revolve around a market-driven strategy to make our churches more attractive and our programs more exciting so more people will attend the services. Paul would be surprised at the approach, for he explains that a church is healthy when all of the members use their gifts to help, support, and encourage one another, and that enables them to go and make disciples of others (of all nations). The gospel of grace drives true church health and growth.

❖ The Foundation of Church Health: The Spirit gives us a common confession.
vv. 1-3

The Spirit ALWAYS exalts Jesus Christ, and so all communications in the assembly center upon and glorify Him, for He alone is God’s salvation.

❖ The Blueprint for Church Health: The Spirit gifts us with many kinds of ministries. vv. 4-11

The Spirit empowers every believer with a gift which contributes to the growth and health of the church. Every believer. Every believer.

❖ The Dynamic of Church Health: The Spirit forms us into one functioning Body.
vv. 12-16

The Spirit unifies the church in practical ways as believers apply their Spirit-ordained gifts to the building up of others.

❖ The Practice of Church Health: Each of us must employ our gifts. vv. 17-30

It’s not automatic, but occurs as we love one another (See chapter 13).

Growth Principle #15 --

The spiritually mature Christian sees himself placed by God as a living, working member of Christ’s Body in a local church.

1. It all begins with Jesus.

The church, in many quarters, has become little more than a social institution on the level of a club, a place where children are taught to “be nice” and adults taught to be “tolerant.” The Church, Paul explains, confesses Jesus. Do you? Do you acknowledge Him as your Savior and forgiver of your sins? As the ONLY way to God? John 3:31-36

2. Church is community, not a series of events or services.

Paul is describing people whose lives are intertwined and interdependent. In twenty-first century USA, we really have to make that happen, since we no longer have “community” churches. Our children go to different schools, we shop in different places, and share few things in common. Therefore, “doing church” is actually more challenging today than ever before. If we depend upon “accidental contact” or just attend service, we will never grasp the idea of a vibrant spiritual community of caring and nurture. Are you “into” the lives of some other people in helpful ways? Have you allowed some people into your life? Romans 12:1-13

3. You have something to offer!

If this chapter teaches us anything, it is that every single person in a local assembly can do things to build up the Body of Christ. It is neither humility nor faith for us to say, “I can’t contribute to the church” or “The church doesn’t need me.” Don’t let self-preoccupation or fear keep you from using your gifts to help others. It is possible for someone to be kept out of an “office,” but no one can keep us from loving and serving others. It is no sin to have joy because God has given you a gift to benefit His people! The glory still is His. Matthew 25:14-30

Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:

1. How do we know or discover our gifts? Is it possible to misread ourselves and think we have a certain gift when in reality we do not? How does the church validate our areas of giftedness?
2. What causes us to think either that we have no gift or that our contributions to the church are too small and insignificant to matter? Why is this a matter of faith?
3. Paul says that each gift is given for the common good (v. 7). What does this mean? How does his statement help keep us from pride? (Hint: There are at least two ways.)