

Membership Covenant



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Message for the Week: Each of Us Belongs

Sunday, September 24

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Of all the groups that you are a part of, which is your favorite group?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#) out loud.

[Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

Who are the people that you belong to? What 'groups' are you a part of?

Think about the groups you are a part of at church, home, school, work. Pick one of these groups. What unifies the members of this group? What is the same about them? How are the members of the group different? Why is each member needed? Pick another group you are a part of. What unifies the members of this group? What is the same about them? How are the members of this group different? Why is each member needed?

Reflect on Covenant Church. What unifies the members of this group? What is the same about them? How are the members of this group different? Why is each member needed?

Where or how are you "plugged into" the church (the GROUP who are following Jesus)?

When Paul uses the word unity, what do you understand the word unity to mean? Is the unity Paul is talking about conformity or is it something else? If it is conformity, what does this mean in terms of using gifts? If it is not conformity, what does this mean in terms of using gifts?

Try It:

As you go through your week, notice all the groups you are a part of. What role do you play in each of these groups? How would these groups be different if you were not there?

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father, show me where to use my gifts, talents and resources within the body of Covenant Church. If I've been faithless, forgive me. Give me the courage I need to live out my life within this group of believers to whom I belong. AMEN

Missional/Spiritual Practice: Groups

I commit to being an active participant in Covenant's faith community through corporate worship and ministry involvement. Are you an active participant in these?

I commit to being involved in a small group, prayer group, and/or a ministry group to encourage others in their spiritual life and to be held accountable for mine. Are you involved in a ministry group?

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

New International Version

Unity and Diversity in the Body

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by^(c) one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ 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 stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^(d)? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

a. [1 Corinthians 12:10](#) Or *languages*; also in verse 28

b. [1 Corinthians 12:10](#) Or *languages*; also in verse 28

c. [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) Or *with*; or *in*

d. [1 Corinthians 12:30](#) Or *other languages*

The Message

¹²⁻¹³ You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which *he* has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

¹⁴⁻¹⁸ I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, transparent and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

¹⁹⁻²⁴ But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a *part* of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn't be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, "Get lost; I don't need you"? Or, Head telling Foot, "You're fired; your job has been phased out"? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way—the "lower" the part, the more basic, and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes *no* difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?

²⁵⁻²⁶ The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

²⁷⁻³¹ You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body":

Apostles Prophets Teachers Miracle workers Healers Helpers Organizers Those who pray in tongues.

But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete Body and not a gigantic, unidimensional Part? It's not all Apostle, not all Prophet, not all Miracle Worker, not all Healer, not all Prayer in Tongues, not all Interpreter of Tongues. And yet some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts.