

# Romans (12:4-5)

## *Body Parts*

Part 62 - February 12, 2006

### ONE BODY IN CHRIST

Let's sum up chapter twelve's first three verses:

Verse 1: Dedicate your body

Offer your bodies as living sacrifices. - *Romans 12:1 NIV*

Verse 2: Renovate your mind

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. - *Romans 12:2 NIV*

Verse 3: Evaluate your capabilities

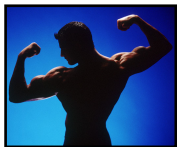
Think of yourself with sober judgment. - *Romans 12:3 NIV*

Once we have: dedicated our human form as an act of exaltation and worship, renovated our mindsets as an act of surrender and submission, evaluated our strengths and weaknesses as an act of humility, we are ready for the next step in Paul's progression:

Verse 4-5: Appreciate your role

Now, let's read Paul's favorite illustration for the church:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. - *Romans 12:4-5 NIV*



The comparison of a human body to the church body is one of the most common analogies in the New Testament. It immediately communicates four great realities:

1. Every believer is a specific part

Chaos occurs when we try to coerce other Christians to conform to our specific ideas of how their faith should be expressed.

Q: Have you ever tried to force a puzzle piece?

That's what can happen in the church, if people are pressured to "plug holes" or guilt-forced into filling positions they weren't designed for.

- We fit a specific range of roles.

One of the secrets to joyful living as a believer is to function within the unique range of roles you were created for.

- A. Then you don't have to feel guilty saying "no thank you" when you're asked to fill a position you *weren't* designed for.
- B. A healthy sense of self-esteem comes from realizing you are a unique part of God's big picture that *nobody else* can replace.

"These members do not all have the same function"

## 2. Every part is vital

The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." - 1 Cor 12:21

Some parts are more visible in the church than others, and because of that, we tend to give them more "credit".

I have a hand and a heart. My hand is more visible, but my heart is more vital (to the life of my body). Don't sell yourself short, if your role isn't prominent. There are no insignificant roles in the body of Christ.

"Just as each of us has one body with many members"

Make a list of the members of your body (limbs and organs) that you'd donate to science - while you're still alive! Most folks are reluctant to give up their organs after they're dead.

## 3. Every part must cooperate

Despite specific functions, body parts interact in harmony because they are synchronized by the headship of the brain.

"In Christ we who are many form one body"

Notice that in God's body this happens: "In Christ"

Christ brings our uniqueness into harmony. Our harmony is based on commonality: we are redeemed *together*, justified *together*, forgiven *together*, and created anew *together*.

## ALL OF ME

Q: How often does your right leg kick your left leg?

In the movie "All of Me" Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin occupy two halves of the same body, but don't want to cooperate. It's quite humorous to watch them tug-of-war within the same body; one leg trying to go one direction, the other determined to go its way.

Your relationship with the Lord is personal, but it was never intended to be private. Only *together* do we form Christ's body.

In fact, our true individuality can only be discovered and experienced through interaction with the body of Christ.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? - 1 Corinthians 12:17 NIV

The eye can't fully know or appreciate its function apart from its interdependence with the other parts of the body.

- We are independent *and* interdependent.

My independent identity - who I was created to be - cannot be fully understood except through serving and being served.

4. Every part belongs to every other part

Our unified harmony in Christ is more profound than just belonging to the same body. We belong to each other.

"Each member belongs to all the others"

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. - 1 Corinthians 12:26 NIV



My face is about as far from my big toe as two body parts get. So how come when I stub my toe, my face does this? You see, my face is so deeply connected to my toe, that it responds as rapidly as if it was feeling the pain.

And my knee won't have to think about drawing my toe up to where my hand won't have to think about reaching out to comfort it.

- Body parts reflexively respond to one another.

In the church, this means that each member feels the pain or the anguish or the peril or the pleasure that the other parts feel.

## TWO BODY TYPES

But, for this to happen we need to appreciate the difference between the two body-types described in verse five.

“In Christ we who are many form one body”

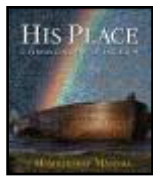
This is: *Positional* Membership

It’s the invisible union we share with Jesus and *every* believer, the moment we receive Christ as Savior.

“Each member belongs to all the others”

This is: *Participating* Membership

The NT urges *positional* members to *participate* in local gatherings to exhort, support, encourage, and comfort one another. This is how we make the invisible union visible.



Something you’ll be seeing fairly soon, is a brand new membership manual. Just finished writing it on Thursday!

And an interesting coincidence: the first Bible verse quoted in the manual is Romans 12:5.

But all of this is only theory if we don’t have a viable network of deepening, nurturing, encouraging, personal relationships.

- Small groups are not a therapeutic strategy.
- Small groups are not a psychological method.

They’re a living expression of a supernatural creation!

- A. They help us become who God created us *in Christ* to be.
- B. They help us develop into a mutually ministering body.

Small groups give us a strong back. And by keeping fit in these smaller-body settings, we are prepared and ready to lift up one another’s burdens as the needs arise.

The enemy loves severed limbs, because the more we detach ourselves from the local body, the more inevitable that our faith will shrivel and die on its own.

- You’ve been called to believe *and* to belong.
- None of us can fulfill God’s purposes *alone*.