

The Synergy of Souls

By Dr. Dave Neale

Last week we talked about how God gets out among us by the exercise of our gifts, each to their own abilities and gifting. It was quite encouraging to think that who you are is the gift of God and that as ***To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*** (i.e. “to be continually helpful”). We said that this was our shared mission, the common good.

So this week we turn to the rest of chapter 12 in 1 Corinthians to talk about what happens when you put all of these gifts together in a body. So I call my message ***The Synergy of Souls***.

The Obvious Blessings of the Body

The body analogy used by Paul in vss 14-21 is a salute to the tolerance of diversity and the strength that arises when we pool our gifts around a shared sense of mission to Jesus Christ.

The first thing to say is that there is an obvious Synergy of Souls we get by working together,

- Good works within the community of faith and in the general community and world
- Soul food for the flock of all ages
- Outreach to the lost
- Care for one another
- Fun together

Of this we are all very well aware here at Victoria Nazarene. And if you haven’t had the life-giving encouragement of being in a healthy, loving church body you really must come and join us and experience it! We do absolutely amazing things here together.

But of course it is more, we are a spiritual entity, the “body of Christ” as Paul says.

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. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (vss 12-13).

The Problem – Divisions and Factions

The context of Paul’s correspondence with this body of richly gifted believers in the Corinthian church, with whom he had invested 18 months of his life, is conflict – divisions - factions. What a surprise!

In the first verses of the letter he exhorts them to heal their divisions, stop quarreling and forget about their factions. Some say they belong to Apollos, or Cephas, or Paul or Christ! (1 Cor 1:10ff)

He speaks of a ***painful visit*** (2 Cor 2:1). And that ***I hear there are many divisions [factions] among you... and I believe it*** (1 Cor 11:17ff). He says that when they come together is ***not for the better but for the worse...*** This makes clear what he means to say when he says the manifestations of the Spirit are for the ***common good*** (1 Cor 12:7).

The Neale Dictum on Management was created after years of managing people in various contexts. It doesn’t matter if the organization is Christian or secular, the Neale Dictum holds.

- 80% of the people you manage are awesome.
- 15% are usually awesome.

- And 5% are a complete pain (I use polite language). And when the 5% become 20% or more you have dysfunction.

So it is when we put people together as a body that we can confront some challenges. So... as it happens, people never really change and it is the case that Christians often don't get along, and never have really.¹

[Insert global population; circle graph and denomination slide each as I discuss]

Isn't it an interesting anthropological observation that what the earliest churches experience is what remains our biggest embarrassment 20 centuries later?

As an aside, you do know that no one ever really knows about all the good that happens through the church. When was the last time you saw an item in the media about how much good the Catholic Church has done through the centuries? You hear a lot about the bad, sure. But never the good.

The good of the church is always going to be unheralded, and we don't care. When it comes to the good Jesus said the left hand never knows what the right hand is doing. True good is always anonymous.

The Solution – A New Oneness

So we see the obvious blessings of the Christian body, the propensities for division, then and ever since. Here is the solution Paul lays out. Dissension arises when we fail to honor each member of the body as fully human and created by God. Dissension arises when we use the human categories of social status within the body (wealth, education, success, ability, disability, poverty, intelligence, number of likes, your gaming high score)

Vss 20-23

- Weaker → Indispensable
- Less honorable → Greater honor
- Less respectable → Greater respect

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (vss 24-26)

What Really Matters?

Microsoft announced this week that they are acquiring Activision, the gaming company that own and operates Call of Duty and Candy Crush, for \$70 billion. Activision doesn't produce anything; they just own these games. But what they

¹ •	Global population	7.5 billion
○	Christian	2.4 billion (31%)
○	Islam population	2 billion (25%)
○	Hindu	1.1 billion (15%)
○	Nonreligious/agnostic/atheist	1.2 billion (15%)
○	Buddhism/others	1 billion(13%)

Slide 4# a circle graph from the Wikipedia article I sent you earlier in the week.

Of Christian denominations

- Over 200 Christian denominations in North America
- An estimated 45,000 globally

have that Microsoft wants is 400 million on-line user base. Microsoft is attempting to reposition itself for the new Metaverse.

Nobody really knows what the Metaverse is exactly but one person defines it as “the nascent world of virtual augmented reality” and the emerging cultural trend where the internet merges with the virtual reality world.

You might think this is all a bit silly if you are a boomer... but then you are told that there are 3 billion on-line gamers in the world, more than there are Christians.

For example, Christine plays Beat Saber with her grandkids in Boise with virtual head ware. A new dimension of human relationship. Soon there will be a church you can join virtually.

[Musicians]

Here is what really matters. Here is what is actually real.

- We need each other. ***And if the ear would 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. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose*** (vss 16-17... 18)
- That by holding all present in a state of mutual respect and love we attain Christian community. Where, tell me, do you find this elsewhere in the world? A community where your professional standing, your education, your race, wealth or lack of wealth, your appearance nor your ability determines your value. Only our value as people created in God’s image, sharing in one Spirit – for God shows no partiality.²
- Finally, out of this oneness the presence of God arises in our midst. Out of this oneness God gets out among us and in our world.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

²● There are roles, sure... but no status. The Corinthian church had forgotten this, perhaps we do too at times, but we aspire to no less in our community.