

G.E.M.S.
L.I.F.E. DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF A HEALTHY CHURCH BODY

Overview

Over the next five weeks or more, we will study the **five guiding principles** of a healthy church body: **humility, unity, diversity, purity, and charity**. We want you to **learn** the **five principles** by **meditating** on the teachings you will receive, so you can **conform** your character to these principles (Joshua 1:8). We will know these principles are being applied when members of our church body work **interdependently**, which results in our flourishing, both **relationally** and **numerically**.

Be excited about this study. Through this study you will receive revelation about how you as a Christ follower are an actual *part* of Christ's Body. Most Christ followers know Christ as their Savior and grow into Him being their Lord, but few know Christ as a result of being an interdependent part of His Body.

Our Text: Romans 12:3-10 (ESV)

Romans 12:3. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. **4.** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, **5.** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

6. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; **7.** if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching, **8.** the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity, the who leads, with zeal; the who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. **9.** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **10.** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Introduction: Book of Romans

- **Writer:** Apostle Paul
- **Who:** The Book of Romans was written to the Christ followers living in Rome, who were both Jewish and non-Jewish
- **Why:** Paul wrote this letter to address the **tension** between the Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Christ. He addressed this tension through his **theology** of salvation. Paul let them know that everyone had sinned, the wages of sin was death, and the free gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 3:23, 6:23).
- **What:** In our text (Romans 12:3-10) Paul used the **metaphor** of the **Body of Christ**. In our study, we will learn how Christ followers come together **collectively** and work together **interdependently** as Christ's Body, the church, so they can **belong** to one another in **fellowship** and do the works of Christ together.

STUDY III – PRINCIPLE OF DIVERSITY

Diversity (Body Dependence) – We are One Body in Christ, but we have various members who are dependent on one another.

Introduction:

In this session, we will cover **diversity** in the Body of Christ.

God created **diverse** parts and made them dependent on one another, so they can become the whole.

- God made diverse nations (Genesis 10)
- Jesus preached diversity (Matthew 28:18-19)
- Apostles addressed diversity (Acts 6:1-7)
- Paul defined diversity (Galatians 3:28)

Paul talks about the diversity of gifts that lead to different roles in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:27-28). Sometimes we elevate some gifts over other gifts, causing schisms or division in the Body of Christ. All gifts are needed for the Body to function as One.

How can Christ's Body be diversified but remain one?

APPLICATION OF DIVERSITY

In Romans 12:4-5, Paul commands the Roman church to walk in unity with one another.

Study Scripture: v4. For as in one body we have **many** members, and the members do not all have the **same function**, v5. so we, though **many**, are one body in Christ, and **individually members** of one another.

In verses **four and five**, the key phrases of these verses are

- “we have **many** members”
- “members do not all have the **same function**”
- “we, though **many**, are **one body** in Christ”
- “**individually** members of one another”

Christ followers work *interdependently* with one another, even though their roles and gifts may differ. Each member should know their different gifts and roles in the Body of Christ, so they can work interdependently together as one through humility and unity.

- **Humility** – Humility is the first principle that opens the door for all other principles. Walking in humility compels you to make the other members' gifts and roles just as important as your own. Humility makes allowances for the diversity that is in the Body of Christ.
- **Unity** – You understand we have uniformity in our belief in Christ, but our unity in Christ is diversified. Most Christ followers do not understand the difference between uniformity and unity.

One Body in Christ implies we may be different in our gifts and roles, but we come into **uniformity** in our belief that Jesus is our Savior and Lord. Paul is instructing the church at Rome to recognize that the members of the Body of Christ have various gifts and different roles, but the Body must keep first things first—Jesus Christ is Lord.

“The law of **human existence** depends on **interdependence**.”

Diversity in the church can go beyond gifts and roles. Diversity in the church could be cultural, racial, gender (male and female), social status, etc. When churches are made up various cultures, races, and social statuses, and political views, these churches are known as diversified churches.

American churches are primarily homogeneous, and it is not always intentional. Cultivating a diversified church is hard because churches cannot be all things to all people. The primary difficulty of church diversity involves issues of **ethnicity**, **preference**, **familiarity**, or **location** among the many members of the Body of Christ. The early church had to deal with the **ethnocentrism** of the Jews’ belief of their superiority over the Gentile believers (Acts 6:1).

We have **preferred** worship styles (music), which drives members’ choices of what church they will attend. It is difficult for a church to be all things (musically) to all members.

Sometimes **familiarity** with a group of people makes it easier for a Christ follower to assimilate in the Body of Christ. For an example, a Korean Christ follower coming from Korea to America would most likely look for a Korean church. It has nothing to do with feelings of superiority or prejudice, but a desire for comfort.

The issue could be as simple as location. Some members go to churches in their local neighborhood. If their neighborhood is not diversified, then their church will not be.

If a church wants to be culturally diverse, then it must be intentional. Here are five keys to cultural diversity in a church:

- (1) Drop labels (such as white church, Hispanic church, or Asian church, etc.);
- (2) Choose relationship over comfort (sometimes you have to make allowances for other cultural customs that are not your own);
- (3) Leadership (be intentional about having all cultural groups in leadership roles);
- (4) Keep messages centered on Christ (do not become involved in the cultural or political wars that may divide the Body); and
- (5) Remain real (members can act like themselves and like not some other culture).

Remember this: even though now there may be a struggle to be a diversified local church, God is still creating a people (singular) from all peoples (plural)—people from all tribes, nations, tongues, and people groups that make up the universal church. According to Revelation 5:9 and 7:9, the universal Church is a preview of God’s eternal kingdom.

Study Questions:

1. What does diversity look like in the Body of Christ?

References: Galatians 3:28; Revelation 7:9; Acts 17:26; Psalm 117

2. Can a church have a mission focused on a certain race of people?

References: Galatians 2:7-8; I Corinthians 9:19-23

3. How can NWCC be more intentional about being diversified?

References: Acts 4:32; Philippians 2:2-3; Romans 14:17-19; I Corinthians 9:19-23

4. Name some of your preferences that could hinder diversity in your local church.

Actions to take: How will you be intentional about walking in diversity?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Verse to Ponder: I Corinthians 9:22. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.