

Vital Differences

by K.P. Yohannan

The Body of Christ is complete only because of differences, and we must recognize the value of each person and who they are to function smoothly.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:14

Topics: "The Body of Christ", "Unity in Diversity"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the vital differences within the Body of Christ, illustrating how each member, regardless of size or visibility, plays an essential role in the overall function and health of the church. He draws parallels between the human body and the church, highlighting that just as every part is necessary for physical balance and movement, every believer contributes uniquely to the spiritual body. Through personal experiences, he shares the importance of embracing differences and working in unity, as these differences enrich the ministry and foster growth. Yohannan encourages believers to recognize and value each other's roles, understanding that together they fulfill God's purpose. Ultimately, he calls for a compassionate and unified approach to serving one another, reflecting Christ's love and grace.

Transcript

Look at your body and you will see a left leg and a right leg, a nose and two eyes. We were all given two feet and two hands. Both hands are complete with five fingers--nothing is missing. And because nothing is missing, you are able to write with your hand and feed yourself as well. You can see with your eyes and walk with your feet, doing all the things your brain tells you to do. Imagine now if some parts of your body were missing or were sick and not working. Have you ever seen someone try to walk without their big toe?

We typically consider a missing leg or missing arm a big deal--and it is. Yet how many times have you considered the importance of your big toe? This one little body part may seem insignificant and not all that impressive or important, but it establishes the balance for the entire body, keeping you steady and able to walk. You wouldn't even be able to stand without it! How crucial this small, seemingly insignificant member really is. Just like the toe or the leg, the arm or the nose, each one of us represents a different, unique and valuable part of the Body of Christ.

Each part is needed so that the Body is complete, able to do whatever is required. The Bible speaks of the importance of each member, big or small, known or unknown, honored or not, in 2 Corinthians. In writing to the believers there, Paul reminds them how each individual is vital and contributes to the health of the whole: Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, 'I am not a part of the

body because I am not a hand,' that does not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear says, 'I am not part of the body because I am only an ear and not an eye,' would that make it any less a part of the body? Suppose the whole body were an eye--then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything? But God made our bodies with many parts, and he has put each part just where he wants it. What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.'

The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you. . . .' This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other equally. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it (1 Corinthians 12:14-21, 25-27, NLT). Just as the Lord has done everything so perfectly with our physical bodies, He also has done with us, His Body.

I have traveled to numerous places and have seen many different groups of believers. There are differences in each fellowship, and the meshing of these differences is what makes the Body of Christ so beautiful. The first place that comes to mind is Gospel for Asia's international headquarters in the United States and the group of people the Lord has brought together to serve there. He brings the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the slow and the eager. There are people from different places, backgrounds and experiences, yet each one is greatly needed and fits together in the service of the Lord.

No one is perfect alone, but each person's skills, abilities, talents, giftings and temperaments make the ministry whole and complete. A Blessing in the Difference In the illustration of the parts of the body all being important, unity seems to be an obvious element, easily attained. But as you and I both know, it's not always as easy as it sounds. Differences are just that--they separate and distinguish one from another. And unless we put forth an effort to live in unity, our differences can be used to divide us, causing great chasms and hurts.

I have had many personal experiences with both knowing the pain and the beautiful purpose of differences. Back in the early days of the ministry, when Gospel for Asia (GFA) was just starting out, a brother named Fred came to work with us. I had the hardest time working with this man. He was just so different from me. We were complete opposites--I was night; he was day. His skin is clean white; mine is dark brown. That is what you'd see on the surface, but the differences ran much deeper than that.

We had different personalities and different ways of doing things; everything you can possibly imagine, we were different in. We just couldn't seem to get along. It was absolutely awful. There were many times when I went through such agony working with Fred. Being the leader of GFA, I thought I could just ask him to leave. "I cannot live with him anymore. He just does not understand!" We obviously could not get along and because this was causing so much added tension to my days, I decided Fred must go.

The day before I was going to call it quits with him, God, in His mercy and grace, intervened. In the evening when I was all alone, God began to speak to me about the struggles I had with Fred. Surely He knew of my agony with this man and would agree with me about the pain this situation was causing me. Or so I thought. I didn't expect to hear God say, "The problem is not Fred. It's you." This shocked me! "What?" I said, "Me, the problem? God, You know how I've been living with all these issues with this man!"

He said, "Yes, I know, but it's you that is the problem." Later the next day, God continued to speak to me and said, "I have a plan and you never understood it. You only looked at the work. You only looked at what you could get out of Fred. You only looked at how fast he could run. You only looked at how well he spoke and what he did to see if it met your qualifications. You only looked at how he could perform from your perspective, with you as his judge. You never understood Me."

I broke down and cried. God was right. The problem was with me. This incident was a major turning point in my life. I never did fire Fred; instead, I asked him to forgive me. Although Fred's temperament never changed and neither did mine, my heart changed inside that day. I can honestly tell you, since that day I have never had anger, unforgiveness or an unloving heart toward my brother Fred. As a matter of fact, I cannot imagine life at GFA without him. One of my greatest joys is that Fred and I--two entirely different people--work in the same kingdom's work, fighting side by side, both taking orders from Him who is our head.

He has faithfully labored right alongside me for 22 years now. This is the kind of perfect and beautiful work God does to unify His Body. In hindsight, I see how wonderful this situation was. God puts us with other people to show us how we need them and they need us, and together we grow and mature and do the part God created each of us to do. As long as we human beings live together on this earth, there will be differences. We come from so many different backgrounds--family backgrounds, Christian backgrounds, educational backgrounds and cultural backgrounds.

We differ in age, race, income and marital status. We must not concentrate on the differences as "negatives" but rather see them as good, bringing balance and fullness to our lives and to the rest of the Body. Yet it is only as we look to Christ that we can have the perspective of seeing our differences as blessings. Recognize the Value The Body of Christ is complete only because of differences. Think about that statement for a moment. Consider how many different people, ministries, churches and mission organizations there are.

Each has been given a particular assignment from God and carries with it different strengths and weaknesses. Whether we realize it or not, we all need each other. We cannot stand alone. GFA's approach to ministry focuses on preaching the Gospel first and foremost. But recently, a doctor who heads up a large medical mission organization came to visit GFA to talk to us about the importance of hospital ministry--how Jesus healed people, and through that healing He brought them to eternal salvation.

For a long time I sat with this man and listened to what he was sharing. He had many good things to say. By the time the meeting drew to a close, I saw the enormous potential God has given their ministry. The opportunities are endless, especially in Asian nations where illness and disease are so widespread. They could minister in places like Orissa, where the medical needs were so overwhelming after the devastating cyclone hit in 2001. Millions of people would turn to Christ through the compassion shown them in treating their sicknesses and in healing their diseases.

When he had finished talking, I said, "You are absolutely right. What you are saying works beautifully if the preaching of the Gospel is not compromised." Ten years ago, I never would have responded so well; in fact, I would not have even considered this kind of ministry. If someone had come and talked to me like that doctor did, I would have said, "Yeah, okay. That is all very nice, but I will see you later. Here at GFA we preach the Gospel. I don't have room for anything that is less important."

Of course preaching the Gospel must always be the priority. But at the same time, Jesus still fed the hungry and healed the sick. If we, Christ's Body, are to function like He did, we have to accept the value of each and every individual part. If GFA didn't accept the ministry of this medical mission, valuing the role it plays, then the work of both groups would be compromised. Wherever you are and with whomever the Lord has joined you together, remember that you and your brother or sister have each been given a particular part to play.

As we recognize our part, our gifts and our lack, we can complement each others' lives and experience the harmony of the fullness of Christ. Every individual that the Lord has brought into your life, especially in the service of the Lord, is uniquely placed to somehow complement your lack in the Body and you, theirs. In accepting and valuing each person and who they are, the whole Body functions smoothly. Unseen Yet Needed Just as there are different organs in your human body that you have never seen yet are vital to your existence, so there are members in the Body of Christ.

Perhaps you or someone around you is rarely noticed, always working behind the scenes, not given much honor or fame. Remember that "the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16). And "he who is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). Although you can't see your heart, your kidneys or your stomach, if one of these hidden members stops functioning properly, you would certainly know. You would be very sick and possibly in the hospital. The same is true concerning the Body of Christ.

The healthy functioning of every part is critical. When each member is healthy and rightly connected to the rest of the Body, all is well. But when one member of the Body is no longer connected to the whole, that member is in danger of dying. And it is not just that part that suffers, but the whole Body is also affected. United like this, we realize we are linked to each other, walking side by side, feeling each other's victories as well as each other's hurts. It is like when I stub my toe--ouch!--my whole body feels it!

I hop around on the other foot and hold my toe with my hand. Maybe a little tear runs down my cheek because it hurts so badly. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Romans 12:15-16 (NIV) says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another." That means if my brother is sad, I am sad too. If my sister is sick, I feel her sickness. In 1994 a terrible butchering happened in the African nation of Rwanda.

In the span of just a few months, more than 700,000 people were killed in a conflict between neighboring tribes, the Hutus and the Tutsis. After hearing reports of this tragedy, can you remember what happened in your church service the following Sunday? In the church I attended, absolutely nothing was different. Everything continued as normal, as if this slaughtering of thousands never even happened. There were no tears, no hurt, no pain, no sharing--nothing. This concerns me.

Much of Christendom has come to focus its effort on sustaining its own emotional health, strength and comfort. Lukewarm Christianity watches those who share in the pain of the suffering and says, "That is fanaticism! That is flesh! It's all emotion!" Lukewarm Christianity won't let its heart be broken for the hurt and dying. But biblical Christianity sees the tragedy and is moved by the pain and suffering, weeping just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the proper religious people left the wounded man to die on the road.

Only the man from Samaria had compassion and shared the pain, helping his brother who was in need (see Luke 10). We cannot generate Christlike compassion or godly emotions any more than we can save ourselves. But we can be obedient to pray for and receive His burden, even if it means processing painful

things. I am not saying this to make you feel like you're not praying enough or not doing enough or not feeling enough of the burden. All I want is for us to take His yoke and share with Him in "the fellowship of His sufferings" (see Philippians 3:10).

And just as we share in the sufferings, we also share in the victories and joys. If there is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents, then there should be rejoicing on earth too! In Luke 10, we find the story of Jesus sending out the disciples two by two to heal the sick. Luke 10:17 says, "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' " Seeing how excited His disciples were at the power of God, Jesus rejoiced with them.

Luke 10:21 says, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.' " Let us then imitate Jesus, rejoice in our differences and make the effort to see the value and gifts each of us brings to the whole. In this appreciation of each other and how the Lord has made us, He will be glorified.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kp-yohannan/vital-differences/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net