

## ☞ Living in the Body

--James S. Hewett... Do you know how many members of the Tate family belong to your church? There is old man Dic Tate who wants to run everything, while Uncle Ro Tate tries to change everything. Their sister Agi Tate stirs up plenty of trouble, with help from her husband, Irri Tate.

Whenever new projects are suggested, Hesi Tate wants to wait until next year while Devas Tate provides the voice of doom. Then there is Aunt Imi Tate, who wants our church to be like all the others.

But not all members of the family are bad. Brother Facili Tate is quite helpful in church matters. And a delightful, happy member of the family is Miss Felici Tate. And of course there is the black sheep of the family, Ampu Tate, who has completely cut himself off from the church.

We are each part of the body of Christ and we must learn to live in the body.

--Dan Bernard... Remember putting your face above a headless frame painted to represent a muscle man, a clown, or even a bathing beauty? Many of us have had our pictures taken this way, and the photos are humorous because the head doesn't fit the body. If we could picture Christ as the head of our local body of believers, would the world laugh at the misfit? Or would they stand in awe of a human body so closely related to a divine head?

### ☞ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

#### 1. ☞ Acknowledge the Necessity of each part

--Aesop... One day it occurred to the members of the body that they were doing all the work and that the belly was having all the food. So they held a meeting and after a long discussion decided to strike work until the belly consented to take its proper share of the work. So for a day or two the hands refused to take the food, the mouth refused to receive it and the teeth had no work to do. But after a day or two members began to find that they themselves were not in very active condition. The hands could hardly move, the mouth was all parched and dry, while the legs were unable to support the rest. Thus they found that even the belly in its dull quiet way was doing necessary work for the body and that all must work together or the body would go to pieces.

v. 18 God has arranged the parts

☞ v. 22 Even the "weaker" parts are **indispensable**

v. 23 Even the "less honorable" parts are treated with special honor

Each and every part is important.

*General Eisenhower once rebuked one of his Generals for referring to a soldier as "just a Private." He reminded him that the Army could function better without its Generals than it could without its foot soldiers. "If this war is won," he said, "it will be won by Privates." In the same way, the common, ordinary, one-talent Christians are the very backbone of the church. We have our great evangelists, our super congregations led by dynamic elders, and our wealthy brethren who are able to finance great works. But, if the work of the Lord is to be done, if the gospel is to be taken to the lost, it will be the "ordinary" Christians who will do it.*

### **Ephesians 4:16**

From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament,  grows and builds itself up in love, as **each part does its work.**

Though some parts may seem insignificant, each one is necessary. Individually we are weak, but together we become strong.

*--Vesta Kelly... Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together.*

Acknowledge the necessity of each part.

## **2. Accept the Diversity within the body**

Since each part is a necessity, we must be ok with diversity...

v. 14 not one part, but many

Romans 12:4

...members do not all have the same function

### **Romans 12:6**

**We have different gifts,** according to the grace given us.

** What would my church be like if every member were just like me?** See v. 17

*--James S. Hewett... You have your gifts not so much for your own sake as for the sake of others. You are like an apple tree that produces fruit not for its own consumption but for the consumption of others. Your gifts are given so you can bless others by ministering to them. If you have the gift of teaching, you have it so others in the body will be taught. If*

*you have the gift of hospitality, it is because others need the gracious welcome they receive from you. If even one gifted person fails to function, the body of Christ is deprived of a ministry it needs to function well.*

So, how do we live in the body with so much diversity?

Romans 14:19

☞ Let us therefore make every effort to **do what leads to peace** and to mutual edification

Colossians 3:13

☞ **Bear with each other** and **forgive** whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

**Ephesians 4:29**

☞ **Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**

Accept the diversity within the body. Look to your neighbor and say, "boy, you're different, but that's good."

### 3. ☞ **Actively Protect the Unity of the whole body**

*Tonto and the Lone Ranger were riding through a canyon together when all of a sudden both sides were filled with Native American warriors on horses, dressed for battle. The Lone Ranger turned to Tonto and asked, "What are we going to do?" Tonto replied, "What you mean 'we,' Whiteman?"*

v. 16 Belong to the body = each is part of the whole

v. 24 God combined = cause to fit together in an overall picture

Romans 12:5

so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1 Corinthians 1:10

☞ I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **agree with one another** so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

☞ **John 17:23**

**May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

We can actually answer the Lord's prayer on this one!

Ephesians 4:3

☞ **Make every effort to keep the unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Philippians 2:1-5

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by **being like-minded**, having the same love, being **one in spirit and purpose**. 3 Do **nothing out of selfish ambition** or vain conceit, but in **humility** consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the **interests of others**. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus

☞ **Romans 12:15**

**Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**

*Weak things united become strong.*

Actively Protect the Unity of the whole body.

☞ **Acknowledge the Necessity of each part**

**Accept the Diversity in the body**

**Actively Protect the Unity of the whole body**

These principles apply in a variety ways:

We need all the gifts God has placed in people. We must realize that not everyone is gifted just the same. And that's all right; in fact, that's excellent! We need the variety. Also, we must realize and be able to say, "My gift is not superior to anyone else's. Neither is someone else's gift superior to mine. They're just different."

This is not only true in gifts, but in personalities. Some are very outgoing while others are more introverted. Some are very energetic and others are more reserved. It's okay for us to be different.

There are different gifts, different personalities and there are different interests and passions. These principles apply here as well. The intense worshipers tend to think everybody should be more involved in worship. The studious people think everyone should study harder. The givers think others should give more. The organizers want everything and everyone more organized. The thing you are passionate about is not

necessarily what everyone else needs. Each one has their individual needs as well as their main areas of interest. And it's okay for us all to be a little bit different. As long as we're within the boundaries of what is morally right, and as long as we are generally moving in the same direction, it's okay for each one to be unique. We must Accept the Diversity and even Acknowledge the Necessity of each part. And above all, we must Actively Protect the Unity of the whole. **It's not about me; it's not about you; it's about us; and even more... it's about him!**

As a Pastor, which literally means Shepherd, one of my main responsibilities is to protect the flock. One of the things the flock needs protection from is itself. That's why there are so many scriptures that deal with how to get along and how to relate with one another.

God is blessing our church. But, let's be careful as we go along. The enemy would love to come in and create havoc in this good thing that God is doing. One of his favorite tools is messing with our relationships. That's why we must apply this message today and always. Acknowledge the Necessity of each part; Accept the Diversity; and Actively protect the Unity.

☞ Next Sunday is **Back to Church Sunday** and we are focusing on the church being the people. We will begin at **11 o'clock at McHose Park Shelter** by simply gathering together to enjoy each other's company and encourage each other. There will be yard games and table games available. Then at **noon**, we will have a **devotional** followed by a **potluck** meal. So bring food enough for you, your family, and a few guests. Finally, at **1:30** we will have an all-church **softball game**. Anybody can play and others can cheer it on. It will be a casual, laid-back day that might appeal to a newcomer, so **invite a friend**. All of these things are meant to encourage and build up the body of Christ. So, next Sunday, **we are going to "have church" by being the church**. See you next time!