



Last week we began a three-part sermon series on our church's 3E vision statement: *Embrace God's Truth ... Enjoy His People ... Extend His Glory*. Just as we need our physical vision checked occasionally, so we need our spiritual vision checked also. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "I pray that *the eyes of your heart* may be enlightened..." (Eph. 1:18 NIV, italics added). Paul wanted the hearts of his fellow believers to be flooded with the light of God so that they might better understand his limitless love for them, the immeasurable greatness of his power toward them, and the glorious future he has prepared for them.

Only the Holy Spirit can give us such insight, and he does so through Scripture. That's why we began this series with the first part of our vision statement: "Embrace God's Truth." All Scripture points to Christ, who is the truth (John 14:6). So, embracing Jesus as your Savior-King is the start of your Christian journey.

But we were never meant to walk alone. God wants us to "enjoy his people" on the road of salvation. [\[show slide\]](#)



That is the second part of our vision statement and the subject of today's sermon. Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12. We're going to read verses 12-27 (page 902, pew Bible). In this section, Paul compares a person's physical body to the body of Christ, the church. Beginning in verse 12, Paul writes,

<sup>12</sup>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.<sup>13</sup>For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> For the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should 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. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup> If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,<sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Most of us are familiar with the concept of body image – how we think, feel and act toward our body. Negative body image leads to many negative outcomes, such as stress, anxiety, depression, interpersonal problems, social isolation, perfectionistic tendencies, and persistent negative thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, research shows that roughly half of all 13-year-old American girls are unhappy with their body. This percentage grows to nearly 80% by the time they turn 17.<sup>2</sup> Negative body image afflicts the male population too. While only 25% of males admitted that they were concerned about their physique, 75% reported using appearance- and performance-enhancing substances to modify their body image.<sup>3</sup>

How we think, feel and act toward our body – has a huge impact on our lives. The same is true when it comes to Christ's body – the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jake Linardon, "Body Image Statistics 2023: 52+ Shocking Facts and Stats," Break Binge Eating, 03 March 2023 [online]. Retrieved on 21 September 2023 from <https://breakbingeeating.com/body-image-statistics/>.

<sup>2</sup> Kearney-Cooke, A., & Tieger, D. (2015). "Body image disturbance and the development of eating disorders." In L. Smolak & M. D. Levine (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Eating Disorders* (pp. 283-296). West Sussex, UK: Wiley. Cited by Linardon, "Body Image Statistics, 2023."

<sup>3</sup> Ganson, K. T., Hallward, L., Cunningham, M. L., Murray, S. B., & Nagata, J. M. (2022). Use of Legal Appearance-and Performance-Enhancing Drugs and Substances: Findings from the Canadian Study of Adolescent Health Behaviors. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 1-9. Cited by Linardon, "Body Image Statistics, 2023."

If I were counseling someone with a negative body image, I'd want them to see themselves as God sees them. That's the starting point for overcoming negative perceptions and experiencing positive outcomes – replacing anxiety with peace, depression with joy, interpersonal problems with healthy relationships, perfectionistic tendencies with reasonable expectations, negative thoughts with positive thoughts.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul seeks to improve the church's perception of itself. Instead of putting ourselves down or disparaging other parts of Christ's body, we are to appreciate every part and cherish the church in its entirety. God wants us to "enjoy his people." The Spirit of God, speaking through Scripture, declares that

***Christ's body has many members  
which constitute a beautiful whole.***

Earlier in our service we read Ephesians 4, where the church is referred to as the body of Christ. In the very next chapter, Ephesians 5, the church is referred to as the *bride* of Christ. This past Wednesday in our Care & Discipleship Course, we spent time considering Ephesians 5:25-32, where the Holy Spirit says,

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- Ephesians 5:25-32 NIV

In these verses, Paul employs two metaphors for the church, "bride" and "body." The relationship between husband and wife illustrates the bond between Christ and the church. That's why each man is to love his wife as he loves his own body. Now, you may wonder how the statement in verse 29, "No one ever hated his own body but feeds and cares for it" jibes with the negative body image epidemic I mentioned earlier. Well, the problem is, "some people have a messed up love for their body"<sup>4</sup> and mistreat it as a result.

Likewise, some believers have a messed up view of the church and mistreat it as a result. That's the problem that the Holy Spirit is addressing in 1 Corinthians 12. That's why Paul draws a comparison between our physical body and Christ's body.

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<sup>4</sup> Josh McDowell, "Loving God's Temple," Josh McDowell: A CRU Ministry [online]. Retrieved on 21 September 2023 from <https://www.josh.org/daily-devo/loving-gods-temple/>.

## Analogy

Look again at verse 12: “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.”

When you saw me this morning, you didn't think, “Oh, there's Pastor Matt's feet. Oh, and there are his hands ... and his head! Oh, my goodness – he brought both of his arms to church, too. And his ears!” That's ridiculous. Although my body has many parts, many members, you see me as one person, a unified whole. This is how we should see the body of Christ. Why? Paul tells us in verses 13: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

If you are a believer in Christ, you were baptized in the Spirit, into the church, the universal body of Christ, at the very moment you were regenerated – born again. That was the moment you repented and believed the gospel – the Good News – about Jesus. You realized you were a rebel against God, who had disregarded his word, disobeyed his commands, and lived life your way instead of God's way. Because of your rebellion and disobedience, you knew God was right to condemn you to hell, away from his glorious presence, for all eternity.

But God in his immense mercy and incredible love, rescued you. He rescued you from your helpless and hopeless condition by sending his own Son, Jesus Christ, to become your substitute. Jesus lived a perfectly righteous and obedient life on your behalf. He suffered unspeakable anguish on the cross as he absorbed God's righteous wrath against your sin. Three days later Jesus rose victoriously from the grave, proving he had forever broken the bonds of sin and death for all who would turn from their sins and trust in him, embracing him as their Savior and King.

The moment you believed this message and received God's free gift of salvation, you were baptized in one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, into the one body – the body of Christ.

- ⇒ Water baptism is the outward symbol of this reality (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27). Baptism is going public with your faith – something Jesus commands all his disciples to do. That's why when Peter preached the gospel in Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost just days after Jesus' ascension, we're told in Acts 2, “those who received his word were baptized, and there were added [to the church] about three thousand souls” (v. 41).

The Lord has been adding believers to the church ever since. The church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, who love her and gave himself for her. Near the end of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, the apostle John is given a breathtaking view of the church as God sees her and by his grace has made her in all her resplendent beauty as the bride of Christ. John writes,

<sup>6</sup> Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying, Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns!

<sup>7</sup> Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself.

<sup>8</sup> She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true."

- Revelation 19:6-9 CSB

I wonder if you see, have you ever seen, the church in this way – the way that God sees her, the way that Christ beholds his bride. Dustin Bengé writes,

The church is beautiful because the lens through which Christ regards her is his cross – the focal point of blood, righteousness, forgiveness, union, justification, regeneration, and grace. His cross makes her beautiful. His perfection makes her beautiful. It is his sacrificial, substitutionary, sinless blood that washes her garments as white as snow. The cross of Christ makes her beautiful not only inwardly by justification but also outwardly through sanctification. From giving second birth to final glory, the righteousness of Christ creates a beautiful church.<sup>5</sup>

Christ's body has many members – people of all different ethnicities, social classes, personalities and skill sets – all of whom constitute a beautiful whole. Amid all our diversity, there is a pervasive unity. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13).

"Variety is the spice of life" – and it also is the spice of the church. Listen as I read again verses 14-27, this time in the *New Living Translation*, keeping in mind that Paul using our physical body as an illustration of Christ's body, the church:

<sup>14</sup> Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

<sup>18</sup> But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. <sup>19</sup> How strange a body would be if it had only one part! <sup>20</sup> Yes, there are many parts, but only one body.<sup>21</sup> 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."

<sup>22</sup> In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important

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<sup>5</sup> Dustin Bengé, *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), 19.

are actually the most necessary. <sup>23</sup> And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, <sup>24</sup> while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. <sup>25</sup> This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

<sup>27</sup> All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

- 1 Cor. 12:14-27 NLT

I can think of a body part that isn't pretty or prominent and doesn't seem all that important but fulfills a vital function: the pinky toe. It's the smallest toe, but it plays a big role in maintaining your balance, like the leg of a chair that shares the load with its counterparts. If you hurt your piggy, you'll hobble like crazy. Your whole body will be affected. Your piggy is a little toe with a big job.<sup>6</sup> It isn't pretty, it isn't prominent, but it sure is important!

The same is true of certain members within the body of Christ. Your contribution may not be public, it may not be prominent, but don't underestimate your importance. To say you don't matter is to say that God made a mistake when he designed the church. Because Scripture says, "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (1 Cor. 12:18). So, don't put yourself down. And don't disparage other parts of the body just because you have a more prominent role. You need the church and the church needs you. "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it" (1 Cor. 12:27).

### Application

With this in mind, what practical steps can we take to *enjoy God's people*? There are many things we can do, but let me give you four basic steps to begin:

1. **Be saved.** God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. And the truth is, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17). "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).
2. **Be baptized.** That's how you go public with your faith, how you go on record as a Christian. Baptism is the outward expression of your inward experience. It portrays your union by faith with Christ in his death and resurrection. Baptism is how you publicly commit yourself to Christ and his people.

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<sup>6</sup> Martha Michael, "Little Toe With a Big Job: Standing Tall With Your Pinky's Help," *The Joint Chiropractic* [online]. Retrieved on 21 September 2023 from <https://www.thejoint.com/2022/08/22/little-toe-with-a-big-job-standing-tall-with-your-pinkys-help>.

3. **Be committed.** If Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. If he never gives up on the church but continues to love her and serve her and lead her by his word and by his Spirit, then how should this inform our own commitment? Church is not a spectator sport. So, get out of the stands and on to the field! Go all in! Enter into a covenantal relationship with your fellow believers by becoming a formal, active member of the church. You can see our church covenant on our church website. If you're wondering "why should I join a church?" come to our next *Membership Matters* class – or see me right after this worship service and I'll give you a free booklet that presents seven reasons why church membership is essential for displaying the gospel in your life. *Be saved. Be baptized. Be committed.*
4. **Be encouraged.** The Lord Jesus loves his church. Dustin Bengé reminds us, "There's never a time when Christ doesn't love her. There's never a time when he doesn't extend his whole heart to her. There's never a time his heart isn't captivated by her."<sup>7</sup>

⇒ Doves are often represented at weddings because they mate for life. So, they symbolize a lifetime of love. The bond is so strong that it can even extend for a time beyond death as they watch over their mates, trying to care for them and returning again and again to the place of their death. The ever-loving, "ever-watchful dove looks only to its mate" and has eyes for no other. So, "Christ has eyes only for his church."<sup>8</sup>

If we love Jesus, we will love his church.

*For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be giv'n,  
'Til toils and cares shall end.*

*Beyond my highest joy  
I prize her heav'nly ways,  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,  
Her hymns of love and praise.*

*I love thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of thine abode,  
The church our blest Redeemer saved  
With his own precious blood.*

*Sure as thy truth shall last  
To Zion shall be giv'n  
The brightest glories earth can yield  
And brighter bliss of heav'n.*

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<sup>7</sup> Dustin Bengé, *The Loveliest Place: The Beauty and Glory of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022), 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*