

Our Responsibilities as Christ's Body I Corinthians 12:27

Please open with me I Corinthians 12:27. This morning God declares to us that we are Christ's Body, and being a part of something that big and that important has enormous responsibilities. Note what Paul says:

*I Corinthians 12:27 Now you **are** the **body** of Christ, and **members individually**.*

You and I are each individual pieces, parts, members of Christ's Body. And as a member of His Body, we have shared responsibilities; to accomplish His plan we each must do what we were made to do! The Body of Christ is complex, made of many individual parts, each with a special job to do.

To illustrate that truth think about the most complex, interdependent weapon system ever built on earth, which was made here in the USA. This amazing system is a collection of almost a million different pieces, all made to work with the others pieces.

It is 600 feet long and 42 feet wide, weighs over 18,750 tons, has more than 750,000 numbered parts; and is constantly on the move at 40 miles per hour—somewhere in the depths of the world's oceans. That is:

The Most Complex Weapon Ever Built

Of course I just described one of America's 18 Trident submarines.

Within this high tech titanium bullet are 24 missiles, each holding 12 independently guided warheads—one of which can completely destroy most human life in an average city.

That means this one sleek, black system can deliver to nearly any spot on the surface of the earth a superheated 30,000 degree cloud of fire that will melt, evaporate or crumble anything that man knows about, in less than one second—and one sub can send that cloud of death out to 288 different spots all at once¹.

That means that just the 18 Trident subs could destroy the lives of one billion people.

¹ I learned this from a report recently produced by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) that, for the first time ever, has brought to the public a graphic analysis of the secret U.S. plan for nuclear war. As part of their "Nuclear War Simulation Project," the NRDC made a computer program that shows the effects of different likely nuclear war scenarios.

The ***immense death*** all of those individual pieces working together could cause can only be contrasted to the ***immense LIFE*** that Christ's church offers to this world, but only if all the individual members of His Church are doing their parts.

For almost six years we as a family lived on the road where the Trident subs were built. Every morning thousands of cars rolled by into the sprawling General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard—at night that river of cars flowed back out of there.

One of the most amazing insights I ever had about the church was gleaned while studying God's Word and discipling workers at EB. Here is the lesson.

A Trident submarine is made up of three-quarters of a million components.

Those components arrived from every corner of the country all pre-designed to fit into the whole plan of that submarine. For Tridents, every single piece has a number signed or etched into it. In fact, the critical machined parts have the actual employee identifier etched on them. Each critical piece can be traced the machinist who shaped that piece somewhere in the USA!

Absolute Interdependence

The absolute need for integrity of performance and the absolute interdependence that all the pieces have to the whole is acutely clear in a submarine. One small leak can cripple that 600 foot long high tech wonder when it is at its maximum (and classified) operating depth.

So all parts are shipped in and then tested to be sure that they exactly match the specifications. That process is part of why the Trident was the most expensive object ever built for its size, in its time.

Now think about us as Christ's church gathered this morning. Look again at I Corinthians 12:27: *Now you **are the body of Christ, and members individually.***

You and I as members of Christ, are like those myriads of components in the Trident—only we are built for life giving purposes and not death delivering purposes.

- No two of us are **exactly alike** any other component of Christ's church.
- We **all are vital**; and there is a function within in His Body the church that only we can perform.
- We each are also **signed by the very One who created us** for His glory.
- And we also **are tested** by Him, onsite, to be sure we accomplish the purpose for which we were designed and built.

God's Word explains our purpose in life when we were saved. We also know that God will do everything and anything it takes to make us fit into His purposes. That is why at any given moment in the shipyard at EB there would be seen sparks flying as a certain

part had to be ground down. It didn't fit exactly as it was supposed to fit, so the diamond hard grinding wheel was applied, the surface of the part was ground, burned, and torn upon with immense heat and pressure—until that minute anomaly was removed.

Now this morning I ask you—are you accomplishing Christ's purposeful design for your life? If you are overcome by anxiety, frustration, anger, despair, and depression in your day to day life, you are not working according to specifications.

God's plan for each of us is that we be a living walking dispenser of His Life. We have been built into Christ's Body to live, walk, and talk His truth. But we can only do that effectively if we are responsibly doing our part in the Body.

Now, please turn with me to Acts 5:20, and stand with me as we listen to God's Word.

Acts 5:20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

Pray

Here at church we gather as Christ's Body. Like the Trident, we are each a piece, highly engineered by God to be His delivery system for life. God is the assembler, life is the factory. He is grinding, chafing, cutting, sawing, torching and hammering us into place. So in the truest sense, we are:

Engineered By God

One big difference between the Trident sub part and us is that we have choices to either hinder or advance the process (we can bend ourselves out of shape, we can corrode ourselves, un-calibrate ourselves and so on). Plus, unlike a sub part—we feel the grinding wheel and torch!

What about a vital part that jumps off the conveyor belt and doesn't want to be a part of the submarine? That part was designed to work with all of the other pieces, to support the other parts, to complement them—and it forsakes the assembling together process.

What are the implications of a part that says I don't want to do what I was made to do? Or a part that says I don't like water (that is pretty serious if you are part of a submarine) and so on!

So God wants each of us serving, worshipping, and reproducing in the unique way He designed. In any way we are not—out comes His grinder, saw and torch. He will do everything and anything to get us to fit into the Body and function.

This morning we have gathered to celebrate the One who made us to have an infinite, endless, divinely procured life. Remember John 3:16?

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He designed us to have an abundant life.

John 10:10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

So this morning, as we gather we gather in the life giving Name of Jesus, with His life within us, and His life flowing through us. Now turn to the early church. What was the message that they were to give out? Look at just one of the specific times that the Lord explained what they were to be doing.

Acts 5:20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

We are to Live the Life

And that is what they did.

- Jesus asked them to stay in Jerusalem until the Spirit of Life came upon them to dwell within and empower them—as in Acts 1-2 the upper room and day of Pentecost.
- Everywhere they went they explained the new life Christ had given them—as in Acts 2 and Peter's sermon.
- In every situation they offered to individuals this new life—as in the lame man in Acts 3.
- They gathered and celebrated that life and were energized even in persecution—as in the prayer meeting of Acts 4.
- And then in Acts 5 we see after the time in jail, they are resent to keep on talking about "this life"! Are you part of the life giving ministry of Christ's church as we go out into a world of sin and death?

So how do we do it? How are we supposed to impact our world? By realizing that we are not alone, we are part of a Divinely constructed Body. The Church that Jesus Christ is building is the most powerful life giving force on this planet. And that is exactly what we see lived out in the book of Acts.

The Bible does not describe a believer's life as ever being lived apart from other believers. All members of the universal church, the body of Christ, are to be actively and intimately involved in local assemblies.

We are Not Alone

Seven times in the book of Acts the early church is described by the same word. That word is most often translated "with one accord". The Greek word that is used in Acts is an adverb (Strong's # 3661 homothumadon 12x) that means "together, unanimously, with (in) one mind, purpose, accord".

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Worship**: Acts 1:14 these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ to share worship.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Togetherness**: Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ to share life together. As Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds us, we must never forsake gathering as a Body.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Fellowship**: Acts 2:46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and enjoying fellowship with one another.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Prayer**: Acts 4:24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ for a time of prayer of dependence for strength and courage to continue ministry as things became harder and harder because of persecution and threats.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Unitedness**: Acts 5:12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and celebrating their oneness in Christ. Do you remember 9/12/01? It seemed like every house and car in America was flying a flag the day after we were attacked. We were united.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Responsiveness**: Acts 8:6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and sharing a desire to accomplish ministry by responding to God's Word as it was taught.

- As Christ's Body we **Share a Life of Investment**: Acts 15:25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.

This was gathering as the Body of Christ and sharing a desire to accomplish ministry by following biblical leaders.

God Wants us to Share Life as Christ's Body

The Bible does not describe a believer's life as ever being lived apart from other believers. All members of the universal church, the body of Christ, are to be actively and intimately involved in local assemblies.

So the early church shared life as one in Christ's body. Their desires were simple--they wanted to share a life of worship, fellowship, and ministry. And all of us have been given the same spiritual duty as believers—we are to stimulate each other to holiness and faithfulness (Hebrews 10:24-25). The basic meaning of *koinonia* (**fellowship**) is "partnership," or "sharing." When we received Jesus Christ we became partners with Him and with all other believers (1 John 1:3). This partnership and fellowship is permanent, because our shared eternal life is forever. The joy associated with salvation may be lost through sinful neglect of our duties as believers.

So we could look at the list in the book of Acts as 7 key elements that monitor our fellowship. We have seven responsibilities illustrated here in Acts that show whether we are healthy and doing what God designed and engineered us to do.

As we saw already, all these elements were the passions the early church held dear; so we should ask ourselves this morning if we also hold these actions as our shared passion.

1. As they were in Acts 1:14, are you part of a **partnership of praying** with the fellow members of Christ's body?
2. As they were in Acts 2:1, are you **part of our partnership of gathering** by wanting to be together with the fellow members of Christ's body?
3. As they were in Acts 2:46, are you part of a **partnership of worshipping** with the fellow members of Christ's body?
4. As they were in Acts 4:24, are you part of a **partnership of waiting** on God together with the fellow members of Christ's body?
5. As they were in Acts 5:12, are you part of a **partnership of identifying** with the fellow members of Christ's body?

6. As they were in Acts 8:6, are you part of a **partnership of responding** to God's word with the fellow members of Christ's body?
7. As they were in Acts 15:25, are you part of a **partnership of following** scriptural leadership with the fellow members of Christ's body?

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You and I are each individual pieces, parts, members of Christ's Body. And as a member of His Body, we have shared responsibilities; to accomplish His plan we each must do what we were made to do! The Body of Christ is complex, made of many individual parts, each with a special job to do.

Today, ask God to help you do what He made you to do, and become all He designed you to be for His Glory in His Church!

SERIES: Our Shared Life

Our Responsibilities to Christ's Church

We as members of Christ's church are:

1. His TEMPLE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **God's new temple**—*should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet.*

*I Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built **up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

I am Christ's Temple. I should want to grow in my awareness of living in His Holy Presence. That is what happens as we read His Word if we bow first in adoration and whisper a prayer of seeking Him.

Have you personally sought your God, this week, in His Word? If so say **"Yes"** aloud right now! God wants us 100% employed in His Temple.

2. His PRIEST: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a priesthood**—*should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him.*

Hebrews 13:15-16 Therefore by Him let us continually **offer the sacrifice** of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

I am part of Christ's Priesthood. I should want to delight in offering the sacrifices He desires. Have you thanked God for eyes to see with, ears to hear with, feet that walk, a mind that still functions? Offer Him the sacrifice of thanks for sins forever gone, of hope that it endless, of joy that never runs out. And then pick someone to "do good and to share" with.

We all need to be spiritual Boy Scouts, each doing a "good deed" for others each week. And then, each day, and then all day long. God wants us 100% employed as His Priests.

3. His RELATIVE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a family**—*should increase our love and fellowship with one another.*

I Timothy 5:1-2 *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as **a father**, younger men **as brothers**, 2 older women **as mothers**, younger women **as sisters**, with all purity.*

I am Christ's Relative. I should want to increase my love and fellowship with those in Christ who are my true family. Try writing down a name each week of one person, and asking them how to encourage them. Then pray for that area all week long, and look for them next week and find out what God did in their lives. Can you imagine coming each week and looking for people you've prayed for and seeing people looking for you? That is what we need to be employed in doing. God wants to see us having 100% employment in serving and encouraging our spiritual relatives.

4. His BODY: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the body of Christ**—*should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.*

I Corinthians 12:27 Now **you are the body of Christ**, and members individually.

I am Christ's Body. I should want my body to do what His did. Jesus went around doing good. He had compassion for the confused, He helped the poor, healed the sick, loved the outcasts, and comforted the lonely.

God has no Hands but yours.
Brand & Yancey

God wants us 100% employed as His Body.

5. His BRIDE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **the bride of Christ**—*should stimulate us to personally strive for greater purity, deeper love for Christ, and swifter fuller obedience to Him.*

II Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have **betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as **a chaste virgin** to Christ.

I am Christ's Bride. I should want to strive to stay pure for Him. When I watch TV I am seeking His approval. When I dress its for His adoring gaze. I think of Him as my beloved.

God wants us 100% employed as His Bride.

6. His FARM: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **an agricultural crop**—*should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper spiritual nutrients to grow.*

*1 Corinthians 3:6-9a I **planted**, Apollos **watered**, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are **God's field**, you are God's building.*

I am Christ's Farm, His own personal garden that He planted. I should want to bear the fruit He planted into my life. Jesus wants to harvest from me a crop of His love, His joy, His peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All these are what I want Him to find me 100% employed in growing by the power of His Spirit, in the soil of my life.

7. His BUILDING PROJECT: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a house that is being built**—*should stir each of us to be a part of the process of building up, edifying, and discipling one another.*

*1 Corinthians 3:9b For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, **you are God's building.***

I am a working partner in Christ's Building Project. I should want to be stirring up those around me to love an good works. I should become an expert in building up others, mending others.

Christ should find me 100% employed in doing what He created me to do.