

**Go: Inside
Missions Month
1 Corinthians 12:12-27
June 11, 2017**

Welcome CrossPoint. We are in our second week of our missions month series: Go! In this series we are looking at how we are called to fulfill Jesus' command in Acts 1. Last we focused about preparing our own hearts to serve others. Today we are looking at it from the perspective of serving within the church. Most people know that we need to be serving in the church, right? We've done a number of messages lately that demonstrate the need to serve inside the walls of the church in a number of ways. So, I want to pose the question this morning: What does it look like for us to be part of the team or what the Bible calls the body as people who are serving? Here's what it might look like:

You see I love this clip, because it's how I think of the church. There are people who have this idea that only a handful of the positions at church are important which can lead us to say that the church doesn't really need me. Yet in this scene, Gusteau is making a valuable point for us all. He points out that everyone is important. This is certainly true in the kitchen. Without the dishwasher, then the entire kitchen falls apart. Without the chef, the entire kitchen falls apart. Without the waitresses and waiters the whole kitchen falls apart... you get the idea. The kitchen works together in unity. They function best together. This is a true of the church as well. When we are functioning together and using our gifts in unison, the church functions at its best.

The church functions at its best when we are functioning together.

Our passage for this morning gives us incredible insight into this fact and will help us in our discussion about how we can best serve the church.

Read Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

This passage is directed at the early Corinthian church. Now, there are many who talk about how we need to become like the early church. That is true to an extent, but when we look through the letter to the Corinthians we begin to see that there are some things going on in the early church that have not changed. There are people who are treated better than others, there are divisions, and there are people who have grown prideful and arrogant. The church in Corinth is anything but a perfect church. It's messy, kind of like us, right. Isn't that the case with organizations in general? When people get involved, things get messy and complicated. Yet Paul's letter is timely as he appeals to us to likening the church to the body. He wants the church to be different than other organizations. He wants them to be something more united, more focused than they currently are. When I look at the Corinthian church I think: we aren't all that different after all, are we.

So, let's take a look and look at this amazing vision of what it looks like to be the church and how that might affect how we serve the church and the community around us.

Paul begins here by addressing the fact that we are all different. That each of us have different talents and abilities. Now let us think about that for a moment. When there are differences in the world, conflict has a tendency of following close behind. Especially when two individuals have such different talents that they cannot understand the other. For instance, if someone is gifted at being organized, they often assume that it should be that easy for everyone else to be organized. So, when someone comes along that is not organized there is typically conflict right? Our differences seem to divide us or segment us into separate groups. Remember back to High School and the different groups? There were those who were in band, there were those who were the jocks, those who were the nerds, and so on... Each group was separate from the others. This seems to be a picture of the world we live in. When we are different we try to separate ourselves and move to groups of people who we have thing in common. Yet, Paul is suggesting that we are looking at it the

wrong way. Paul suggests in fact that the church needs differences. That those differences actually produce a greater result. In other words, the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Our differences produce greater results

That kind of unity can only come from the Holy Spirit because our natural tendencies is to focus on what separates us. If you think I'm wrong just remember how much you like "people watching." Our ability to work together comes through the Spirit of God that works in us and through us. When we are united by the Spirit we are empowered to do amazing things. Paul says that we have all been gifted differently and we are all different parts of the same body. Some of us are the feet, while others are the hands, and still others are the heart and head. He's saying that whatever we have been gifted with we need to use for the good of the church.

Now listen to this and tell me if you've ever thought it before: The church needs help with the Kid's program, but I'm not good with kids so I can't help at the church. Or maybe this sounds more like you: The church needs someone on the media team, but computers and those sound boards scare me so I can't really serve the church. Paul has an answer for those things. The church is filled with needs. Needs that you are suited for, it just takes some experimenting to find your place. Maybe you just love talking to people, then come down to the food pantry and talk with people as they wait to shop. It is amazing how much of an impact that has on others. Maybe you're an introvert with a fierce aversion to technology. Again, there are plenty of things that you can help with. The food pantry is always looking for people to help just bag groceries or the office can always use volunteers throughout the week. You see, we somehow play this game with ourselves that we believe that we need to have a certain set of skills and if we don't possess those then we aren't really needed at the church. Oh, and let me just throw this out there...the word retirement is not in the Bible and the thought process that I've done my time, is not in there either.

Imagine with me what it would look like at CrossPoint if each of us here were serving using our gifts. That is what Paul is saying here. He is saying that each of us have a role to play. Each of us have a part to play. Let us think again about the kitchen from Ratatouille. Every part of the kitchen is important. Every part has its role to play. When each part is functioning well, it is like a well-oiled machine that is united around a common purpose, a common vision. When that happens, amazing things can begin to take place. We begin to watch as families are fed and clothed. We begin to watch as people break down walls between each other and show genuine love for one another.

You see Paul believes that we were made differently so that we can complement one another. This builds a reliance on each person in the body. The whole team is counting on the rest of the team. For the church to function at its best it needs every part.

The whole team is counting is you.

So, this means that we need to know our spiritual gifts. It starts with asking ourselves simply, what do we enjoy doing or what are we good at? By asking these simple questions we can begin to find our place to serve. We can begin to find a place where we can flourish the most.

You see each of us have been gifted so that we can build up the church. Look again at the passage beginning at verse 22 – 24. It talks about how we care for different parts of the body differently. It talks about how we are to give care to those who need it most. Let me give an example.

You see sometimes parts of our church family go through situations and circumstances that require special attention, that requires us to step up as a church family and come to their aid. This is the purpose of our service ministries. Our food pantry, clothing connection, and home improvement ministries all help those who are in material need. That is their purpose and it calls us as Christians to care for one another.

There are more ways to serve than at a time of crisis or difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, a lot of people think that is the only service CrossPoint gives, but service happens daily. You see part of service is using your gifts to help others grow. Each of us here are at a different place spiritually. Some here have been Christians all their lives, others might still be unsure about Christianity. A key part of serving is caring for the spiritual growth of others. That means that our student ministry is pouring into our students so that they can take hold of their faith and live it out daily. It means our small groups and Bible studies are seeking to develop that deeper faith in God. It draws people together and helps each of us to love God more.

By doing these things we are working toward the picture that Paul paints in verses 25-26. He says that we will be so united that when one member suffers the rest of us will suffer with them. He also says that we will have harmony and that when part of the body is honored the rest will rejoice. It is a picture of humility and genuine love for the entire church. I don't know about you, but I want to be part of that kind of church. I want to be part of a church that serves unconditionally. A church where every member is seeking to use their gifts for the good of others. A place where we are growing alongside one another and bearing with one another's burdens. That is the picture of the church. Here is the thing that picture doesn't happen without you. Let us read verse 27 again: *All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.* Each one of us has a role to play. There isn't an exception to that statement. Each of us are to be part of this vision. Each of us are to Go.

Serving in the church isn't just for the Super-holy or super-spiritual it is for everyone.

²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. ²⁷ All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Let us serve with our whole hearts and give generously with our time and compassion.