

With this passage, we begin a series of studies on “The Christian as a...” As Christians living on the stage of life, with God our Father as the only One in the audience, we’ll look at our roles and responsibilities in many areas. The first is in the Body of Christ. The Church, as established by the Lord Jesus Christ and described in the NT, is the living, spiritual Body of Christ. Christians are a group of people who share the same life, who have the same Father, who belong to the same Lord, who are indwelt by the same Spirit, who are given places in the Body and spiritual gifts by the same Spirit, who are given ministries by the same Lord Jesus, and, who are intended to function together to reveal Jesus in our homes and churches and community. God’s arrangement, we are Christ’s one Body! THAT is what the Church is! All are needed!

1 Corinthians was a letter written around A.D. 55-56 by the apostle Paul to the believers in the city of Corinth. In the midst of answering questions about spiritual gifts (chapters **12-14**), he addresses the Christian as a member of the one Body of Christ. Every gift is to point to the Lordship of Jesus. The source of the gifts is the Spirit, the variety of the gifts is His choice, and the unity of the Body under the Lordship of Jesus is His goal. When the Church is operating correctly, people will see the one Body of Jesus in action, each member doing its part. How beautiful!

As we thoughtfully study and meditate on **1 Cor. 12:12-13** (READ), we learn that *even as the human body is one and yet has many members, so also is the Body of Christ!* Christ and His Body are compared to the human body. By the Holy Spirit (our power source), each Christian was placed into one Body and identified as belonging to Christ’s Body; a past action. The Holy Spirit baptized (placed) each believer into the one Body of Christ at the moment he/she became a Christian. And where the Holy Spirit places us into Christ’s Body is where we best fit and can best use our spiritual gifts. We’ve also been made to drink of the one Spirit (see **Jn. 7:37-39**). We are totally identified with one Lord, yet our unity comes in the form of variety, not in sameness. Each part different yet part of one Body.

We further learn in **:14-19** (READ) that *a body is not one member but many!* We need to cultivate this mentality: “I’m important, needed, in the proper functioning of the Body of Christ.” Quit comparing!! If the body was composed of just one member (like an eye), such a body would be a monstrosity. Remember: We’re all part of the one same Body! We’ve all been gifted! *There are no insignificant members of the Body of Christ!! It’s unbiblical thinking when we believe we’re not needed or we can’t do anything.* Each part is important; *that means you!* The Body of Christ is ALWAYS going to need *your* contribution! Be content with what you have. Be content with what others have. Refusing to function as part of the Body does not make you any less a part of the Body or negate your responsibility for ministry! **:18** is an important verse. God takes responsibility for where each of us has been placed and for the gift-mix each has!

In addition, in **:20-26** (READ), we learn that *there are many members, but just one Body, the Body of Christ.* Those with more obvious roles or spiritual gifts in the Body were overestimating their own importance and underestimating that of other believers. Paul points out that those ‘inconspicuous’ members of the Body are essential! All are of equal worth in the Body of Christ. If those with less noticeable gifts are slighted, the whole church is impoverished. God arranges and gifts us so the clashing will be done away with. As teamwork is essential, so is care for one another. How do we care for one another? By love, functioning where God has placed us, using our gifts He has given us, and ministering where He has determined for us. “We’re so interrelated that if someone is hurting...you feel the sting of pain. Someone can’t keep up...you slow down and encourage him/her. The one who is hurting...you do everything you know to console. The one who is blessed...you have a party with him/her!” This is what Christ’s Body in action looks like and will be like as we trust the indwelling Holy Spirit to live the life of Jesus through us.

To make this walk called Christianity work, we’ve got to practice the ‘one anothers’. Just listen to these: Love one another, be devoted to one another in brotherly love, honor one another above yourself, live in harmony with one another, instruct one another, welcome one another, greet one another, have equal concern for one another, serve one another in love, bear one another’s burdens, bear with one another, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive one another, speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, submit to one another, encourage one another, build up one another, spur one another on toward love and good deeds, confess your sins to one another, pray for one another, practice hospitality toward one another, rejoice and weep with one another, edify and equip one another.

He wraps up this section in **:27** (READ), now you are Christ’s Body, and individually members of it!! We are nothing less than Christ’s Body (identity), and every Christian belongs to it! We are one in Him. This fact should be especially obvious when we’re gathered (behavior). Grow to a place of maturity where we will reflect who we are: Christ’s Body(!), revealed by unity and love, who are acting as one body, under the headship of our Lord Jesus. When every Christian is content and obedient in his or her place in Jesus’ Body and uses his/her gift from the Spirit, the Body functions beautifully and exalts our Lord Jesus. All are needed; the proper functioning of each part is vital. Everyone involved, using their Spirit-given gifts, in their Jesus-appointed areas of service, resting in the Father for the results (**1 Cor. 12:4-6**). This is the Body of Christ in action. Where are you involved? How are you using the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has given you? Christian, YOU are a member of Christ’s Body! Live like it! More on spiritual gifts later!

What is your role if a Christian single? We need to see what the Bible has to say about this ‘calling’! Singleness is an area to which God calls many. Some are single through circumstances, some by choice. In **Mt. 19:3-12**, in answer to a question on divorce, Jesus quotes from God’s original plan for marriage (**Gen. 1:27, 2:24**). Male and female are to leave their parents, be joined to one another, and become one flesh. *What God has joined together, no person should divide.* Yet, there are some for whom marriage is not God’s gift. *Singleness must be understood as a gift from God. Realize the seriousness of marriage, see the advantages of the gift of singleness, and check in with the Father to see if at this time you have been given this gift.* In **1 Cor. 7**, the apostle Paul addresses this role. This is a letter written around A.D. 55-56 to believers in Corinth. In chapter seven and following, he deals with questions the Corinthians had asked. In the midst of answering a question about marriage, Paul gives us several advantages of singleness. In **7:1-7** we learn that the single life is not wrong but good. Yet, no person should attempt a way of life for which he/she is not gifted by God. Paul makes it clear that one is not more spiritual simply because he/she is married or single!

Read, study, and meditate on 7:17-40. In **:17-24** (READ), Paul emphasizes “Remain WITH GOD in that condition in which you were called.” God is the key to being faithful and obedient in the midst of any condition. Be a Christian where you are! *At this moment you are where God wants you. Regulate your life according to this calling.* A Christian isn’t dependent on conditions for true freedom. **:7,17,20,24**—serve the Lord where we are until or unless He calls us elsewhere.

In **:25-28** (READ), because of some present, impending distress, it’s useful for a person to remain as he/she is. If you are married, remain as you are, yet understand, marriage increases responsibility. And if you’re single, that’s fine also; it’s a perfectly proper way of life, especially in distressing times. **:28** Choosing to marry under these conditions may not be the wisest decision because such will have trouble (a pressing) in this life, and Paul is trying to spare them the stress. Also, such times are often full of opportunities and shouldn’t be spent in pursuing a change of conditions. If single, recognize you have less pressure, less trouble. Life is less complicated than if you were married.

In **:29-35** (READ), keep in mind that time is short and the form of this world is passing away! Because of the times, keep your focus on *eternal* values. We can get engrossed in weeping or rejoicing or marriage; we can lose God’s perspective; we can forget the shortness of the time and the fact that the form of this world is passing away. The married person’s interests are divided: one-flesh, children, finances, roles to play, a constant giving of yourself. Single, realize this time or world is not all there is! The single life makes it easier to maintain the proper priorities of life. Singleness makes possible a degree of dedication, commitment, and time to the Lord’s work that the married life doesn’t allow. Paul is teaching these truths for their benefit. He has no desire to curtail their freedom, trying to put a noose/halter around their necks. He’s just promoting what is proper, what makes for good order—what frees one for undistracted attention to things of the Lord. God has called us to take the situation we’re now in and use it for His glory.

In **:36-38** (READ), this could be a man engaged to a woman or a father arranging for a daughter’s marriage. Paul’s summary: It’s good (fine) to be married; it’s more useful to be single.

In **:39-40** (READ), marriage is permanent. But a widow is free to be married to any Christian man she wishes. If there’s no sincere interest in the Lord and His things, it’s an indication that man is not God’s choice for you.

For the Christian, singleness is a perfectly proper way of life. The single life is a calling from God. If you’re single, it may not be a permanent condition but it’s where the Lord has you right now. Give yourself to that which God has assigned you for the present. Also remember, you’re an important member of the Body of Christ.

If single, relax! Rest in the Lord. Use the advantages you have now to give undistracted devotion to the Lord. Accept other singles as God has made them and as He fully accepts them. Don’t try to make them fit some ‘ideal image’. In the relationships you have, commit to them, be open with your feelings and questions and spiritual issues. If single but have the desire to be married, that’s also okay. But use this present time, letting the Lord continue to mature you so you’ll be the best mate you can be. And also, realize at this time the Lord may be continuing to mature your future mate so he/she will be the best mate he/she can be. Warning! Much wreckage has been caused by the tactics of a person seeking a life-partner at any price. This type of person has lost God’s perspective and is not able to evaluate the character of those he/she meets. For those not single, be aware of singles’ presence and their problems and needs and giftedness. How can you extend a hand of friendship to them? Avoid having judgmental attitudes. And, quit trying to marry them off! For singles or single parents, don’t get caught in a guilt-trap because of your single status. Recognize you have Jesus as your Lord, and He was an all-right single! Also, don’t condemn marriage because of the advantages of singleness. Whether married or single, remember that with God the single status is no accident; it’s part of His plan!

Bible Basics Blitz 205 REFLECTION SHEET (to be completed after the study)

The Christian as a Member of the Body of Christ and as a Single (1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and 7:17-40)

To get a general understanding of The Christian as a Member of the Body of Christ and as a Single, read and meditate on the Scriptures, go through the handouts, and answer these questions:

“After studying and meditating on these passages, what are three Biblical truths that I know and understand better?”

OR, if you were sharing these truths with another, what are three points you would make?

1.

2.

3.

“As a result of knowing and understanding these Biblical truths, what are two practical ways I can apply them to my life at this time?” OR, what are a couple of ways that my thinking, speech, actions, and/or choices should change?

1.

2.

FOR OUR NEXT STUDY: We'll look at The Christian as a Mate. Study and meditate on **Ephesians 4:22-24** and **5:18-33** (paragraphs are **4:22-24, 5:18-21, :22-24, :25-30, and :31-33**).