

*"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11).*

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## **"IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE, WHERE WERE THE HEARING?"**

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The question of Paul to the Corinthians — *"If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"* (1 Cor. 12:17) — makes some things stand out.

**1) THE BODY FIGURE.** Throughout the word of God, the church of our Lord is set forth in various figures: as the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22), as as the vineyard of the Lord (Mt. 20:1-16; 21:33-46), as the kingdom of God (Mt. 16:18-19; Heb. 12:23, 28), as the household of God (Eph. 3:15; 1 Tim. 3:15), as the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:22-33), as the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). In this setting, the church is set forth as the body of Christ. Writing *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth..."* (1 Cor. 1:2), Paul stated, *"Now ye are the body of Christ..."* (1 Cor. 12:27). The body of Christ is the church of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

**2) ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS.** As your physical body is singular in number and yet composed of a plurality of members, so it is with the body of Christ. *"For as the body is one, and hath many members,*

*and all members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"* (1 Cor. 12:12). *"But now are they many members, yet but one body"* (1 Cor. 12:20). Please note the "one body" does not consist of many churches (no more than your body consists of many bodies), but many members. "We" (individuals) are members. *"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Rom. 12:5). Members are those who have care for one another, who suffer and rejoice (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

**3) BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY.** Paul continued, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:13). This shows how individuals become members of the body of Christ: *"...baptized into one body."* Without baptism one is without the body of Christ; detached from Christ. In the body, there is reconciliation (Eph. 2:16) and salvation (Eph. 5:23). Thus, before and without being baptized into one body, one is not nigh unto but far off from God and is not saved, but lost! When folks in Acts 2 were "...

*baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38), they were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47).

**4) TEACHES UNITY.** Underscore one. *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:13). Paul used the word "one" 13 times in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. This oneness instruction teaches unity. The Lord does not have one body for the Jews and a separate body for the Gentiles, another body for bondmen and a different body for the free. Though members have different backgrounds and frames of references, all must work together for the good of the body. Your body members are not in conflict with one another, but work in cooperation and unison with one another.

**5) IN THE CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.** All of this is said in the context of spiritual gifts. *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant"* (1 Cor. 12:1). The discussion of spiritual gifts begins in chapter 12 and continues through chapter 14. The gifts given by the Spirit are identified in

12:8-10 as “*the word of wisdom*,” “*the word of knowledge*,” “*faith*,” “*gifts of healing*,” “*working of miracles*,” “*prophecy*,” “*discerning of spirits*,” “*kinds of tongues*,” and “*the interpretation of tongues*.” These were not natural, but supernatural abilities. The words “*to one*” (v. 8) and “*to another*” (vv. 8-10) as well as the context, indicate one member did not possess all nine of the gifts. “...*dividing to every man severally as he will*” (v. 11).

## **6) THE BODY IS NOT ONE MEMBER, BUT MANY.**

**1** Corinthians 12:14 plainly says, “*For the body is not one member, but many.*” A failure to understand this truth has been the cause of many problems. You are not the church, nor am I. And our actions as individuals do not constitute church action. For example Paul said, “*If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed*” (1 Tim. 5:16).

## **7) THE FOOT, HAND, EAR,**

**EYE.** Paul’s reference to these specific body parts (verses 15-17) shows it takes all the members functioning in their capacity to constitute the body. Some may have thought because they were not given the gift of tongues that they were less important or not of the body. Or, one who possessed the gift of tongues might have the notion that the one with prophecy was not needed or unnecessary. This teaching shows “...*God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him*” (v. 18) and “...*God hath tempered the body together...*” (v. 24) in such a way that “...*the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you*” (v. 21). “*Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour...*” (vv. 21-22). Though they performed different functions, each was vital and necessary (just as your feet, hands, ears, and eyes perform different functions to the benefit of your body).

**8) INSTEAD OF CONFLICT, CONCERN.** Verse 25 records, “*That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*” Rather than striving over who has the greater gift, and treating members as if they are dispensable and disposable, show genuine care and concern for one another. The kind of concern body members have for one another is such that “...*whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*” (1 Cor. 12:26).

Though spiritual gifts have failed, ceased and vanished away when that which is perfect was come (1 Cor. 13:8-13), the question — “*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?*” — and the teaching surrounding it is no less needed today. We are members one of another. Let us not be split in sections or divide in parties because of differences of opinion, but let us show genuine care and concern for one another, as we cooperate with one another for the good of the body!

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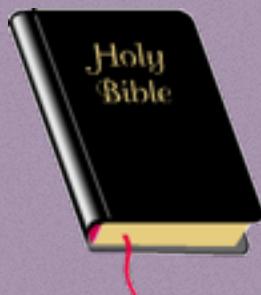
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