

## WEEK 3: IDENTIFYING YOURSELF IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH (ROMANS 12:3–8; 1 CORINTHIANS 12)

### Introduction

#### Scenario

It's not that Carol *hates* going to church, it's just that she has moved on. Most of the people there aren't her age. Most of the stuff they talk about doesn't interest her. They're needy, too—always asking for help, prayer, and financial support. They're nosy too—they notice when she decides she needs to skip that day or take some personal time. The services aren't her style, either.

She would much rather hang out with her friends on her own schedule and do stuff with them. Maybe the best part of this whole change is that her Sundays are open now. She gets to sleep in after staying out late Saturday, and she's free to go to the lake or take a late morning walk.

What is she missing?

- Do you think Carol is making a good choice or a bad choice? Why?
- What kinds of assumptions does Carol have that move her to make these choices? What seems to be motivating Carol?
- If someone like Carol came to you and asked for help, what would you tell them?

#### Questions to consider

1. What role does the church (a "community of faith") play in our relationships?
2. Why do people *not* go to church? What reasons might they give? Do you think there is a valid reason for Christians to *not* connect themselves with a "community of faith?"

### Think truth about yourself (Romans 12:3)

We covered this a little last week, but if we're going to have good relationships with other people we need to make sure that we have the right perspective on *ourselves*.

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."(Rom 12:3 NASB)

What does this look like?

- What happens when people *think too highly of themselves* when it comes to working together in the body of believers?
- What happens when people think *with sound judgment* when it comes to working together in the body of believers?

### Appreciate what everyone else brings to the table. (Romans 12:4–8)

So often, our relationships don't go well because we *criticize* others for being different from us.

But the Biblical pattern is to *recognize* and *appreciate* what others bring to the table.

Different people have different jobs (12:4–5)

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."(Rom 12:4–5 NASB)

The illustration here is the picture of the *body with its many body parts*. They all look and function differently, but they work together for the functioning of the *body as a whole*.

**Question:** How do people in a church *function differently* but *work together*? Can you think of an example? Can you think of some *legitimate* differences that can be used to do the work of the ministry compared with some (perhaps) *illegitimate differences* between people—differences that ought not to be there?

This topic is discussed in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 12. (Cf., 1 Corinthians 12:14–26.)

**1Cor. 12:14 (NASB)** For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The key verse actually coming in **vs 27-28** as Paul says that God has appointed these gifts **in the church**.

"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed **in the church**, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues."

(1 Cor 12:27–28 NASB)

#### *Discussion Questions*

- In what ways do people show they *don't* appreciate differences in the body of Christ (even though they might claim to)?
- Why is it important to surround ourselves with a diverse group of people at church and not merely section ourselves off into our own little group?
- What happens when someone else with different skills and abilities succeed where we have not done as well? How do these verses help us see how to move forward?

#### *Applications*

- If you're not involved in a **community of faith** (a church), then you're \_\_\_\_\_ out on some of the most important relationships that God wants you to be a part of.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the different people with their different roles! Don't be \_\_\_\_\_ about who you are and how you fit into the larger picture.
- You *need to* \_\_\_\_\_. The Bible *never says anything* about shopping for churches that best fit your style or splitting your time between communities of faith. Get involved and get connected.

We need to **do** the job we've been given to do (12:6–8)

"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

(Rom 12:6–8 NASB)

God is the one who gives the gifts: they are given according to grace.

God has made you who you are. He wants you to be who you are.

Don't get upset with God because you aren't like you want to be! Be thankful!

- Prophecy, according to the proportion of faith (Prophecy = preaching; speaking God's words to others. This doesn't mean speaking about the future)
- Service, be faithful in your serving.
- Teaching, be faithful in your teaching.
- Exhorting, be faithful in your exhorting (encouraging, comforting, coming alongside people, motivating them to do what is right, making a difference!)
- Giving, with liberality (Don't be stingy! Give what you have!)
- Leads (or gives assistance/gives aid), with diligence. If you're going to be one who assists others, you need to do so carefully. Think about what you're doing.

God wants you to place yourself in a community of faith so that can build and maintain a diverse collection of Godly relationships.