

## **ONE HEART, ONE MIND**

### ***Partnership***

### **I Corinthians 12**

**Layne Lebo**

**October 24, 2021**

The core value we're focusing on today is **Partnership**. We've described that value with the statement: ***We choose to work and serve together in the church and with the community.*** I experience the value of partnership every day as McBIC's Lead Pastor. I see it as hundreds of volunteers serve in our church doing everything from greeting people on Sundays, to managing our finances, to mowing the church lawn, to serving in Children & Youth Ministry, to preparing meals for people walking through difficult times to teaching Adult Sunday School and many, many other ministries in the church. I also experience partnership as a member of our pastoral staff. Pastors have the reputation—like owners of small businesses—of needing to be good at everything. There is a lot of variety in my job, but as I've told you many times, if McBIC depended solely on my ministry skill set, this isn't a church you'd want to attend.

A statement I like about how healthy teams function is, **"We complete each other, rather than competing with each other."** To illustrate partnership, I want to share how our pastoral staff work together we make a complete team. Jen, Evan and Cody, do a fantastic job leading the children and teens and families of our church. They bring great energy and passion to investing in students and resourcing families. Beyond that, Evan and Cody bring musical talents, Jen brings administrative abilities and they each bring unique perspectives as young staff members who are relatively new to our church. Cindy's skills with graphic design, marketing and tech savviness have been a great blessing to us since she was hired 2 years ago—especially helping us transition to online services during COVID and maintaining an online service presence that continues. She also provides an invaluable perspective for us as the only person of color on our staff. Dave Hershberger has led our worship ministry at McBIC for nearly 25 years—definitely not something any of you'd want me to do unless you were looking for some comedic relief—and Hersh also is a phenomenal team builder and care-giver. John King

and Susan Vigliano serve in tandem as our Associate Pastor team, also giving oversight to discipleship and leadership development at McBIC. John & Susan's focus on pastoral care and counseling allow me to focus on my primary responsibilities of leadership and developing leaders, vision-casting and preaching. And I haven't forgotten Sherry. Sherry Selkirk, our Office Administrator, is like the glue that holds everything together. I can take a Sabbatical and when I come back, be confident that things have gone well and are running smoothly. If Sherry were to go away for 3 months, we'd be scrambling.

As we're getting started, I want to recap where we've been over the past 7 weeks in this series. We've titled this current series, "One Heart, One Mind," based on the description of the Early Church in Acts chapter 4 verse 32 where we read, "*All the believers were one in heart and mind.*" The phrase, "One in heart and mind" captures God's desire for his church. Unity is Jesus' Church is the foundation of all we do, but as we'll see, unity doesn't equal uniformity. Over the past two years our staff worked at refining our mission statement. We landed on the statement, "*Experiencing Jesus and Sharing His Love.*" Our mission is simply a restatement of Jesus' response to the religious leader's question, "What's the greatest commandment?" Jesus responded, "*Love God with all of your being and love your neighbor as yourself.*" Our vision statement that explains how we'll seek to accomplish our mission is, "*Disciples who bring restoration and wholeness to Mechanicsburg and to the world.*" After a year and a ½ of disruption, our staff thought this fall was an excellent time for us to share our mission and vision statements and to preach on the core values that serve as the foundation for who we are and all we do. And so **we've been walking through our core values: Worship & Prayer, Transparency, Healing, Maturity and Integrity, Togetherness and Discipleship**—which Pastor Evan preached on last week. This morning I'll be preaching on the value of partnership and next Sunday I'll close our series by looking at the value of Missional Living.

As we read the New Testament, we'll find many references to the Church—the gathered group of Jesus' followers. At times the word church refers to specific local communities of people—like McBIC—and at other times the word is used to refer to the church worldwide. The most common word picture used to refer to the church is family. 84 times references are made to family or to followers of Jesus as his sons and daughters. The 2<sup>nd</sup> most common word picture

for church is the one I want us to focus on today as we explore partnership. 22 times the New Testament refers to the Body of Christ when it's talking about Jesus' church. And the Scripture passage where the church as a body is given the fullest treatment is in chapter 12 of the Apostle Paul's first letter to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church at Corinth.

As I prepare to read this chapter, I want to remind you that problems, challenges and difficulties churches today encounter have been experienced by churches as long as they've existed—including the churches we read about in our New Testaments. People are people and where there are people there will competition, striving for power and influence, elevation of some people and disparaging of others, valuing some gifts and abilities over against others, petty jealousies and insecurities, pride and calling attention to oneself, some people feeling left out or ignored, and the list goes on. I invite you to follow along as I read chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians and as we read keep those people dynamics in mind. As I read, I'll make some brief comments between sections.

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. I Cor. 12:1

Paul's opening statement in this chapter makes it clear that the use of spiritual gifts and various roles within the church was a point of contention in the Church at Corinth. He goes on in verse 4 to say...

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. I Corinthians 12:4-6

Paul's emphasis on unity is front and center here as he uses the phrases, *same Spirit, same Lord, same God* to make the point that all of our gifts, talents, abilities, passions and personalities come from God. I don't think I ever noticed the reference to the Trinity here—Holy Spirit, Jesus and God the Father. As Jesus mentions elsewhere, our unity and oneness is grounded in the unity that's found in God between the Father, Son and Spirit.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. I Cor. 12:7-11

Most Bible scholars agree that whenever Paul or other New Testament writers list spiritual gifts, they're giving examples, not presenting an exhaustive list. So, if you don't find gifts or abilities or interests of yours listed at various points in Scripture, please don't assume you didn't receive any from God. I want to focus on how Paul opens and closes these verses I just read. He starts with, *"to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."* And he closes with, *"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."* Paul is trying to make sure we understand that who we are and what we have comes directly from God and God has made us as we are for the benefit of everyone else. Our gifts and abilities and talents and interests aren't ultimately ours. We are managers or stewards of what God has entrusted to us, and the way we steward or manage those gifts is by using them, not for our benefit, but for the good of others and of the Body as a whole. In verses 12-14 Paul makes a transitional statement reinforcing unity before he goes into his main analogy of the human body.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.  
I Cor. 12:12-14

6x the word *one* is used in these 3 verses and 3x the word part or parts is used. Paul emphasizes that we are one body even though we're made up of many parts. And our oneness in Christ transcends everything else. In Jesus' church we're one. Now for most of the rest of the chapter Paul fleshes out (pun intended 😊) what this looks like in our physical bodies.

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. I Cor. 12:15-26

What Paul writes here is comical, because we know the parts of our body don't speak to each other and if they could talk, they wouldn't be arguing one part against another. At one level Paul's analogy is absurd, because our bodies function as a whole unit, not as individual parts. In the same way Paul says, it's absurd for us to think of ourselves in individual categories, rather than as part of a whole and complete body. And then Paul wraps up his argument with these words,

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. I Cor. 12:27-31

Each of us is part of Jesus' Body, the Church and God has given gifts and roles, so the Body can function well. We function well, not when we try to imitate or displace others, but when we use the gifts, abilities, talents and interests God has given us.

It's important to note that immediately after this chapter—1 Corinthians 12, we have 1 Corinthians 13. I know, you're thinking of course we do, because 13 follows 12. No, what I mean is that after these words about the unity of the Body, we have the Apostle Paul's famous "Love Chapter"—the Scripture that's probably read most frequently at weddings. I Corinthians 13 is appropriate for weddings, but Paul's intent was to highlight what love in a church looks like. Listen to how this chapter begins,

And yet I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. I Cor. 13:1-3

Do you see it? Our gifts and abilities and the roles we hold in the church only matter as they are exercised in love. Apart from love, they are worth nothing.

Rosanna and Mark, please join me on the platform. I've asked Rosanna and Mark to share with us this morning, because they have served on many teams and in a variety of roles at McBIC for a number of years.

I want to conclude the sermon with two Scriptures that talk about God's design for us. In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 we read,

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

The word translated *handiwork* in the original Greek language the New Testament was written in is *poëima*, the root for our word poem. You and I were made by God has creative expressions of who He is. We're designed to demonstrate a facet of who God is and when we come together in a church family, all of us with our complementary gifts, abilities, personalities, experiences and passions, we give a fuller picture of God's nature.

That truth coincides with Matthew 5:13-16 where Jesus says as his followers, we're to be salt and light.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16

In his MESSAGE Paraphrase, Eugene Peterson says as salt we draw out God flavors and as light we highlight God colors. I love that word picture. None of us were made to function in isolation. As Henri Nouwen explains, "*Nobody can say: I make God visible.*" But people who see us working together can say, "*They make God visible.*" That is partnership as God has designed it, and that's how Jesus desires you and I to function at McBIC.