

Armpits For Jesus

Long Beach Alliance Church • October 18th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

It is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 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...
~1st Corinthians 12:22–23 (NASB)

1) Unity Dominates Diversity

- A) The church is metaphorically* pictured as functioning like the human body of Jesus Christ (1st Corinthians 12:12).

- B) The emphasis is not on “unity in diversity” or some other preservation of individualism. Rather, the unity of the body dominates diversity. The One over the many.

- C) This unity “floods” the body, washing away (baptism) diversity and providing a Spirit designed unity (12:13).

* A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (e.g. *the ship plows the seas*). *Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary*, ©2002, pg. 1420.

2) Unified Ministry Is Not Optional

- A) The focus of Paul's short "hand, eye, ear" (12:14-20) metaphor is to illustrate the chaos which naturally occurs when "the many" (12:14) attempt to function independently of "one body" (12:20, note the bracketing "inclusio").
- B) In fact, God has designed (12:18) the church (body of Christ) to function with supernatural unity by virtue of special giftings, ministries, and effects (12:4-6).
- C) Christ's body (the church) is to work toward God's purposes in unity, expecting that the Spirit will provide whatever is needed for "the common good" (12:7).
- D) This is a very different approach to ministry than "working in your areas of interest or strength." In fact, this "unified approach" calls us to serve God's purposes where there is need, and expect that God will provide.

3) God Honors The Armpits

- A) Paul then applies the figures of his metaphor allegorically[†] to note we pay the most "honor" (attention) to the least presentable parts (12:22-23) of our bodies (e.g. armpits).
- B) The "allegorical application" is clear! Those of us who feel we have nothing "attractive" to offer are EXACTLY those who God wants to glorify with supernatural ministry!
- C) What is God doing in our midst, even those things which seem difficult or uninteresting? How can Christ's body serve God with Spirit power for "abundant honor?!"

[†] An allegory is a form of written expression by means of symbolic figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human conduct or experience, symbolic representation (e.g. *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan). *Webster's 3rd New Int'l. Dictionary*, ©2002, pg. 55.