

## Respect for Others Leads Towards Unity

We had season tickets to Wake Forest basketball games. At each game, a statement read over the loudspeakers encouraged fans to respect the referees, opposing players, and those who cheer for the opposing team. The statement was about respect for the diversity of everyone in attendance. The final words were that “diversity doesn’t divide us, but makes us stronger.” Very true.



One of the more familiar passages in the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:12-30) addresses diversity as part of unity. Scripture talks about the body of Christ being made up of many different parts, none of which is more important than another. Although it gives the example of a physical body, the verse is a metaphor for people and their relationship with each other. We are all God’s creation. He made each of us unique, with different skills and a unique role (purpose). We don’t all think or look alike. No two people are the same. We thrive when we work together. We each have a role to play in life, and we complement each other to become a stronger society. To be sure -- we need each other. We need people who can teach and doctors who can treat our illnesses. We need people who can design buildings and people who can build them. We need parents, and we need children who bring us joy with their love and enthusiasm. The list of people with a purpose and skills to carry out that purpose is as long as the number of people in His creation. When we work together in unity, it does make us stronger.

While you may be able to paraphrase the scripture verse below, it is worthwhile to read it in its entirety. The passage is God speaking to us about respecting others and the goal of the unity of all people.

**The Bible Says:** *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by<sup>f</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

<sup>15</sup> *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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.*

<sup>21</sup> *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!” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

<sup>27</sup> *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues<sup>[b]</sup>? Do all interpret?*

<sup>31</sup> *Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.*

**Question:** Who have you not honored as you should?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father. You have created each one of us, giving us skills and a purpose. Yet we sometimes don’t honor the uniqueness and perspective of others. Help us to gain a greater appreciation for others, especially those who may have different opinions than us. Amen.