



Connecting to Others (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) Combating Loneliness (Part 2)

THE BIG IDEA

We gravitate to people who are just like us, but no one is exactly like us, making us quick to avoid connections. We can connect with people who are different than us by valuing their differences, relying on their strengths, and protecting their vulnerabilities.


OPENING

- Who in your life do you share the most in common with? What are some of the things you share in common?
- Is there someone in your life who you have little in common with? What are some of these differences?

DIGGING DEEPER

- Read 1 Corinthians 10:17. How does this verse foreshadow what Paul says in 12:12-26?
- Bible scholar N. T. Wright says that in these verses Paul insists “*on equality between different functions, leaving no room for social, cultural or ‘spiritual’ elitism or snobbery within the church.*”¹ Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 and 11:17-22. How was spiritual elitism and snobbery a problem in the Corinthian church back then?
- Compare 1 Corinthians 12:13 with Galatians 3:26-28. How are these passages similar? How are they different? According to Reformed Bible teacher Simon Kistemaker, “*Here Paul stresses the unity of the church in its diverse forms. He notes the racial, cultural, and social differences that existed in the Corinthian church: there were Jews and Greeks, slaves and free. Regardless of their status and position in life, these people came together to worship God in one church. If the*

¹N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), pp.164-165.



*church should practice discrimination, it would be in direct conflict with the law of love. All people who are spiritually renewed in Christ are equal to one another."*²
How does the body analogy Paul utilizes here teach this point?

- Why must we value someone's person's differences first before we can rely on their strengths?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- Valuing people's differences takes effort on our part. We have to be willing to suspend our assumptions about the person and actively listen to their story. This week, spend some time with someone who's very different than you are to practice these skills. What was this like for you?
- The deeper you connect with another person, the more aware you become of their vulnerabilities. How can you protect another person's vulnerabilities without becoming codependent?³

PRAYER REQUESTS

²Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Baker Academic, 1993), 430

³Codependency is an unbalanced relationship where one person enables another person's self-destructive behavior.