

1 Corinthians 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the body is not one member, but many.

Analysis

For the body is not one member, but many—Paul states the obvious to expose the absurd: a body composed of only one kind of member (all eyes or all hands) would be monstrous, non-functional. The simplicity masks profound truth: diversity is not a problem to solve but a design feature to celebrate. The Corinthians' elevation of certain gifts (especially tongues) as superior implied the body should be uniform—all should speak in tongues, all should prophesy.

Paul's counter-argument through verse 26 demonstrates that uniformity would produce dysfunction. The body's strength lies precisely in its members' complementary differences. An eye cannot hear; an ear cannot see. Neither is deficient—each fulfills its designed function. Applied to the church: those with teaching gifts shouldn't envy those with healing gifts; those with administration gifts shouldn't feel inferior to those with prophecy gifts. Each member's unique contribution is indispensable to the body's flourishing.

Historical Context

Corinthian culture prized oratory and public display, leading the church to overvalue spectacular public gifts like tongues and prophecy while minimizing behind-the-scenes service gifts like administration, mercy, and giving. Paul's body-metaphor corrects this distortion.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you combat the temptation to view some spiritual gifts as more valuable than others?
2. What 'hidden' or less-celebrated gifts in your church deserve greater appreciation?
3. How can churches structure themselves to recognize diverse gifts rather than elevating one kind?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γὰρ	τὸ	σῶμα	οὐκ	ἐστιν	ἐν	μέλος	ἀλλὰ	πολλά
G2532	For	G3588	the body	not	is	one	member	but	many
	G1063		G4983	G3756	G2076	G1520	G3196	G235	G4183

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