

Messy People week 4

Enjoying Our Differences

[1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#)

I once sat in a committee meeting composed of a dozen people of various ages, both genders and a broad range of interests. Our mission was to select the best possible piece of art for a particular purpose. The leader spread out ten choices on a table. We jostled around, looking over each other's shoulders, criticizing this camera angle or that color choice, admiring a facial expression here, a shading in the background there. Finally we narrowed our choices to two and took a vote.

That was when a problem that had been simmering below the surface bubbled to the top. It seemed that several people in the room were employed by one other person present. And none of them dared to vote against the boss. A committee shaped with the purpose of reflecting a variety of perspectives lost its purpose. The boss may have been unconscious of the whole dynamic—or he may have thought he won. But he didn't. Nobody did.

1. If you were choosing a church (or a cluster of friends), what similarities to yourself would help you feel comfortable?

What differences from yourself would you accept—or even want? Why?

2. Read [1 Cor. 12:12-31](#). Paul opens this section of his letter to the Corinthians by saying, "The body is a unit." What all do you see in this passage that supports that statement?
3. [1 Cor. 12:12-19](#) speaks of both unity and diversity. What all unites?
4. Who among your circle of friends represents diversity: a foot, a hand, an eye, an ear? What do you appreciate about each of these people?
5. Sometimes when we focus on the ways we are different from other people, our gut feeling is "I do not belong" ([1 Cor. 12:15](#)). When and why have you felt this way?
6. If your friends accepted the teachings of [1 Cor. 12:12-19](#), what could (or do) they do to help you cope with the feeling of not belonging?
7. Focus on [1 Cor. 12:21-26](#). How would you express what Paul is teaching here?
8. What situations tempt you to think of someone else, "I don't need you" ([1 Cor. 12:21](#))? (Consider your church or fellowship, business, friends, family.)
9. Focus on [1 Cor. 12:22-23](#). How does Paul tell the Corinthians to deal with people who are "weaker," "less honorable," "unpresentable"?
10. What reasons can you find in [1 Cor. 12:24-26](#) for relating to difficult people in this way?

11. [1 Cor. 12:26](#) speaks of suffering and honor. When has someone chosen to share your suffering—or when has someone allowed you to share his or her honor?

12. [1 Cor. 12:27-31](#) speak of how individual differences actually strengthen the church. Describe what you would expect to see in a church where these and other skills were seen as gifts from God to be used for the common good.

13. Look at [1 Cor. 13:1](#). Why do you think Paul ends this section about diversity among believers with this question?

14. What do you appreciate about this passage that could help you become a better church member, a better worker, a better family member or a better friend?

Going Deeper

15. Write a letter (or make a phone call) to a friend or spouse. Express appreciation for a particular strength that is different from your own.