

Faithful Stewards: What God Requires of Those He Entrusts

“God Hath Tempered the Body Together”

The Stewardship of God’s Workforce

1 Corinthians 12:18-27 (begin reading at vs. 13)

Over the past several weeks, we have been considering what it means to be a steward. We began with understanding what the Bible means by the term “steward” — that it’s not just about money, but about management of what belongs to God.

We have looked at:

- The Stewardship of God’s Work — the mission He has entrusted to us.
- The Stewardship of God’s Word — the truth He has revealed to us.
- The Stewardship of God’s Wealth — the resources He has placed in our hands.

In this message, we come to the stewardship of people. The greatest resource God has entrusted to His church is not material — it is people. The greatest investment in this church is not in the bank. It is sitting in the pew.

- It is serving in the nursery.
- It is teaching children.
- It is maintaining the building.
- It is praying quietly when no one else sees.

As we’ll see from our text, God did not randomly assemble

the church. He placed it together; He arranged it; He designed it. In this text, we find the analogy of the human body to describe the local church. In verse 24, it states:

“But God hath tempered the body together...”

This means that God has blended it, mixed it, balanced it, and has joined it so that each part compensates for the other. And if God assembled the workforce, then we must steward it carefully.

This passage is not about titles or structure, it’s about the truth that the church is the body of Christ, and every member is a necessary part.

Now, let me clarify something before we go further. When Paul speaks of “members” here, he is not referring merely to a name on a church roll. He is speaking of living, functioning parts of Christ’s body — believers who are visibly connected, actively serving, and relationally committed within a local church.

In the New Testament, there is no such thing as a “detached believer.” To belong to Christ was to belong to His body. And if stewardship means faithfully managing what belongs to God, then we much understand that we are stewards of one another.

I. THE DIVINE DESIGN OF THE WORKFORCE (VS. 18)

A. The designer — “God”

1. The subject of this sentence is not the pastor, or the leadership of the church — it’s God.
2. This is not our organization — it is His organism.

B. The deliberate action — “hath set”

1. The word translated “set” (τίθημι) means to put,

place, appoint, assign. In this context, it means to lay something exactly where it belongs.

1 Timothy 1:12

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

2. God positioned the members, not man. It was not accidental, nor random. Think about it: God did it, He arranged it, He determined it. If that's the case, then you are not here just because of where you live; you are not here just because of preference; you are not here just because you like certain things.

If you are part of this body, God placed you here.

3. This truth is especially relevant in our day. We live in a time when church attendance is often treated casually, where believers move from church to church with little thought of the spiritual effect on the body.

There will be time when leaving is necessary — if there is doctrinal error, spiritual compromise, or unbiblical leadership, but we must not confuse biblical separation with personal preference.

If God has set the members in the body as it please Him, then our connection to a local church is not merely a personal decision — it is a spiritual placement. And when we detach lightly, without prayerful discernment and biblical cause, the body feels it.

If God placed you here, your presence matters; your service matters; and, your absence matters.

The question then becomes, not just, "Am I happy?" But, "Am I where God placed me."

C. The detailed scope — "every one of them"

1. Notice the emphasis: not some, not most, not only the leaders — *"Every one of them."*
2. There are no unnecessary members in the body of Christ (in the church). All are as vital as all others. The nursery worker, teacher, deacon, trustee, cleaner, quiet prayer warrior — every one.

If God has placed every one then no one has the right to belittle their role, and no one has the right to withdraw from their responsibility.

D. The divine pleasure — "as it hath pleased Him"

1. God placed each member according to His will — not according to human preference, or popularity, or personality.
 2. If God designed the workforce, we do not rearrange it without careful consideration; we do not abandon it lightly; we do not neglect it with indifference. We steward it reverently.
- That leads to the next truth: not only is there a Divine Design, there are Distinct Duties within that design.

II. THE DISTINCT DUTIES OF THE WORKFORCE (VS. 19-24A)

This section teaches one central truth: God's design includes diversity of function.

A. Diversity is necessary (vs. 19-20)

"If they were all one member, where were the body?"

A body requires varied parts performing varied duties. So does a church — the church does not exist without the varied members with their varied spiritual gifts.

The problem in Corinth wasn't lack of gifted people; it was envy and elevation. Some gifts were being exalted while others were minimized.

B. Superiority is forbidden (vs. 21)

1. *"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee..."* — No member has a right to be dismissive of another. Those in obvious, visible positions cannot dismiss those that do the work no one sees (the hidden).
2. *"Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you"* — even the pastor (or leadership in general) cannot operate independently of this truth. Every position requires support from the rest of the body.
3. If God designed distinct duties, then we must not rank them according to our preference.

C. Weakness is indispensable (vs. 22)

1. *"Seem to be"* — perception is the problem.
2. *"More feeble"* (ἀσθενής)
 - a) Literally, without strength
 - b) In this context, it appears to be referencing those necessary parts of the body that are internal – stomach, lungs, heart, etc. They are structurally inferior to the outward limbs of the body, but the

body cannot exist without them. Remove what no one sees and the body collapses.

- c) So it is in the church — remove the unseen prayer warrior, the faithful cleaner, the quiet giver, the one who visits when no one else knows, and the church loses its strength.

D. Honor is reassigned by God (vs. 23-24a)

1. *"We think less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour"*

- a) The Apostle speaks of giving *"more abundant honour"* to those parts we might otherwise overlook.
- b) The Bible even says that the parts we consider "less honorable" are often treated with greater care — we instinctively protect what is vital; we clothe what is private; we guard what sustains life. It's not because those parts are less important, but because they are indispensable.

So it must be in the church. The ministries no one sees may be the very ones sustaining spiritual life.

We now move from:

- Design (God arranged it)
- Duties (God diversified it)

To:

- Dependence (God joined it)

III. THE DELIBERATE DEPENDENCE ON THE WORKFORCE (VS. 24B-26)

This is the purpose of Divine Design. God did not just assemble the body; He blended it. The word "tempered...together (συνεκέρασεν) means:

- Mixed thoroughly;
- Combined intentionally;
- Balanced for mutual compensation.

God did not create independent parts; He created interdependent members.

A. Designed to prevent division (vs. 25a)

"That there should be no schism in the body..."

1. The word "schism" (σχίσμα) means tear, division, split.
2. When the human body turns against itself, it becomes diseased.
3. When the church body competes against itself rather than cooperate, the church is weakened.
4. If God has blended us together, we must guard unity intentionally. Unity must be stewarded.

B. Designed for shared care (vs. 25b)

1. The word "care" (μεριμνάω) carries the idea of earnest concern. This isn't casual interest; it's not simple politeness; it's not "Sunday-only" awareness ("out-of-sight, out-of-mind").
2. God designed the body so that we feel responsible for one another. We do not just attend together — we "care" together. We carry one another. This means:
 - a) We pray for one another;
 - b) We check on one another;
 - c) We encourage one another;

d) We protect one another.

- Stewardship of God's workforce means stewarding the spiritual well-being of the people God has placed beside us.

C. Designed for shared experience (vs. 26)

1. Considering the metaphor of the body here — when a toe is injured, the entire body adjusts.

When one member of the church is burdened, the entire body should feel it. If someone suffers and we remain unmoved, the body is not functioning properly.

2. Shared suffering eliminates isolation — *"whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."*
3. Shared rejoicing eliminates envy — *"or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."*

- All of this — design, distinct duties, dependence — finds its ultimate meaning in one final declaration. The Apostle closes this section with a statement of identity, and identity determines direction.

IV. THE DEVOTED DIRECTION OF THE WORKFORCE (VS. 27)

A. We belong to Christ"

1. *"Ye are the body of Christ"* — not the body of the pastor; of a denomination; of tradition; of preference.
2. *"Of Christ"*
 - a) He is the head.

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

- b) He purchased the church.

Acts 20:28

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

- c) He walks among the churches (Rev. 2-3)

- 3. The workforce does not ultimately answer to one another. We answer to Him.

B. We represent Christ

How we serve, speak, treat one another, handle conflict, value roles, carry burdens — reflects on Him.

A divided church, an envious church, an indifferent church misrepresents its Head.

C. We will answer to Christ

- 1. If God set the members; if God tempered the body; if we are the body of Christ, then we will give account for how we treated His body.
 - a) Did we guard unity?
 - b) Did we value unseen service?
 - c) Did we carry one another's burdens?
 - d) Did we withdraw when we should have remained?
 - e) Did we serve faithfully where He placed us?

1 Corinthians 4:2

² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Conclusion:

We have seen in this message that we are stewards of God's workforce — it's His, not ours, anymore than His work, His Word, or His wealth are ours.

We are stewards of the people sitting beside us; of the roles God has assigned for us within His church; and of the unity Christ purchased with His blood.

One day, the Head of the church will evaluate His body. We won't be evaluated on how impressive it looked, or how large it became. We will be evaluated by whether the church was faithful, whether it was unified, whether it cared for one another, whether it honored what God called "necessary."

May we be found faithful stewards — of God's work, of His Word, of His wealth, and of His workforce.

If you are here this morning and you are not part of Christ's body by faith, you cannot steward what you do not belong to. But the invitation is simple: Christ gave Himself to bring sinners into His body, and if you come in repentance and faith, He will forgive your sin and place you in His body.