

Bad Ideas for a Good Church

Week 4 *Bigger, Louder, and More Impressive Is Better*

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Big Idea: A church that chases impressiveness instead of faithfulness misunderstands how God actually works.

The Pull of Impressiveness

- Our culture prizes scale, visibility, and spectacle.
- Those values quietly influence how churches think about success.
- The Corinthians assumed the most dramatic, visible gifts were the most important.
- Paul challenges the idea that impressiveness equals faithfulness.

Understanding 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

1. One Body, Many Parts (vv. 12-13)

- Paul begins with identity, not gifts.
- “So it is with Christ” — the church is described as Christ’s own body.
- Unity is a gift of the Spirit, not the result of uniformity.
- No one belongs “more fully” than others.

2. The Danger of Comparison (vv. 14-20)

- Paul imagines body parts comparing themselves.
- Comparison distorts our sense of worth.
- Difference does not mean deficiency.
- A church full of only “impressive” gifts would be dysfunctional.

3. God’s Surprising Arrangement (vv. 21-24)

- Paul addresses those who feel important and those who feel insignificant.
- “The parts that seem weaker are indispensable.”
- Visibility does not equal value.
- God assigns greater honor to what receives less attention.
- The “abnormal normalness of the God of the cross” (Gorman).
- A real-world test: how churches treat people with disabilities.
- If we exclude those who inconvenience us, we wound the body.
- God arranged the church intentionally to honor the overlooked.

- This prepares us to understand God’s goal: mutual care.

4. The Goal: Mutual Care, Not Mutual Competition (vv. 25-26)

- God’s purpose: no division, shared care.
- Spiritual gifts form a care system, not a performance system.
- “If one suffers, all suffer; if one is honored, all rejoice.”
- No scorekeeping, no applause economy — just shared life.

Main Points

1. God does not measure importance the way we do

- Faithfulness, not flash, marks spiritual health.
- God treasures what is hidden and quiet.
- We must retrain our eyes to see value as God does.

2. When impressiveness becomes the goal, unity becomes collateral damage

- Comparison → insecurity → competition → fracture.
- Visibility as value causes people to feel like they don’t belong.
- God’s design of the body protects against this.

3. The Spirit distributes gifts for service, not status

- Gifts are tools for service, not badges of importance.
- Every role contributes to shared life.
- Strength comes from belonging and serving, not shining.

Application

For the Church

- Resist defining success by size, noise, or visibility.
- Celebrate unseen faithfulness.
- Cultivate a culture where service is honored over platform.
- Gorman: honoring the weak prevents division and reflects true humanity.
- Stott: the church is designed for “mutual burdensomeness” (Gal. 6:2).

For Individuals

- Stop minimizing your contribution because it looks different.
- Examine whether recognition has become a motivator.

- Serve for love, not visibility.
- Practice faithful presence where God has placed you.

Conclusion

- A body can look impressive and still be sick.
- A healthy body learns to care for its weakest parts.
- Measuring strength by convenience or smoothness forgets the cross.
- God builds His church through humble, faithful people who belong to one another.
- **Not bigger. Not louder. Not more impressive. Just faithful.**