

# Fed By Focusing On Others

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Paul describes the Lord's church in terms of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. The metaphor works not only in enumerating on the many and varied gifts of the body's members, but also in making the point that the church has needs, like a body of flesh. Paul goes on to say that the human body can survive on very little at times (*"And if we have food and covering with these we shall be pleased"*, 1 Timothy 6:8). Similarly, a congregation's needs are not complicated or decadent. What it takes to make a healthy, sound, vibrant congregation is no mystery, so why do so many seem to starve to death? Some churches starve for lack of love (Revelation 2:4); others tolerate spiritual parasites (Revelation 2:14-16, 20-23); some other churches devour themselves through petty conflict (Galatians 5:15). Just like a malnourished human body, many congregations linger for years without addressing their deficiencies. So what can we do to prevent starvation in our congregation?

## Focusing On Others

One of the most frustrating problems that seems to exist in many churches is a lack of enthusiasm and involvement by church members. Sadly, it is understandable considering the way our culture has programmed us to be self-sufficient and self-centered. Too many Americans have a "Me First" mentality in every other area of life (school, work, sex, relationships) that it should not surprise us when this begins to affect our work in the congregation. The Corinthians were nearly torn apart because of a mercenary attitude: they were dividing into parties (1 Corinthians 1:11ff), they were suing each other (1 Corinthians 6:1ff), the married couples were manipulating each other sexually (1 Corinthians 7:1-7), they were arguing over food (1 Corinthians 8, 11:17ff) – They had become so fixated on their own needs, desires, and goals that they nearly destroyed the entire operation with their blatant displays of selfishness. I must learn to stop focusing on myself by:

- Refusing to hold on to grudges, and extend the same level of forgiveness that God does (Matthew 6:14-15).
- Finally getting my priorities straight; nothing is more important than my participation in this congregation, absolutely, positively nothing. Serving God supercedes work, money, and even family (Matthew 10:37-38). Studying for Bible class, learning new skills, visiting the elderly and the sick, prayer – these must never be second-tier priorities.
- Seeing other people's problems instead of just my own. Somebody once said that there is always somebody worse-off than you, and I think this is very true. There is always somebody that needs your love, attention, and prayers. Learn to stop focusing on your own problems and start deriving satisfaction from helping others.
- Being anti-social. While it is undeniable that some folks are less talkative than others, and some even suffer from legitimate psychological disorders that preclude normal social interaction, we must make an effort to reach out to other Christians and become more involved socially. Go to the monthly get-togethers, the singings, and the potlucks. Have people in your home or take them out to restaurants. Notice that hospitality is not an option for the Christian, but a command (Romans 12:13). Loneliness is often self-inflicted, and those who seek it are foolish (Proverbs 18:1).

When we realize that our "membership" is more than just a name on a roster, we feel compelled to become more involved in the functions of the church. Is being a member

here embodied only in attendance at one or two Sunday mornings a month? Does a spot in the auditorium mean the same thing as true, lasting, devoted participation? Would anybody miss you if you just stopped coming to church?