

Only God Can Make the Church a Community

By Bob Young

Commentaries on First Corinthians often include lists of the problems that plagued the church in Corinth. Seldom included in such lists are the underlying problems of individualism, independence, me-ism, personal insignificance, devaluing others, pride, and competitiveness which led to the loss of community in the Corinthian church.

Paul addresses some of these underlying problems in 1 Corinthians 12-14. If we are too focused on the superficial, external details, we may miss the real message. Consider the following principles from the text:

- God provides the church diverse gifts to accomplish his work
- God provides both the power and the abilities for his work
- We are stewards of these gifts and abilities which are to be used for the good of the entire body
- The gifts of God give significance to every member
- God “arranges” the body as it intends it to be
- Because God gives differing gifts, in one sense, God is the originator of our differences
- This suggests that God intends us to be different, but united in our differences
- Every member is necessary
- In our differences, we share a common purpose
- God combines or blends us into a single body through the presence of his Spirit
- We cannot exclude any, we must care for all

God has done his part to make his church a community. The church becomes community as it allows God to work within it and through it. Let me suggest some first steps toward opening up to the work of God. Forgive yourself, forgive others. The community of God has no reverse gear. It is impossible to go backward. We can never go back to where we were before. With God’s power we can overcome the past through the renewal and refreshment that God provides. Our newness in Christ is not a one-time event or promise—newness in Christ is a forever promise to every Christian and every body of believers. But it happens only as we allow God to work in our lives.