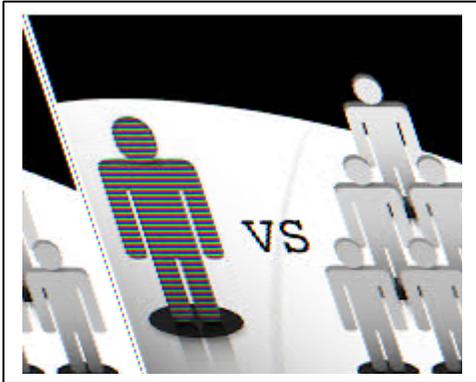


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CORPORATE VS INDIVIDUAL, PART I

The concept of a corporate body is a constant thread that can be seen throughout the Bible. For example, the ancient Jews placed a great importance on the "group/clan/tribe/family/nation" concept. There was great loyalty within the distinct Jewish tribes and families.

In the New Testament in Paul's writings he often refers to "you" when he is addressing the church as a collective body of believers. The admonishments and exhortations addressed by Paul to "you" were meant to apply to the church as a whole. Since Paul could not possibly know every individual Christian's personal walk with God, he spoke to them as a church using the concept "you alls."

This "corporate" mentality should be examined in more detail. We mentioned the Jewish "tribe/clan/family" concept. The Jewish nation realized that they as individuals made up the Jewish "nation" but at the same time they understood that as individuals they had to give up personal rights at times for the betterment of the nation as a whole. Many of God's requirements given to the Jews focused on the nation as a whole made up of individual Jews, and complete loyalty to the Jewish nation was demanded by God.

The New Testament portrays the church as a body made up of individual members. Many passages focus on the responsibility of each member to act in the best interests of the body as a whole. Paul addresses this concept many times in passages that say "there are many members, but one body." The corporate body of the church is made up of individual members. Just as the individual members of our physical body all work together in the best interest of the body, so each member of the church must work in the best interest of the corporate body of the church. Paul even goes into great detail to explain that one member of the physical body cannot say to another member, "I am more important than you," or "you are not necessary to the body." We see this happening often within the spiritual body, the church. Some members think their opinion, their understanding of scripture, and their way of doing things is more important and better than any other member. This, of course, breeds division. Paul tells the Corinthians that *"the body is not made up of one part but of many"* (1 Cor. 11:14). He continues to point out, if all members were one part, *"where would the body be?"* (verse 19). The bottom line is revealed in verse 24: *"But God has combined the members of the body.....so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for one another."*

Unfortunately, this is not always the case in the church. Often there are those who think they are more important than other members. As suggested earlier, there are those who think their judgment, their opinion, their understanding of scripture is more important than another members'. And when they cannot have things their way, they are ready to separate themselves from the body. This is a common occurrence in congregations everywhere. This is the very thing Paul is condemning in 1 Corinthians 11.

Often more time is spent arguing minutia than in creating effective ways to share the truth of the Gospel with the lost. How can we unify and promote the Gospel? Some ways will be addressed in next week's bulletin.