

## Message by Emma Poole

Good morning! I thought I'd start off with a brief introduction. My name is Emma Poole, I'm 15 years old and a sophomore in high school. I have to say, after writing today's message I've gained a whole new appreciation for the challenge pastors have every week. If you know me I love to talk, so I thought ten minutes of speaking should be a breeze. But believe me, you won't really know how long ten minutes is until you try to write a sermon. That being said, I really enjoyed this experience and wanted to thank you all for the opportunity to share a message with you today.

For the past couple weeks, we've been hearing about seeking vitality and renewal in our church. How we can look to the future with imagination and hope, because God will make amazing things possible for us. How we can see the future with eyes of faith because we have seen God in our past and our present. Just last week, we heard about how we can move forward as a discerning community. And truly, that's what we are a community of believers. By definition, a community is a group of people who have a particular characteristic in common or feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes interests and goals. As members of this church, we know what unites us as a community it's laid out very clearly in our mission statement. To praise God, teach faith, and serve others. But it doesn't always feel like we have a place in our community, church or otherwise. We all know, especially in today's society, it's easier to focus on what divides us then what unites us. We are surrounded by our iPhones, iPads, everything that says I is more important than we. I think, in fact, that because of our worlds divided state, Paul's message in 1 Corinthians is just as, if not more pertinent today than it was thousands of years ago. In the verses we just heard,

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth- he's heard of their struggles, and wants to instruct them. In chapter 12 verses 12-27, Paul is speaking specifically to the idea that we all have a necessary, unique, and valued role in the Church. In these verses Paul uses the analogy of the body to show the significance of every believer in Christ. He describes how every part of the body has a unique role, that none of the others can accomplish. **Paul claims that each member of the church is like a part of the body, unique and necessary for its own function.** Paul is really giving the Corinthians a challenge, giving us today a challenge. **He's challenging us to not only realize our purpose in the church, and use our God-given gifts for Christ's glory, but to accept our role, even if it's not what want.** I mean, going along with the analogy of the body, who wants to be an armpit? People want to be the mouth, the eyes, or the hand, something people notice and praise. How often do we wish we had different skills, a better job, more friends, better grades, a bigger house. **Things that will make us like someone else.** But Paul warns against this thinking, saying "If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." God has crafted each one of us with a purpose for not only His church, but the world. He has created us each as unique individuals. It's amazing actually, that the God of the universe would create every one of us so uniquely that our talents, passions and personality fit perfectly into the church He has placed us in, and in a position to touch the lives of so many others, according to His plan. That was just a whole lot of metaphorical speech, so here's what this might look like in real life. Take all of the parts of today's service. What if I decided that I wanted to do the

cover art, instead of the message? I mean, the covers the part the people see first, and yeah, I want to be the people seen first, to be the first thing they notice when they sit down. If that had happened, you'd probably be holding a paper with a bunch of stick figures on it. Believe me, the drawings of the 5 year olds in Sunday school look like works of Picasso next to mine. Or maybe, I want to play the music instead of Mr. Loffler. I mean organ sounds so pretty, and it's loud, and everyone notices it, so yeah, organ sounds good to me, maybe I want to do that instead of the message. If that had happened, we'd be singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star all service. The idea is that God gives us unique gifts and interests for a reason, to further his kingdom. Sometimes, it seems like we've been given an un-important gift, or no gift at all. But I can tell you, as long as you're sitting in one of these pews God has a purpose for you in this church.

So after Paul talks about how we are all unique and necessary parts of the body of Christ, placed there by God, He goes on to explain how we cannot function separated from the body. We weren't designed to walk with Christ alone, we're meant to help and encourage each other. That's why we have this community, why we join a Church. To praise God, teach faith , and serve others, **surrounded by others who desire to do the same**. Even Christ, while he was on Earth, relied on his disciples. God has designed us to be unified in Christ. We can't turn away from the church because it's taking us to different and maybe scary levels in our relationship with God, or calling us to do something we've never done before, to take on a role we don't like. And just as we can't run away, we can't let anyone drive us away from the church. Paul says, "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor.” Like it or not, everyone in the church, weak or strong, needs each other. Keyword, needs. Not wants, but needs. Why? **Simply because God designed it to be that way.** We may be different, but that's a good thing. It doesn't matter if you've been attending church for ten years or ten weeks, God has a plan for each one of us in this community of faith. Maybe you haven't found what you feel is the “perfect role” in the church. Or maybe you have, but just don't realize it, because it's the role God wants for you, not the role you want for you. I mean, we can't view the church as something that shapes people like playdough into perfect Christian molds. Yes, our hearts should be transforming in ways that will visibly reflect common qualities like the fruits of the spirit, but God didn't design us all to have the same spiritual walk. If he did, the gospel would never be spread and we would never see the growth in our faith that comes from interacting with different people. God has gifted us each with unique personalities, passions, and experiences so we can reach the exact people and places He has designed. If we're all exactly the same, with identical backgrounds and beliefs, we will only be able to reach a very small set of people. God is shaping us, but not to be the same. He's working on our hearts to make them beautiful, using our struggles and joys to paint a gorgeous picture of His grace and glory.

So we know God has a unique purpose for us in this community. We know that we're needed. We know that even if God's will for us isn't what we want, it's necessary for his plan. We know that we can never separate, or let ourselves be separated from the church, because God designed us to need each other. And lastly, we know that although each of our faith journeys look completely different, God is shaping us into

beautiful testimonies of His love. I have a quote by pastor **Peter Frey** that I believe sums up the purpose for this message- "Here in the church, we don't come together as people with common interests, or things that are similar about us. We come together as people who have differences about us. Sure, we come together with the single cause to know Jesus and make him known but as we do that, God's design for the church is dependent upon diversity. I'll say it again, dependence upon diversity is God's design for the church. And I think that the spirit of God wants us to come together to value your unique role in the church." Last week, Pastor Jon said something that has stuck with me. It's like one of those VBS songs that gets stuck in your head for weeks every time you hear it. He said: Despite what we often think, this is not our church. It's God's Church. Just as it's God's Church, so we are God's people, and He has amazing plans for us, **in this community of faith and wherever we go.**

## **Benediction**

Go now into the world as a unified body, to love and serve unconditionally. And may the God of joy walk with you, today and forever, so that you may always know you are unique, needed, and loved