*This document is an AI transcription of an audio recording and may contain errors; refer to the audio recording for accuracy.*

Heavenly Father, thank You for this family that You've made me a part of. Thank You for the opportunity to speak to them. I ask that You will now please give me the words to say. Please open up everyone's spiritual ears to hear what You were trying to say through me. I hear Your name, Jesus, Amen. So, good morning. Today, I wanted to speak to you on the body of Christ. That is a metaphor that we hear a lot in the Bible. And I think it's one of those things where we use the metaphor so often that a lot of times that phrase just comes out and we kind of forget what the metaphor is really trying to say. So, today I would like to peel back the sugarcoating of metaphor and expose the gooey nougat center of the truth that is being expressed there. But let's start by reading one of the primary verses that the Bible talks about the body of Christ. And that is 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-30. And if you have your bulletin, it's this big section on the left over here. "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and all have been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact, the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I'm not a hand, I'm not of the body.' Is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Well, I'm not an eye, I guess I'm not part of the body.' Is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' Nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body, which seem to be weaker, are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, on those we bestow greater honor. And our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the Church. First, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; and after that, miracles; then gifts of healings; helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? So, the point of this is that you and me and every Christian everywhere is part of this body of Christ. Everyone who has put their faith in Jesus and who has been filled with the Holy Spirit is a member of this new family. We have been adopted as children of God. And that's not a metaphor; that's literal. We have been adopted as children of God. The people in this room, the Methodists down the street, the Christians in China and Sudan and the rest of the world, they're all part of one family. And as separate as our cultures are and as different as our lives may be, we all have the most important thing in common. We've all been made brothers and sisters. We've all been washed by the same blood and filled with the same Spirit. Practically, to be a member of the body of Christ means that you have been given gifts and abilities to equip and edify and unify all of the other Christians in the world. I'm going to pick out just a couple parts from that verse we just read and go into detail on them. First, it says, "The body is not one member, but many." Even though we are all part of this family, we are not carbon copies of each other. We all have a role to play, but my role is different than your role. And you have a role to play. It says we are all members. When you became a Christian, God set in motion - He gave you certain gifts - a role that you would have to play in this family of believers. And it is not more or less important than anyone else's role. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? Don't let anyone who you see - apparently is more important, more influential - don't let that discourage you from thinking that you are somehow not involved or not a part of the body of Christ. Every part of your body has a function to play, and every part of the body of Christ has a function to play. And your body is at its best when every part is functioning as it should be. And the body of Christ is at its best when we are all functioning as we should be. God set the members of the body just as He pleased. Don't be dismayed or discouraged if you're not playing the part that you dreamed of. Because God put you right where you're at and He knows what's best and He loves you very much. And He loves this body very much. And so wherever you're at, you have a very important role to play. And it was a God-ordained role. Also, one part of the body cannot say, "I have no need of you." At camp, and oftentimes in life, I run into Christians who just say, "I don't really need the church. I don't really need to go to church. I don't need to be around other Christians." That's not true. We all need each other. We all need what each other has to offer. And the other people around us need what we have to offer. So you need to come and you need to plug in and be a part of this. And I'm not saying you have to sign up for every single small group and every Bible study, but you need to be around and interacting with other Christians. They will affect you and impact you. They will build you up. They will make you stronger. They will make you sharper. I think it was, I want to say, Mr. Moody, who used the example, he took an ember out of a fire and watched as that ember grow cold and dark once it was separated from the fire. And that's how we are as Christians. We need to be around each other. Just that proximity builds us up and transforms us into the people God wants us to be. But at the same time, the people around here need you. And for some people, that means signing up for VBS, or leading a Bible study, or for me, who's an interim pastor. But we all have something that we need to do. It may not even be an official role. I mean, maybe you're just the person who comes in and helps clean up after the service, or makes sure that their kitchen is always restocked with napkins and stuff. It doesn't have to be a big official role, but somehow, each of us has an important part to play, and the rest of these people need you to play your part. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. And if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Ephesians 4, verses 11-16. That's actually on the next page of verses. Ephesians 4, 11-16. It says, "And He," talking about Jesus, "He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working to which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Now, I'm not going to lie, I can sit and stare at that passage for an hour and still not able to get the whole thing into my head. If I tried to diagram it like we used to diagram sentences in school, I'm sure it would be a big mess. But as you sit there and as you study it, you'll start to pick out important pieces, and I'm going to highlight a couple of those right now. Why does God give us our spiritual gifts? He does so for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. You are an important part of this body because you help these people and those people and all Christians to become equipped for the work of the ministry. Maybe that means you teach a Sunday school class, or maybe that means you write a book, or maybe it means you support missionaries or something, but somehow you are focusing your time and effort and energy and talent and resources into helping Christians mature. And saints for the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the body of Christ. Edifying is building up. We want the body of Christ to grow. We want to become strong and mature and not children who are tossed to and fro and carried about by every crazy doctrine that someone puts forward. And the end is that we would grow up into all things. Grow up in all things, into Him who is the Head. In every area of our life, in every area of these relationships, we grow up into full maturity just like Jesus. That happens when, according to the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies. We are every joint. And it is important that we are joined and knit together by what every joint supplies. So I want to encourage you this week to look around at the other Christians in your life, whether they are in this church or out there somewhere. And I want you to really honestly consider them as your brother and sister. And I want you to ask yourself, why has God connected us? What does God want me pouring into this person? What part of the body am I supposed to be here? Someone who teaches? Or someone who comforts? Or someone who encourages? Or someone who repairs? I encourage you to go through this week and just rethink all of the Christians in your life and how you're supposed to be acting towards them. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have made us a part of this family, this body. But we thank You that You have given us each unique roles to play. And we ask now that You will please open our eyes and our understanding to the role that You have called each one of us to. Help us to identify our gifts. Help us to see where we can apply ourselves to be more effective into encouraging and building up our brothers and sisters, into maturity, into love, until we all come to the fullness of Christlikeness. Open our eyes and our understanding as we go through this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.