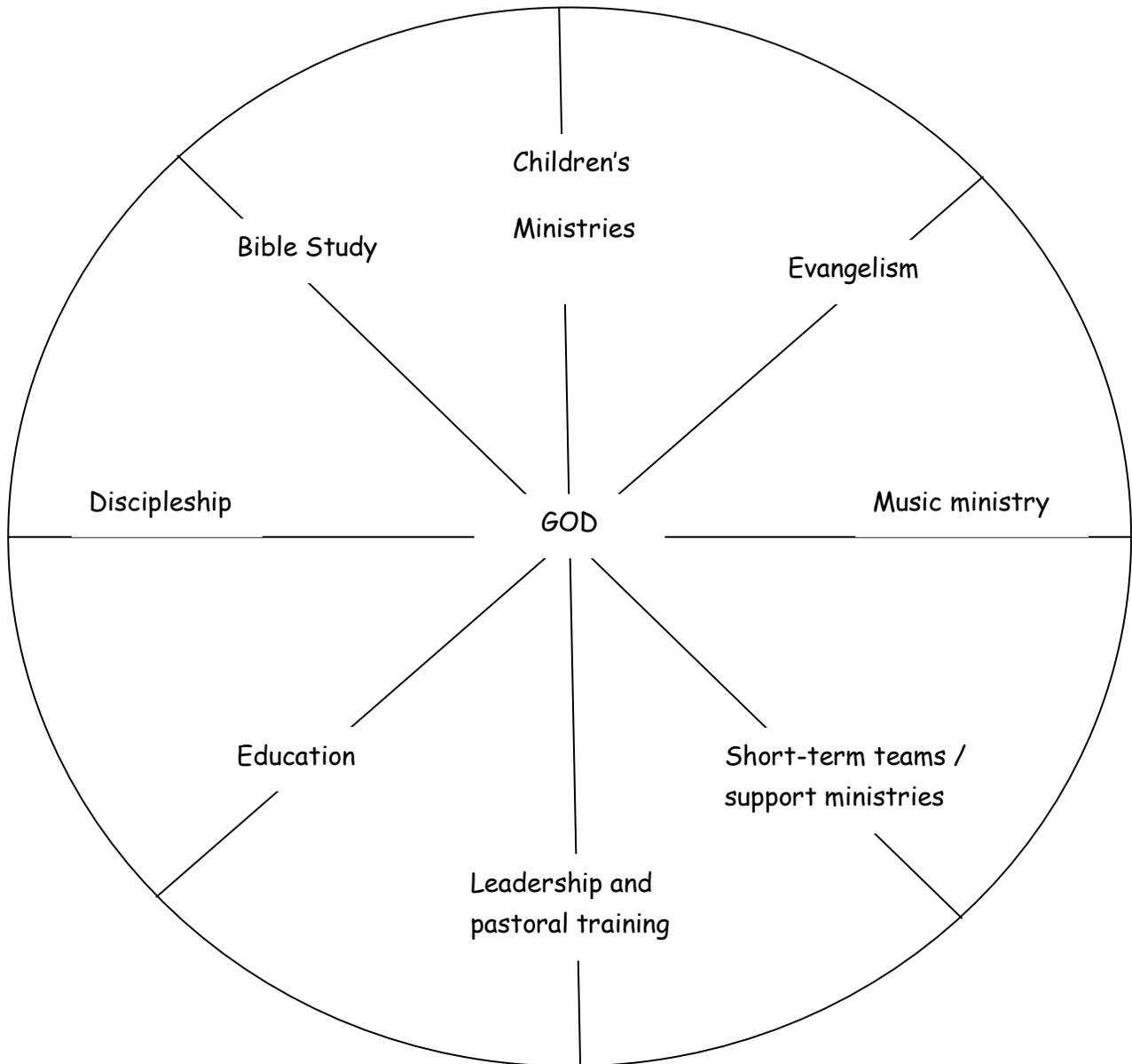


This week we want to look at how all of us fit together: you, us, them? Actually those are the wrong words to use when talking about being a part of the team. We are all together in this.



Thought questions for you and your team:

How is your team going to “fit” into this wheel of ministry? In other words, how will you work in conjunction with another hub of the ministry?

How can *you* help support and strengthen relationships and bring others closer to God?

How can *you* help to *serve another ministry effort* in the hub with the gifts and talents that you are bringing to Peru?

How will each of these ministries interconnect during your time here in Perú? How can each piece of the hub work together to bring people *closer in relationship and closer to God*?



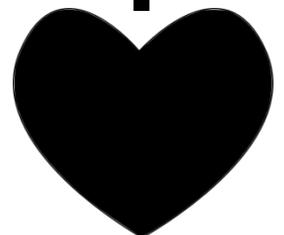
— week three —

We are the body

We are the body of Christ. As such we are working together to help others to enter and to enjoy living in the Kingdom of God. We could say, we are a team. A more Biblical image, however, is that we are a family. Like a family, though, there are going to be times of disagreement or misunderstanding. Are we willing to act like a family and do all we can to work through our tough times?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK

1. Do you like Peruvians?
2. Do you like North Americans?
3. If there is something you don't like or don't understand about the Peruvian people and culture, what are you going to do?





DÍA UNO:

DO YOU LIKE PERUVIANS?

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

-- 1 Corinthians 12.12-13 (NIV)

Prejudice is nothing new in our world. I don't know for sure, but I wonder if even Adam and Eve had a bit of it in themselves after they were kicked out of the garden. I doubt I have to say it, (but just in case I do, I will) but prejudice hurts people just because of who they are or what they look like or what they believe. It isn't always easy to spot up front, but as the old saying goes, hindsight is 20/20. It is easy to see the prejudice after something has happened. Listen for a moment to what a few people have said about this festering sore on the face of the history of human kind (how's that for a gruesome image?):

An ancient Hebrew proverb reminds us that "Opinions founded on prejudice are always sustained with the greatest violence."

The French Enlightenment writer Voltaire wrote, "Prejudices are what fools use for reason" (18th century)

Laura Junot, Duchess of Abrantes, once said, "Prejudice squints when it looks and lies when it talks" (late 18th century and early 19th century).

North American philosopher William James has said, “A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices” (late 19th century).

Finally, 20th century actor Clint Eastwood has been quoted as saying, “I'm interested in the fact that the less secure a man is, the more likely he is to have extreme prejudice.”



DO ANY OF THESE QUOTES STAND OUT TO YOU? WHICH ONE, IF ANY, DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE BEST? WHICH ONE MAKES YOU CRINGE INWARDLY WHEN YOU READ IT?



Everyone has a prejudice. That might be hard to read for those of us who profess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, but it is true. I'm not saying we're the kind of people to go out and beat up the people we don't like. We're not going to burn crosses in the front yards of our enemies. That's an extreme type of prejudice. Perhaps that is the safest kind because it is obvious to those who see it. The problem comes in when our prejudice becomes too hidden... too much under the table. I knew a good Christian woman once who would tell you she didn't have a prejudiced bone in her body. I thought she was right about that until we were talking about a family that would be coming to church. “They're *black*, you know,” she said, whispering the word *black* under her breathe as if it were a bad word.



RECENTLY, I CAME ACROSS A LIST OF SIX DIFFERENT TYPES OF PREJUDICE. LOOK AT THE LIST AND SEE IF YOUR OWN THOUGHTS FALL INTO THESE CATEGORIES.



Racism: People who are racist judge a person by the color of their skin (“red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight...”), their race (“Everyone with slanted eyes has got to be Chinese”), their religion (“All those Muslims are terrorists”), their denomination (“We must be good Methodists, 'cause we have food at our meetings”), their culture (“I can't stand being around Greeks, because they always smell like garlic”), their language (“If they want to use our church, they need to learn to speak English”), their dialect (“Y'all come back now, y'hear”), the way they dress (“Those towel heads in Iraq got what was coming to 'em”).

Classism: People who are classist are those who judge others by the amount of money they make (“What snobs. They live in a huge house with only the two of them”), how much education they have or don’t have (“He’ll never amount to anything, because he only has a third grade education”), or what interests they have (“What a stupid jock!”).

Sexism: Sexists are those people who judge others by either what gender they are (“Men are such pigs” or “Quit being such a tomboy”) or sexual orientation (“AIDS is God’s punishment for all the gay people in the world”). It is important to note here that the question is not whether you agree with a lifestyle or not. The question has to do with the *person* involved.

Lookism: Lookists (is that really a word) are those who judge someone by the way they look. Going to the beach to ogle men with bulging muscles or women in bikinis is a form of lookism. So, for that matter, is beauty contests. Judging someone as intelligent simply because they wear glasses is also a form of prejudice.

Ableism: Sometimes we judge people by what they can or cannot do. Even if we do it with a good heart, feeling sorry for someone who is in a wheelchair or who is blind is a form of prejudice. Being jealous of someone who can do brain surgery is also a form of prejudice.

Ageism: Ageists are people who pass judgment on people just because of the number of years they have been on this earth. This is common in advertising in Perú, when stores put a sign in the window asking for a sales person who is “a woman between the ages of 18 and 24.”



OKAY, IT IS TIME TO LOOK AT YOUR LIST AGAIN. DO YOU HAVE ANY PREJUDICES YOU DIDN’T THINK ABOUT (I KNOW I CAME UP WITH A FEW AS I TYPED THIS).



So why all this heavy stuff about prejudice? If we are missionaries, we need to seriously think about the way we look at and think about people. There is no room on the mission field for prejudice. There is no room for people to harbor any ill will against anyone they have never met before. Let me be honest, there will be things in Perú that you don’t like and that you don’t understand. So what? You are going to be in a different county so you need to expect it. Don’t judge everyone by your own ignorance of how and why things are done.

I admit it. That last paragraph may be a bit strong. At the same time, though, it needs to be said. There have been missionaries who come to a country with a good, loving heart, but they end up having a miserable time because they didn't address the prejudices in their hearts and souls before they came.

Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights leader of the 1950s and 1960s, stood up against prejudice of all kinds (and yet, even he, I am sure, had some prejudice as well. None of us is perfect.) He wrote in his 1963 book, *Strength to Love*, "There is little hope for us until we become tough minded enough to break loose from the shackles of prejudice, half-truths, and downright ignorance. The shape of the world today does not permit us the luxury of soft mindedness. A nation or civilization that continues to produce soft minded men purchases its own spiritual death on the installment plan."

The same applies to missionaries serving God as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. When the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he was writing to a church divided by conflict and a variety of -isms. Some were strong followers of Apollos and others of Paul and others of someone else. What they forget was the fact that they really should have been simply followers of Jesus Christ. Into this fray, he wrote: "*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*"

Although Paul's letter was addressed to the church in Corinth, it has a lot of meaning for us today. You are at home getting ready to come to Peru. We are at home in Perú, getting ready for you to come to us. There are also national Peruvians here who are preparing for you to come as well. You are coming with gifts and skills that the people of Perú need. The people of Perú will meet you with gifts and skills that you will need. It's a two way street. In the words of Paul, we are a unit, a body made up of many parts. We are one body baptized by one spirit. How cool is that!

When you get to Perú, and all of us get to see one another face-to-face, we will be one body. A team. A unit. Bound together by the common good. There will not be us and them parts. There will be one body. There will not be North Americans and Peruvians. There will be one body. Paul wrote in his letter

to the Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.28 NIV). That’s what it will be like when you get to Perú. That is, that will be how it is, if all of us do our part ahead of time to put our childish prejudices behind us.



OVER THIS COMING WEEK, LOOK AT THE BONES IN YOUR BODY AND SEE IF THERE IS ANYTHING ABOUT THE PERUVIANS YOU DON’T LIKE. MAYBE IT’S THE WAY THEY LOOK (THEY ARE, AFTER ALL, GENERALLY SMALL IN



STATURE). MAYBE IT’S THE LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK (YOU’RE GOING TO HEAR A LOT OF SPANISH. IF YOU DON’T LIKE HEARING IT IN THE SUPERMARKETS IN THE UNITED STATES, IT JUST MIGHT BOTHER YOU IN JUNGLES, MOUNTAINS AND DESERTS OF PERÚ). MAYBE IT’S THE FOOD (WE HOPE YOU LIKE POTATOES, YUCCA, RICE AND CHICKEN. YOU’RE PROBABLY GOING TO BE EATING A LOT—AND WE MEAN A LOT—OF IT).

We are all one body in Christ. We are not a mission team made up of career missionaries, short term missionaries, North Americans, Peruvians, citizens of a first world country and citizens of a third world country. What we are made up of is simpler than that: we are simply a body made up of followers of Jesus Christ.

DÍA DOS:



THE SOURCE OF OUR GIFTS

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 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 arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

– 1 Corinthians 12.14-20 (NIV)

There is a legend here in Huancayo that says the great creator God of the people of Andes, a god named Con Ticsi Viracocha, first created a race of giant humans and animals. Long story short, those giants and animals could not get along and they continually argued and fought with one another. This made Viracocha angry, and so he changed them into a rocks (giant rocks, of course). After a period of cooling his temper, Viracocha decided to create again. This time, using the giants-turned-rock as models, he made people. Just a few of them this time. A few nobles. A few



pregnant women. A few women with children. And then he said to them, “Go out into the world and populate it. I’m sending each pair of you to a different part of the world. There are some streams and rivers and caves and fountains I’ve set up for you to come out of. Each pair of you is the start of a new people.”

And so the people went. Each to his and her own place. One of those places is just outside of Huancayo next to a 1300 year old temple called Wariwilka. The spring still flows were many of the local people still believe the first Wanka man and woman entered the world. His name was Inapucarancápia (E nah poo cah dah CAH pee uh), and her name was Uruacumbea (oo do ah coom BAY uh). Inside the courtyard of the temple are two doorways, one from which the first woman entered the temple, and the other from which entered the first man. Near each of the doorways is a tall tree, each of which boasts hundreds of years. One is thought to be the first man. The other the first woman. Even today, sacrifices are left in the hollowed trunks in hopes of appeasing the ancient gods.



TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT THE LEGEND YOU JUST READ. THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT FOR SOME OF THE PEOPLE HERE IN PERÚ IT IS NOT A LEGEND, BUT INSTEAD IT IS A STORY OF FAITH. WHAT DO YOU THINK?



WHAT FEELINGS DOES THE STORY CREATE WITHIN YOU? TAKE A MOMENT TO JOT A FEW THOUGHTS IN THE MARGIN.

The creation story we read in the Bible is one of a great creator God. Our God, however, did not make any mistakes (he didn’t have to turn the first creatures into stone to try again) and was much more intimate with us from the beginning. In the first chapter of Genesis we read that God said, “Let us create human beings in our own image.” That phrase shows the intimacy God wants to have with us. When we look in the mirror, we can see a reflection of God looking back at us (tarnished and imperfect, but an image all the same) instead of a reflection of giants-turned-rock. In the second chapter of Genesis we read that God created us with muddy hands and then blew the breath of life into us.

Throughout scripture we can find examples of God being hands-on with us. For example, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God says, “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Isaiah 46.4). God

spoke to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1.5). Jesus even encouraged his closest friends in this when he said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Mathew 10.29-31).

As encouraging as those verses may be, they aren't even taking into account the greatest example of God's intimacy with us. John 3.16 reminds us that God loved the world so much that he sent his one and only son to come and be one of us. Jesus came not to be *like us* but instead to be one of us. That's how close and intimate the creator of the universe wants to be with us. John 1 reminds us that the Word (that's Jesus) became flesh and dwelled among us.

I've always liked the way the Spanish bibles translate those verses in the first chapter of John. In English we call Jesus *the word*, but in Spanish, they choose to use to call him *the verb*. That seems more accurate to me. (Okay, you Greek scholars, I am not talking about accuracy in the translation from the Greek. I know the literal word in the Greek is best translated *word* in English. What I'm referring to here is the idea and practice behind the idea of Jesus the Word.) Jesus is not a static person, idea, or thought. He's not just a thought on a piece of paper. He's more than just black letters on a white page. Jesus is alive and active. Jesus is moving and working in our world today through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is a *Verb* that is making a difference in my life here and now today. He is also a *Verb* (or at least wanting to be) in your life, as well.



IS JESUS ALIVE AND WELL IN YOUR LIFE TODAY? DO YOU SEE HIM WORKING AND ACTING AND DOING THINGS IN YOUR WORLD? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR HIM?



So what does all this have to do with our passage from Scripture for today? The words that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth are talking about the body of Christ and feet and hands and doing their different jobs, and how every one of us is important in the grand scheme of things. What does this have to do with God being intimate with us and about God wanting to be intimate with us and about Jesus being a *verb* instead of a *word*? What it has to do with all this, is

focused in on one section of Paul's writing. It is found at the end of the passage when he writes *"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be."*

God knows what gifts you have and what weaknesses fill your life as well. Not only does God know your gifts and your talents, God knows them for everyone with whom you will be working in Perú. God not only knows those gifts and weaknesses, God gave them to you. Look at the words from the writer to the Hebrews: "God also testified to it [salvation] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Hebrews 2.4). I'm not going to be all predestination about this and say that before you were born, God knew you would be coming to Perú for these few days and in order to make a difference in the lives of people, put this-or-that gift inside you. Maybe it happened that way, but I don't know. What I do know, though, is that God knew what would be happening in your life and knew what you needed to do in order to be truly happy. As a means of helping you to reach that happiness and joy, God gave you the abilities that you have.

There are people here in Perú who believe the source of their strength comes from offering a sacrifice in the trunks of ancient trees located in a 1300 year old temple. As missionaries carrying the good news of Jesus Christ, we need to remember that the source of our gifts and abilities is a God, a Word, a Verb that knows us and loves us enough to create us in their own image and blow the breathe of life into our lungs.

We are all different. God knows that.

We each have something to offer. God knows that as well... even more than even we ourselves know.

DÍA TRES:

I'M JUST AS GOOD



Each and every one of us has a gift from God. Each of those gifts are different. We all have a job to do and we are all important. These gifts come from God. Just like grace, we don't deserve it but they are there. 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. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

– 1 Corinthians 12.20-24a (NIV)

Maybe you had the same kind of mind that I did when I was a kid. Every once in a while when I really didn't have anything better to do, I would ask myself, "If you had to be one or the other, would you rather be blind or deaf?" I never could decide. If I were blind, for example, I could "see" the people I love by touching their faces, but I would miss out on some spectacular sunsets. On the other hand, if I were deaf, I could see all those things, but all the music I love listening to could only be played in my head.

I hope you don't read that last paragraph as me being insensitive. It is not meant to be. It's just the way my mind worked when I was younger. Whenever I read this passage from 1 Corinthians, my mind jumps to those kinds of thoughts. Every part of my body is important. At least, I think it is. I really don't know what the appendix does, but God put it there for a reason so it must be important. I don't fully understand how a kidney works, but I'm glad I have

two. My hands and my feet let me do things and get me places. My throat allows me to eat food that gets nutrients to the rest of my body. I'm glad I have all these different parts of my body. If I didn't, I'd be in a lot of trouble.

Let me let you in on another secret, too: there are parts of my body that I don't want anyone to see. My guess is you are the same way. I wear clothes not only to keep warm, but also to be modest.



LET'S PAUSE FOR A MOMENT AND EXPLORE THIS IDEA OF MODESTY FOR A MOMENT. FOR YOU, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MODEST?



The concept of modesty is very much linked to the culture and the climate. For example, people living high in the mountains tend to wear a lot more clothes (thus covering a lot more of the body) than people who live in the jungles (thus covering less). Each group of people has a different idea of what is appropriate in covering the body.

There is a story about a missionary who went to work in the Amazon jungle. The climate there is very hot and humid, and so the people wear less clothing, if they wear anything at all, except for a few beads and other types of jewelry. The missionary saw the way the people dress, and according to the definitions of his own culture, decided God wanted him to do something about the immodesty of the people there. He sent a prayer letter home, asking people to send t-shirts that he could give to the natives (not the most culturally sensitive term to use when referring to a group of people) so they could cover up the parts of the body he didn't want to see. The response from home was immediate (as *immediate* as it could be when a person is in the jungle), and a package of shirts arrived. The next time the missionary met with the people of the village, he joyfully passed out the t-shirts, explaining to the people how they were to be worn. They put on their new clothes, went about their business of the day, and the missionary returned to his camp to write a glowing letter of thanks to the people back home who had helped him teach "these people about the modesty of a good Christian." The next day, the missionary returned to the village. As he approached, he could see through the thick undergrowth, the reds, blues and greens of the shirts he'd shared the day before. As he entered the clearing, though, his heart sank. Yes, the people were wearing the shirts, but the previous evening, they had all cut large holes in the shirt which exposed the parts of the

body the missionary did not want to see. They did not do it to spite the man of God. They simply had a different understanding of what modesty is and what parts of the body should be covered.

Although we might not be traveling to the jungle together, there are some modesty issues that you may encounter. We need to be aware that it is very common for women to breast feed their babies in public without any blanket or towel to cover the breasts. It is also common to see men unzipping their pants to pee on a nearby wall, street sign, tree or whatever. They don't seem to mind at all that the sidewalk is busy or there are cars zipping by. We might be tempted to think it is wrong what they are doing, but we have to be careful. We need to remember that we do things that seem immodest and indecent as well. For example, picking one's teeth in public is rude and immodest. In the Peruvian culture it is a thing to be done in private.



THINK ABOUT IT: HOW DO YOU THINK YOU WILL REACT WHEN YOU SEE SOME THINGS IN THE PERUVIAN CULTURE THAT YOU THINK ARE RUDE OR IMMODEST? HOW WILL YOUR REACTION AFFECT THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU?



Let's get back to the passage from Paul's letter to Corinth. In it, he talks about "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker" and those parts that are "less honorable." Let's be honest with ourselves, there are some gifts that just don't seem to be worth the time or effort to bring into the light.

Okay, so I can knit a sweater. Big deal. What difference is that going to make in the Kingdom of God.

Okay, so I'm good at writing letters. Who cares? It takes a long time to write to one person. What difference is that going to make?

Okay, so I'm a good encourager. So I can make you feel better. Big whoop! I want to get out there and *do* something for God.

There are gifts that are behind the scenes that others don't see, but the truth is, if they weren't there those things happening on the big stage wouldn't happen. Think of a play at the theater. Yeah, the actors get all the credit for a great show, but if the sound effects person isn't on top of it all or if the person

opening the curtain falls asleep, or if the lighting is off, the actors cannot do their job well. Every part is important for the success of the program.

By the same token, what you are bringing with you in terms of the gifts God has given you is just as important as what anybody else brings. You were created by God to be the person you are and to share the gifts you have. Because you were created by God, you have value.

It surprises me when I go to art museums sometimes. There alongside the great paintings of the great masters is a framed sketch from the artist's sketchbook. It hardly looks like anything, but if I look hard I can see what the artist was trying to capture. In the same way, even if we feel like a reject from the creators sketchbook, we have value and worth.

Howard Finster is a great American folk artist with artwork in many of the great museums of the world. For a short time, we lived near the town where he lived and worked, and so we took a trip with the family to see the place. It is located in a residential neighborhood (of course, his home would be, wouldn't it?) just a few houses away from an open field that marked the edge of a state prison. His house had some neat architectural features to it, but what really caught our attention was the artsy stuff he'd painted on the walls and the sculptures he'd recycled out of garbage. If I'd done the same thing where I lived, I think the neighbors would have called the police to talk to me about the mess in my yard. They'd think I was a crazy fool. Because of who Howard Finster was, though, the house, the yard, and the art had value. Because of who God is, I have value as well.

So what if everyone else gets the honor and glory. What is most important is that I realize I am important to God.



THINK ABOUT YOUR GIFTS AND GRACES. ARE THEY ONES THAT GET ALL THE GLORY OR ARE THEY MORE OF THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES- TYPE OF THING? DO YOU SEE THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT IN THE EYES OF GOD? ARE THEY VALUABLE TO YOU?



DÍA CUATRO:

EVERY PART DOING ITS PART



But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

– 1 Corinthians 12.24b-26

For nearly thirty years, the Peruvian national soccer team (the Selection) has failed to qualify for the world cup tournament. That is why in 2007 Julio Cesar Uribe (HOO lee oh - Say SAR - oo REE bay) was hired to coach the team. He was a standout player back in his own youth during the 1980s and the Peruvian fans had great hope he would lead them to a new level of achievement. As he prepared to take over control of the team, he looked at the roster of players, considering each one very carefully. “I will call up only the best players,” he said of his actions. “All players are very important for Perú. We have a good team but we have to make it a lot better. It will be a different selection, a selection that will play every game with heart.”

We expect that when it comes to a sports team (or a concert orchestra or a staff at school or a... well, you fill in the blank). We expect every person on the team to do their part. If they are playing soccer, and the goalie decides it's time to go get a cup of coffee when the opposing team is chasing the ball in his direction, we as fans are not very happy with him. He is a part of the team and has a job to do. If the third base player decides she needs to talk to her friend on her cell phone when the score is tied bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded, we are not going to be shouting our praises in her direction. She is a part

of the team and needs to be doing her job. If during the introduction, the mezzo-soprano in the opera decides she does not look good in a Viking helmet and goes in search of a French beret, the audience will not be throwing roses when the orchestra pauses for her solo, and she is not there. She, too, has a part to perform and the rest of us are depending on her. Of course, these are exaggerations of some stereotypes, but I hope you get the picture. We are all important. We all have a job to do. We all have to do it.



IF YOU KNOW, LIST IN THE MARGIN WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING IN PERÚ ON THE MISSION TEAM. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE? WHAT IS THE REST OF THE TEAM EXPECTING YOU TO DO...AND TO DO WELL?



This is what Paul was talking about in the last part of today's verse. He wrote: *"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."* You are an important part of the team coming to Perú. You might not be the leader. You might not be the most talented. You might not even understand why you are going because you don't know what you have to offer the people of Perú. Do not let that get you down, though. There is a reason you are on this team (we'll talk about that in a moment).

There is a very good chance that something good is going to happen on this trip just because of your being here. That is, something good is going to happen, if you are doing what you are supposed to be doing here. If you decide it is too hot to pound nails into the school building your team is constructing, and after lunch decide to go swimming in the parasite infected water instead of returning to the building site, you are not the only one who will suffer when you accidentally swallow some water (let me tell you from experience, intestinal parasites are not fun), you are not the only one who will suffer on the trip. Your teammates will have to make up for your slacking off. They will have to pound in twice as many nails and hold twice as many boards. Like Paul says, "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it." You really don't want to do that to your team.

On the other hand, if each of us decides to do our part, things will get done. Maybe not exactly the way we plan on it happening, but at least the way God wants it to be done. At the end of the week, the things you have accomplished for God will be honored. The manner in which this will happen varies. Maybe it will be a firm handshake and a smile. Maybe it will be the good

feeling you get inside for a job well done. Maybe it will be a gift to take home from the people you have served, or maybe even a dinner in your honor. Everyone who does his or her part, though, will be honored in one way or another. Just trust in God.

It is important to stop right here to mention this trip is not a time for jealousy. One thing about human nature is that some people will naturally stand out over others. For many of the Peruvian people here, we gringos all look alike. It is hard for them to tell us apart. Honestly, there will probably be times here in Peru that you will have a hard time telling the Peruvians apart, as well. There are some that we learn to recognize right away, though, because of the way they act or talk or carry themselves (hopefully they stand out for positive reasons, but the opposite is true, too). By the end of our time together here, some of the members of the team will be adored and fawned over. Others will be wall flowers. It might be tempting to feel envious of their popularity. It might be hard to fight back the anger you feel welling up inside you against your teammate because he or she is “so perfect” and the Peruvian people who have been blinded by the “glory” of your teammate (to get the full effect, read the words in quotation marks with sarcasm).

If you are the wall flower, you might feel like the brother of the prodigal son that Jesus talked about (Luke 15.11-32). His brother goes off and wastes everything his father ever gave, and yet when he comes back, he gets a big party. Dad never gave you a party. You were faithful for years and did your part. Little brother was selfish and gets even more back. How fair is that? You worked hard on this trip and what do you get? A hand shake and a smile. Big deal. Mr. Glorious over there got a cool blanket with alpacas on it to take home. These feelings are real. It is important not to deny them, but do not let them control you and make the trip miserable. Remember, the trip is not about Mr. Glorious or even about you. It’s about serving God.

Mr. and Mrs. Glorious, you also have to remember that. It feels good to be the honored one. It feels good to be praised and thanked. But remember, you didn’t do the work on your own. You are not a one-person show. You are a part of a team...the body of Christ. Remember the reason you are here. Be gracious, but also remember the wall flowers who did their part, so that you could do yours.



PAUL WROTE, "IF ONE PART IS HONORED, EVERY PART REJOICES WITH IT."



THINK ABOUT IT: DO YOU TEND TO BE MR. OR MS. WALLFLOWER OR MR. OR MS. GLORIOUS? HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL? HOW CAN YOU PREPARE YOURSELF TO REMEMBER THIS TRIP IS NOT ABOUT ANY ONE PERSON, BUT INSTEAD, IT IS ABOUT GOD AND WHAT GOD IS DOING?

God is already doing some great things, already working under the surface in ways we cannot even imagine. God is guiding people to be in the right places at the right time so that you are fully ready to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. As we said earlier, there is a reason for you to be on this team. Do you know how we can say that? Because there is nobody on your team that put this team together. Yes, you have a team leader. Yes, you have someone in charge of getting the paperwork in and needed information to us on time. Yes, you have people praying for you (you did ask them, didn't you?). Yes, you even had someone ask you if you wanted to come and be a part of this grand adventure. All that is true, but still, nobody on the team put you together. God did.

God did with you what Coach Uribe did with the Peruvian Selection soccer team. Coach Uribe looked at the gifts and talents of each of the players on the roster and then decided who was going to play for him. If we believe this trip is what God wants us to be doing, God did the same thing. God looked at each and every one of us, at our gifts, our talents, our abilities, our personalities, and said, "Hmm, yeah, I think they will be good together."

Maybe you look at the people on your team and think to yourself, "Wow, I would never have thought I would be doing anything with so-and-so. We are so different." The opposite might be true, too, as you wonder why your best friend in the world is staying at home. A lot of times, teams are made up of people who are so different they would never hang out if they weren't about to travel to another country. That's what is really cool about the Kingdom of God. Everyone has an invitation to come in, and everyone has a chance to serve.

Ater talking with a number of pastors, that is one of the joys of serving a church. We get to see that happen a lot. Because of the nature of our ministry, we hear stories from people that we cannot share with others, but if they only

knew... It is a great thing to look out at the body of Christ and see a convicted felon sitting next to a police officer sitting next to a woman who still hurts because of the abortion she had when she was 16 years old sitting next to a grandmother who raised four children to adulthood sitting next to a peace activist sitting next to the recipient of a purple heart for his service in the Persian Gulf. They don't know all of each others stories, but they love one another and they serve together because the love of Jesus Christ is more important than their own ideas and thoughts and prejudices.

Our team is the same way. There are a lot of things we don't know about each other, but God knows everything. There might even be some things we know about others on the team that make us uncomfortable. God knows that as well. However, that didn't stop God from deciding to put you on the same team.



TAKE A MOMENT TO LIST EVERY PERSON ON YOUR TEAM (REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE NAMES OF THE PEOPLE ON THE TEAM WHO ARE ALREADY IN PERU, BOTH MISSIONARIES AND PERUVIAN NATIONALS). NOW LIST BESIDE



THEIR NAMES WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM AND WHAT THEY HAVE TO OFFER THE TEAM. REFER TO THIS LIST DURING YOUR QUIET TIME WITH GOD. PRAY FOR EACH PERSON ON YOUR TEAM BY NAME (OR IN GENERAL FOR THOSE WHOSE NAME YOU DO NOT KNOW).

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DÍA CINCO:

I'M WORTH IT



Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

– 1 Corinthians 12.27-31 (NIV)

As we prepare to work together as a mission team here in Perú with all our variety of gifts and talents and graces, there is one thing that is vitally important for us to remember: we are the body of Christ. We are not just parts of the body. Individually, yes. Together, though, no. We are the body of Christ working together with Jesus at the head.

There is a team leader of the group. There are missionaries with experience coming with you. There are missionaries who have been here for a while and so have a grasp on the culture. There are even Peruvian nationals who will be working side by side with us. We are many parts that come together to make a whole... the body of Christ.

There are leaders in the group. There are administrators. There are perhaps some pastors. Some among us are really good at understanding what is going on around us. There are others of us who can very quickly and easily get a new idea or concept to make sense in our minds. There might be some doctors

or nurses on the team. There will be people who speak different languages. Not a single one of us does all these things, but together we make up the Body of Christ.

As the body of Christ, nothing is impossible. As the body of Christ, walls of injustice and pain can come down. As the body of Christ, the people we meet in Perú will have their lives changed. As the body of Christ, we as a team will have our lives changed. As the body of Christ, the powers of evil will flee. As the body of Christ, we will make a difference for the glory of God.



WE HAVE A LOT TO DO, SO WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THIS WHOLE THING?

WHO ULTIMATELY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE THINGS TO HAPPEN?



We might not get to see these things happen, but they will. The change will be either very subtle or very wide open or thrilling. Either way, it will happen, because as the body of Christ, we are not in control. The body can do a lot of things, but without a nerve center, we can do nothing.

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul writes, “Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (Ephesians 5.23b). Jesus Christ is the one who is ultimately in charge and responsible for all that happens on this trip.

Yes, we have been given gifts and abilities.

Yes, God has called us together to be a team for this mission to Perú.

Yes, God has included many different types of people on this team.

And, yes, God is not a giant puppeteer pulling our strings so that we do exactly what we are supposed to do. We still have free will and choice to make our own decisions.

But, yes, we need to trust in Jesus Christ enough to believe the success of this mission is not our responsibility. We have our part to play, but God is going to do amazing things in spite of us.

Sometimes mission teams come because the team members always wanted to see Perú. They might not openly admit that is their reason for coming, but once they get here, it becomes obvious very quickly. They don't blend with the local people. They are loud and boisterous. They drink beer (against our policy because Peruvian followers of Christ believe drinking is a sin).

They stay out late. They don't do whatever it takes to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. The witness they give is not as positive as it could be. As they leave, the long term missionaries here have serious doubts whether they should be invited to return the following year. However, in spite of all this, God does amazing things. In spite of this, a number of people hear the good news of Jesus Christ and accept him as their Lord and Savior. In spite of us, Jesus Christ can work.



ARE YOU HOPING THAT JESUS WILL BE WORKING *WITH YOU* OR *IN SPITE OF*
YOU WHILE WE ARE HERE TOGETHER IN PERÚ?



Paul knows how important it is for us to be thinking about and talking about the gifts God has given us, and about the fact that we are the body of Christ working under his leadership. In the passage today, he even puts a priority and an order to the way these gifts are viewed within the body. He does not, however, stay there.

Paul tells us that we are to “eagerly desire” the greater gifts. We are not to simply be satisfied with where we are spiritually or with our gifts. Paul seems to be saying we can always be and do more. If we are the shy type who likes to hang out in the background, there is nothing holding us there. We can be leaders on this team. If we are the people who always take charge, maybe God is going to make us better followers on this trip. Whatever the “greater gift” is for us, we need to be looking for it and pursuing it.

But Paul doesn't just stop there, though. He goes further. Most of our modern translations of the Bible probably don't make this connection very easily. Our modern Bibles are different than the first scrolls on which the word of God was written. One of the big differences was that there were no chapter or verse markings. Another difference is the fact that in Greek, everything was written in capital letters with no punctuation. It flowed together as one (in some opinions) jumbled mess or as one (in other opinions) flowing thought and idea. Very few Bibles today are published with this flowing, continuous idea.

Unfortunately, because most translations put a line space or start a new paragraph or a title between the phrases “but eagerly desire the greater gifts” and “and now I will show you the most excellent way,” this messes up our

reading of First Corinthians. What's worse is that this "most excellent way" is separated from what it is by a new chapter.

What is this "most excellent way"? We've already talked about it the first week of our time together. It is love. Paul has just spent a good deal of time talking about each one of us having tremendous gifts and abilities, and talking about how each of these gifts and abilities needs the gifts and abilities of others in order to fully be used for the Kingdom of God. But then he goes on to remind us that no matter how great we are at anything, if we do anything without love, we are not doing any good.

The most excellent way of using our gifts is to do it out of love. We need to be using our gifts not as a way of building ourselves up, but instead as a way of building up those around us. As we prepare to work together as a team, it is important to know what gifts and abilities each one of us has, but it is vital for us to remember to love one another.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13.4-7 that "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record or wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

If we do that with one another and with the people we meet along the way, this trip will be a success and Jesus will be at work *with* us instead of *in spite of* us.



IS THERE ANYBODY ON THE TEAM YOU ARE HAVING ISSUES WITH RIGHT NOW?
WHAT IS THE ROOT OF THE ISSUES? WHAT FEELINGS DO THEY CREATE WITHIN
YOU? HOW ARE YOU DEALING WITH IT?



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A few facts about:

Peruvian flora and fauna

- 🐾 In Perú, one can find 1701 species of birds, more than any other country.
- 🐾 Mejia lakes in Arequipa are the habitat of thousands of migratory birds. More than 150 varieties come each year.
- 🐾 Perú is rich in wildlife with 34 species of primates, 361 species of mammals, 297 species of reptiles and 251 species of amphibious.
- 🐾 Perú has 84 of the 103 ecological zones in the world.
- 🐾 Entomologists in Madre de Dios found a Shihuahuaco (asterix) tree with 5000 insect species of which 80% were seen for the first time.
- 🐾 The first catalog of Peruvian flora, categorizes 3000 varieties of which 524 are edible, 401 are wood, 334 are toxic for the use of insecticides, 213 are medicinal, 110 are used for colorants, 100 are used for the manufacturing of tools, 90 are ornamental, 36 are used for the production of oils and waxes, and 35 are used for the manufacturing of drinks.
- 🐾 In Perú you can find close to 3000 types of orchids.
- 🐾 Sunflowers are native to Perú and were domesticated around 1000 B.C. Francisco Pizarro found the Inca subjects venerating the sunflower as an image of their sun god. Gold images of the flower, as well as seeds, were taken back to Europe early in the 16th century.
- 🐾 Four out of ten cereals are originally from Perú (quinua, corn, cañihua and kiwicha). The kiwicha is the cereal that the NASA astronauts take on their trips.