

What Churches Can Learn From the NFL

I get excited around this time of year because it's the opening of **football season**. I have to admit that I enjoy the sport and love watching my team take the field and battle it out against their division rivals. It's exciting to watch everything that's happening, from the way that the five offensive linemen work as one entity, to the choreography of the defensive backs and linebackers roaming the secondary.

In other sports, it seems like one superstar can carry an entire team, but football is different. A quarterback is no good if his receivers can't hold onto the ball, and a running back isn't likely to get very far without an offensive line punching holes for him. There are 11 men on the field at a time, and they're all interdependent. They need each other and must function together within a system.

I occasionally think about this when I look at the New Testament church as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. If the local church wants to be an instrument of the Lord, then it needs to function the way He has designed it—as a body. The apostle Paul brings some important things to our attention about participating in a church.

First, we ought to realize that we need each other in order to accomplish what we are called to do (vv. 12-19). When teams take the field this weekend, there will be 11 men lining up together. If only two or three go out to play while the rest sit on the sideline, they would have to forfeit the game. Similarly, the people in the church—parts of one body—need each other as well. In the church of Corinth, some of the members thought that they were too insignificant to be used within the congregation. Paul argues that it is God who has arranged each of the members for His purpose and given each

one their talents. Every member, therefore, is important and needed because God Himself has equipped that believer for some type of service within the body.

Second, we ought to realize the interdependence of each member (vv. 20-25). Just as a cornerback is reliant upon the defensive end to pressure the quarterback, each member of the body depends on the other members to fulfill their function. The eyes have a responsibility, and it is different from the function of the fingers. Though each member of the church body is independent, each member is dependent on the other as they seek to work together effectively.

Third, we ought to sympathize with each other, because when one member suffers, the whole body suffers (v. 26). Those who watch football regularly are familiar with the sad-yet inspiring-scene that often takes place when a significant injury occurs. As the injured player lies on the field, many of his teammates will kneel around him or on the sideline, showing their concern and offering prayers on his behalf. When their teammate is in pain, they're in pain. Similarly, when the quarterback sets a passing record, the team celebrates the accomplishment with him. Likewise, the **body of Christ** mourns and celebrates together in both bad times and good because they feel each other's pain and joy in an almost literal sense.

When you sit down this weekend to turn on the game, watch those moving parts and the interconnectedness of your team as they all strive towards one goal, and then consider your role in the body of your church. As much as I love football, Christ's body, the church—and your role as a part of that body—is eternally more significant in a world that desperately needs the Savior.

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