

The Parchment

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A Part of the Body

(In this issue of The Parchment, my wife Lori shares about a painful experience she had when we lived in Washington and what she learned from it. It's a clear reminder that when we live together in the same body/community, we affect each other more than we think.)

"If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body and each of you is a member of it" (1 Cor. 12:26-27, NET Bible).

When we spent a year in Washington state (near Portland, Oregon) so Howard could study at Western Seminary, I broke my toe. In fact, I broke my pinky toe on my right foot. It was one of those freak accidents; I was turning from the kitchen area of our condo to dash upstairs (because I thought I heard a crying child) and slammed my foot into the keyboard stand in the living room. Howard heard a crunching sound and I felt a searing pain in my toe that wouldn't let up. Previously, I had been one of those fortunate people who had never, ever broken a bone. So I didn't know what to expect with a broken toe—and I found out later that I had broken my toe in two places. It's not possible to set a broken toe but I waddled around in a surgical boot for many weeks to give the bones a chance to mend. As a result, my pinky toe is large and misshapen now. It's a daily reminder of our year in Washington and of my freak accident.

During this experience, God brought 1 Corinthians chapter 12 to my attention. I began to think about verses 26 and 27 in particular when my little toe would throb with pain. It was surprising to me that such a small part of my body could hurt so much! Certainly people at the church in Washington sympathized with my discomfort and were glad that I was on the road to recovery. But something strange started

happening in me. I became more sensitive to others' struggles. There was one woman in our church who was going through a painful divorce. She and her soon-to-be ex had gone to Christian counseling and he was still unwilling to help heal the marriage. I started to listen more and ask questions out of concern, not just out of curiosity. We had dinners together in each others' homes. We played with our kids. We laughed together and we cried together. And slowly I was able to share some of the hurt from my mom's death. I did not expect to have this friendship in Christ, but the following verses made a lot more sense after the experience: "...God has blended together the body...so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another" (vv.24b-25). I am very thankful that God put us together for the year in that particular church.

Do you realize how special it is that God placed you and me in our church, right now, at this time? He has fit us together according to His plans. So don't be afraid to reach out and care for someone in our midst today. Maybe you can start with a smile and a "hello" or if it's someone you already know, take a few minutes after the service to pray together for any felt needs. It's my prayer that God will direct your steps as you seek to love one another in Christian love. Let's be like one body that is growing together in Him.