

Empower
Session 6

How God Sees The Church (Part 2)

4. The fourth word action picture describing how God sees the church is one we can easily identify with ... we are the BODY OF CHRIST

- Paul said in I Cor. 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ and members individually."

- Christ's body, the Church, is a the **MYSTERY** that has been kept secret for long ages. In Ephesians 3, Paul speaks about this mystery. He is saying that the Church will be made up of Jews and Gentiles, of peoples from all races and all backgrounds to create one Body for Christ to dwell in.

- God has chosen different ways to live among men on the earth.
 - o In the Old Testament, He dwelt in a tent

 - o In the New Testament, He dwelt in the tabernacle of flesh - Jesus

 - o And now, He dwells in Us, the Church

- When we are born again, we are born into that Body. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit immerses us into the Body. If we are true Christians, we have no choice as to whether we are part of that Body. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body.

“HOW GOD SEES THE CHURCH” – PART 2

IV. CHRIST’S BODY

“All of you together are the one body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it.” —1 Corinthians 12:27

Christ’s body, the church, is the **Mystery** kept a secret for long ages

The mystery of Christ... is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. — Ephesians 3:6 (NIV)

And His reason? To show to all the powers of heaven how perfectly wise God is when they see all of His family — Jews and Gentiles — joined together in His Church, just as He had always planned to do through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Ephesians 3:10-11 (LB) (See also Ephesians 1:9,10 and Colossians 1:26, 27)

When we are spiritually born-again, we are born into the body of Christ. As St. Paul says, we are “baptized” or “immersed” by the Spirit into His body. If we are true Christians we have no choice as to whether we are part of this body—which is the true church.

*“For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body.”
I Corinthians 12:13*

LET’S THINK ABOUT CHRIST’S BODY

The **Incarnation** Body — Philippians 2:2 John I:14
In this body Christ was born, grew up, lived and ministered here on earth as a man for 33 years. Then, He was crucified.

Was that the end of His Body??

The **Resurrection** Body

On Easter morning, Christ came out of the tomb with a new body. He dwelt here in this body for forty more days as He prepared and instructed His disciples. Then, He ascended back to heaven.

Now was Christ without a body on earth??

The **Spiritual** Body

On the day of Pentecost the church was born. Now Christ had a new body: not limited in time and space, but one that could span the oceans and the generations.

- Let's think more carefully about the Body of Christ. Jesus has had three bodies on this earth:
 - o The **INCARNATION** body
 - The first body, born at Christmas, a tiny baby
 - Grew into a man, taught, healed, loved, cried, and finally, died.

 - o The **RESURECTION** body
 - Still on earth, able to eat and be touched, not an apparition
 - Could freely come and go
 - Ministered on earth for 40 days
 - The body His followers watched ascend into Heaven

 - o After not having a body on earth for ten days, we see on Pentecost that Christ's **SPIRITUAL** body was formed by the Holy Spirit ...during an earlier lesson, you even pictured yourself there at that birth and wrote a story!

This was the Body that was 2,000 the first day, then 3,000 the next day, and soon, 10,000; then 50,000. Shortly after it was existing at the same time in Judea, in Samaria, then Asia Minor, Africa, and England - and now it's so great and glorious that it encompasses the whole earth!

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Who is His Body? **WE ARE HIS BODY**

- Christ lives once again in the world thru His Body, the Church. And, just as it was with His earthly body, so now, whatever He does here in this world, it is through His spiritual body. Only as He lives in us will he appear to the people around us.
- So when you look in the mirror tomorrow, say, "Hi, Body of Christ!" What a purpose for which to live! No matter how monotonous your job or how pressed and harried your circumstances, you have a purpose Each day, Christ is living and manifesting Himself through you and all the other believers connected to you!

There are 6 important aspects about the Body of Christ

- **THERE ARE MANY PARTS, BUT ONLY ONE BODY**
 - Many diverse parts, only one head over all - Jesus
 - Not all the same color, not all the same denomination
- **EACH PART MUST BE OBEDIENT TO THE HEAD**
 - When our body responds to the commands from our brain, then our body is functional. However, if a part of our body says, "No, I'm not going to move!" then we become unable to function.
 - So it is with the body of Christ. The only way His Body will function properly is when every part of the body is obedient to the Head.
- **EACH PART IS IMPORTANT TO THE BODY**
 - All the members do not have the same function, but they are all important
 - Jesus puts the parts of the body together strategically where He wants them (not our choice) I Cor. 12:14-18

WHO IS HIS BODY? — WE ARE HIS BODY !!

Christ lives once again in this world through His body. If that doesn't give us a purpose for which to live that is life-changing, then what would it ever be??!

Using our own physical body as a pattern we can discern:

SIX IMPORTANT ASPECTS ABOUT "CHRIST'S BODY" – THE CHURCH

1. **There are many parts, but only one Body**

Our bodies have many parts, but the many parts make up only one body when they are all put together, so it is with the "body" of Christ. Each of us is a part of that one body. — I Corinthians 12:12-13

2. **Each part must be obedient to the head**

And God has put all things under His feet and made Him the supreme Head of the church—which is His body. — Ephesians 1:22-23 (See also Colossians 1: 18)

Illustration: arm, finger

3. **Each part is important to the Body**

*It takes everyone of us to make Christ's body complete, for we each have different work to do... and each need all the others.
—Romans 12:4-5*

— "each part needs all the other parts"

*Yes, the body has many parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand, " that does not make it any less a part of the body. And what would you think if you heard an ear say, "I am not part of the body because I am only an ear, and not an eye"? Would that make it any less a part of the body? Suppose the whole body were an eye—then how would you hear? Or If your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything? But that isn't the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where He wants it.
—I Corinthians 12:14-18*

- Some parts may seem more important, but it's often the hidden parts that are the most important (I Cor. 12:19-24)

(illustration: the hand vs. the liver)

- When we operate on this basis with each other, then this "makes for happiness among all the parts".

- **EACH PART IS AFFECTED BY THE OTHER PARTS**

- "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it"
- If I hit my finger with a hammer, pain shoots up my arm, it swells, I have a slight rise in temperature. It affects other parts of my body.
- People think that it doesn't matter what they do ... it does because we are parts of the same body. Every part is affected by what each one does.
- If your life is displeasing to the Lord, all the rest of the body members to whom you belong are affected by it
- If you are rejoicing and blessed, the whole body is blessed
- If you have a bad testimony (immoral, illegal, bad disposition), don't think that it's only you who is affected. This harmful testimony is affecting the whole body.

- **EACH PART IS TO FULFILL ITS FUNCTION**

- No spectators here
- Jesus has equipped each of us for the special function He wants us to fulfill in His Body.
- We need to find out what our function is and be faithful

- **EACH PART ADDS OR DETRACTS FROM THE BODY**

- Read the last paragraph on the page ... Jesus stumbling ... Not because of me!
- We are either adding to the work of the body of Christ, or detracting from it.
- Jesus has only one Body. The effectiveness of the ministry of His life here on earth today is in the hands of that Body.

- none can say — “you are not important”
- none can say — “I am not important”

What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! So He has made many parts, but still there is only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. Yes, we are especially glad to have some parts that seem rather odd! And we carefully protect from the eyes of others those parts that should not be seen, while of course the parts that may be seen do not require this special care. So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that might otherwise seem less important. — 1 Corinthians 14:19-24

This makes for happiness among the parts, so that the parts have the same care for each other that they do for themselves.
— I Corinthians 12:25

4. **Each part is affected by the other parts**

If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. — Corinthians 12:26

5. **Each part is to fulfill its function**

Under His direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.
— Ephesians 4:16 (LB.)

Now here is what I am trying to say: All of you together are the one body of Christ and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.
— Corinthians 12:21

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God’s many kinds of blessings.
— I Peter 4:10-11

6. **Each part adds to or detracts from the body**

Someone has said — “Often Christ is literally made to stumble and sprawl before the world and become a laughing stock because of His body.” How terrible! Never me, Lord, I pray!

6. The last word action picture used to describe how God sees the Church is that we are CHRIST'S BRIDE

- In the Old Testament, God called **ISRAEL** His bride. "I took you as My bride, and you're an adulterous wife."
- In the New Testament, we see a picture of Jesus as the **BRIDEGROOM**, and His bride the Church.
- In **EPHESIANS 5:25-27**, Jesus' intentions toward us are explicitly stated.
 - o He loves His bride
 - o He gave Himself for her
 - o He sanctifies and cleanses His bride
 - o He is removing all the blemishes
 - o He will take her to Himself and live with her in married bliss forever
 - o He will give her everything that He has
- All of this is waiting for us, the Church.
- Read the last two paragraphs

Only one thing will remain out of the centuries of effort mankind has devoted to this world - and that is the CHURCH.

Everything else will rust, decay, be destroyed or burned up. But through His Church, Jesus will rule and reign and to His Church He will express His love throughout the ages of eternity.

Now that you know what the Church really is ... it should:

- Change your life
- Order your priorities
- Give you purpose for which to live each and every day!

V. CHRIST'S BRIDE

Old Testament — God took Israel as His Bride.
Isaiah 62:5 Jeremiah 3:8; 5:7, etc.

New Testament — Jesus is seen as the Bridegroom
John 3:39 Matthew 9:15

Jesus' intentions toward us are explicitly stated in Ephesians 5:25-27

Jesus is preparing a bride, making her bright and beautiful and holy. He is taking all the wrinkles out and all the blemishes off. Then, He will take her for Himself!

And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the church when He died for her, to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's Word. —Ephesians 5:25-26

HOW FOOLISH CAN WE BE! — to call the church unimportant, to give it a measly little place in our time, strength and attention. Kingdoms and empires will fall, the earth will crumble, all human records and institutions will pass away, but the church will remain!

St. Peter says, "...the earth and everything on it will be burned up...everything around is going to melt away." (II Peter 3:10-14) Jesus Christ said, "I will build My church and not even death itself will ever be able to overcome it."
(Matthew 16:18)

EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE “ADDED” TO THE CHURCH

About 3,000 were added to their number that day. —Acts 2:41

Each day God added to them all who were being saved. —Acts 2:47

*More and more people believed on the Lord and were added to their number.
—Acts 5:14*

I. WHAT STEPS DO I TAKE TO BE “ADDED” TO THIS CHURCH?

1. Enthroned Christ as your Lord and Savior.
2. Follow the Lord in New Testament Baptism
3. Experience “Full Life In Christ”
4. Meet with the Elders
5. Receive the “Right Hand of Fellowship.”

III. WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO THE CHURCH WHERE I AM “ADDED”?

I. A desire to participate in regular **opportunities** for growth and maturity.

- Faithful attendance at the various services.
- Regular study of God’s Word.
- Join a “koinonia” group.

2. At least a Tithe of my income.

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3. Commit to function in some **Ministry** within the body.

— According to your gifts

God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can — as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God. If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are strong and helpful. If God has given you money, be generous in helping others with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer. —Romans 12:6-8

— with zeal and enthusiasm

*Never be lazy in your work but serve the Lord enthusiastically.
— Romans 12:11*

4. A commitment to “Care for” and “watch over” one another in the church family.

Don't just pretend that you love others, really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of good. Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honouring each other. — Romans 12:9-10.

FOR YOUR MEDITATION

FIRST, True Christians throughout the world make up the “family of God”. One of the first expressions of your love for God must take the very practical form of love for His family. and, if you are to love His family, you must begin to associate with the part of it that exists in your community — your local church. He asks you to publicly state that you belong to His family. Then, He wants you to work for the welfare of His family. You are required to take care of the other members of His family, both physically and spiritually. You are asked to pray for them, encourage them, cry with them, and rejoice with them!

SECOND, You become part of Christ’s Body on this earth today when you commit your life to Him as Savior and Lord. You are to take your place and accept your ministry within that Body. You are to be “Christ” to the world today. He has no hands but your hands; no mouth, or heart, but yours.

If every member of the body were like you:

How would the world view Christ?

How effectively would Christ minister to a world in need?

How compelling, how healing, how loving would the fellowship within the body be?

How attractive would it be to hungry, searching people outside the “Fellowship” of Christ?

FOR YOUR RESPONSE

What are some of the areas in which you might be willing to function as a part of the local Body of Christ?

FULL LIFE IN CHRIST, Group Facilitator Suggestions
EMPOWER: Adopting the Lifestyle, Session 6

FIRST

- Quickly go over the responses to Questions 1, 2 and 3 from last week's Questions Sheet. You might want to take a little more time allowing people to share their responses to questions 4 and 5.
- Collect the remaining "Letters of Testimony." After you have scanned them, please give them to your Full Life in Christ Leader.

NOW

Ask each member of the group to share:

"Who in your acquaintance best illustrates what you feel a true member of Christ's body should be like? Describe them for us."

THEN

1. Give each person opportunity to write some notes in response to the following question. Then let the group share:

"In practical terms what do you think Jesus should have a right to expect of you as a functioning member of His body, the Church?"

Make a list on paper or on a blackboard from the contributions of the group and, of course, from your own input as well.

2. What does Ephesians 5:25-27 teach us about how Christ Views The Church? What implications does it have about our attitude toward the Church?
3. Let various ones share where they could see themselves placed for ministry within their local body of believers.

FOR NEXT WEEK

Complete the study questions for Session 6