

Being the Body of Christ

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People who are outside the family of God - outside the body of Christ

- are lost and missing fellowship with Christ
- are searching for a place to belong
- need a body that is healthy and working together in unity
- want to find a place to serve God with purpose and meaning

Our guide for living is the Bible... here is what Paul wrote about the Body of Christ to the Christians in Ephesus while he himself was in prison in Rome.

Just a reminder of the society and people Paul was writing to

- Ephesus was a Greek City famous for The Temple of Artemis (Diana) – one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World,
- one of the 7 Churches spoken about in Revelation
- Today Ephesus is an international tourist attraction in Turkey.

Ephesians 4:1 -5:2 (Today's New International Version)

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

As a prisoner for the Lord I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

(How do we live this life?)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us **(not just some)** grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **(Not given by man AND not chosen by ourselves)**

... Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

(Why?) to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

(Purpose for being equipped) So that we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ.

From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(When we become a Mature Body of Christ - we are different than others)

Paul says, I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking.

The unbelievers are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, Unbelievers have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. **(Sounds like our society)**

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. **(What does it mean to be equipped - to be a mature follower of Christ)** You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

(This – new you – requires change)

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body.

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

and do not give the devil a foothold.

Those who have been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands,

(The Purpose of work) so that we may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, **(Why)** that it may benefit those who listen. **(Our Christian witness)**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

(What Grieves the Holy Spirit?) Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

(Final Command) Follow God's example as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God

CLOSING REMARKS:

As we join around our table to discuss these descriptions of the Body of Christ. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to search our actions and transform our understanding SO THAT we may “follow God’s example and walk in the way of love...as kind compassionate forgiving children of God.

TABLE TALK CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. A whole and healthy body requires that every part is functioning and working together under one brain and nervous system. When this does not happen we cannot function properly. The same is true in the church - we must each do what God has appointed / called us to and work together under His constant direction in order for the Body of Christ to fulfill its purpose. “It is my responsibility to protect the unity of my church.” Rick Warren. When persons from outside the Family of Your Congregation comes into your church worship service or program what do they find? – A healthy, functioning body?
2. The purpose of our work is to have something to share with those in need. The purpose of our gifting and equipping is to prepare God’s people for works of service so that we can build one another up in knowledge and faith and so that we are all strong in times of temptation and trials. What specific action can your local Ministry Through Women group take to become more intentional in these areas? Sharing with those in need? Serving according to our gift and calling? Equipping ourselves in faith and knowledge of God?
3. In our accountability relationships how seriously do we evaluate our understanding and application of what we are taught? (4:22- 5:2) put on the new self, speak truthfully to our neighbour, do not sin, do not give the devil a foothold, speak only what is helpful in building others up, Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive each other as Christ forgives us, follow God’s example and walk in the way of love.

