

## **THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL** **IF WE ARE THE BODY**

How important is your church family to you? Is church simply a building that you enter on Sunday and Wednesday or is it a group of people with whom you associate yourself? Church is a place where people are to be an example of oneness: to love one another, encourage one another, and help one another. A church is not a building; it's the people inside the building. So many people wander aimlessly in their Christian walk because they do not have the support or accountability of a Christian church. The church is supposed to be the "Hospital for Sinners." It's a place for those who are hurting, needy, or dead in their sins. We are to be there for one another.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes how the body of believers is similar to the physical body. Every person within the body of Christ is important and has their particular role just as every part of the physical body has its role and importance. For instance, if the body parts had a choice, which do you think would actually choose to be the liver or the big toe? Man, those things are ugly! But, if we do not have those items, our body will not function properly. Did you know that your big toe controls the balance of your entire body? If you did not have a big toe then you would not be able to walk without tipping one way or the other. And the liver - gosh, it's ugly in those science books at school! No one would want to be a liver, but when the liver shuts down, usually the body follows. Everyone wants to be an eye, nose, mouth, or ear, but without the other parts, the body would not survive.

The body of Christ is the same. We each have our own role to play and our own gifts to use. God designed the body of believers to be able to use their abilities, gifts, and talents to support the other members of the body. No one is more important, but all must work together for the common good. If one person does not play their role or use their gifts, then the entire body suffers. Never feel as though you aren't important in the body of Christ, for we all have our own parts to play. Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior you should immediately get involved in a Bible-preaching church. Do not just go to church, but be a functioning member of the body of Christ. Until we all accept our roles and support one another as the different members of our physical bodies do, we will never rise to our full potential as the body of Christ and never reach others for Him.

### **WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING?**

The church that was built after the Holy Spirit came upon the believers on the Day of Pentecost can be used as a model church for us today. After the Holy Spirit came upon them and Peter spoke to those around, many were pierced to the heart and became believers that day. (Acts 2:37, 41) Our scripture for this week speaks of the events that took place after the Day of Pentecost. The things

that the apostles and new believers deemed as important were what are sometimes referred to as the four pillars of worship: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

### ***TEACHING***

The first thing that the believers devoted themselves to was teaching. This was when the apostles began giving instruction to the new believers. These men would dedicate themselves to the teaching of the apostles. The believers needed instruction and learning about the foundational truths of their faith. As believers, we need to be under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Yes, individual study is important to the growth of our faith, but corporate study is also vital. We should be in regular attendance of church services where we can listen and learn the Word. Not only should we be faithful to church, but we also need to find ourselves committed to a Sunday School class. Sunday School is the time when individuals can get deeper into the Word and develop accountability with other believers. We, as the first believers, should be hearing, studying, and learning the Word.

### ***FELLOWSHIP***

Not only should we meet together to learn, but also to gain fellowship with other believers. It has been said that fellowship is simply “two fellows in the same ship.” It’s people who share similar interests and ideals and in return develop a deep friendship. The Greek word for this is “koinonia,” which is a close relationship with each other and not just meeting together with each other. This means that we need to share each other’s burdens. We need to find a church and grow and develop with the believers in that church. Corporate worship helps us to grow in the Spirit and in unity with one another. Many of our closest friends and confidants should be a member of our local church. Just as mentioned earlier, the body of Christ must grow together and love another to develop this Christian friendship and bond needed to be influential in our Christian walk. As John Wesley said, “There is nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian.”

### ***BREAKING OF BREAD***

As we fellowship often, we should also take part in special occasions with one another. The breaking of bread refers to the Lord’s Supper. We should never miss, if at all possible, an opportunity to share in the Lord’s Supper. These occasions draw us closer as a body and allow us to grow in oneness and love.

### ***PRAYERS***

As a fellowship of believers, we need to constantly pray for one another. We need to remember each other in our prayers and bind together in trials and temptations. Prayer is the line of communication between ourselves and God. God wants us to keep that line of communication active and meaningful. There are so many needs that are around us, many that we could never imagine. One way of helping individuals that we cannot physically or materially help is to remember them in our prayers. Prayer is one of the greatest strengths that we

possess as Christians. We should never take lightly that we have the honor of praying to God about our burdens and others' burdens.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE DO?

People today wonder why the local church is not having the impact it should on its surrounding community. Why do people not come to church? Many people do not come because they have already been to church. They don't enjoy an old dead church without oneness and without enthusiasm. A lot of people don't want to come to church because most of the people that do come, don't want to be there. Churches around us are shriveling up and dying. This first church in Acts shows the great results that will occur if we truly devote ourselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers.

#### EVERYTHING IN COMMON

When people get serious about God, a love develops between the believers where one person's need is another person's need. Everyone truly cares about the others and their lives. If we as a church family would be truly devoted to these foundational needs, we would care about one another with "agape" love. We should hurt when others hurt, rejoice when others rejoice, and cry when others cry. During the days of Acts people would give up all they had in order to meet the needs of the other believers. Today, we sometimes complain and get put out when someone needs assistance or help. We get too caught up in ourselves and our lives that we overlook all the hurting people around us.

#### PRAISING GOD AND HAVING FAVOR WITH ALL

When we truly get serious about God as an individual and as a church family, we will begin praising God as we should and will develop a oneness among the people. God desires and deserves all our praise and devotion, yet many times we do not give Him the time or love He deserves. We need to get serious and dedicate ourselves to Jesus Christ. When we truly get real about Jesus, our praise for Him will show, as will our attitudes toward other believers.

#### THE LORD ADDED DAILY

We wonder sometimes why more people are not accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. Unfortunately, a lot of it has to do with our devotion to Jesus and how much we are working for Him. When we decide to get serious about Christ and our teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and praying, then the Lord will add to the believers. Growth in the church has a lot to do with the love shown by the church. Until we grow more in love with Christ and are determined to live for Him, we will never experience the blessings the first believers did.

As members of the body of Christ, we each must determine within ourselves to dedicate our lives to Him and thus help the body prosper. Until we fully commit to Christ, we will never fully experience the blessings of Christ.

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