

A Firm Grip on the Christian Life ■ The Body of Christ

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the body of Christ and functioning as a unified entity. It highlights the need to move beyond individualistic Christian living and embrace the unity and diversity within the body, allowing each member to fulfill their unique function. The speaker urges for a deep repentance for any actions that have grieved God's heart and calls for a solid grip on the Christian life through active participation in the body of Christ.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 4:16, John 17:21, Romans 12:4, Colossians 3:14, 1 Peter 2:17, Acts 2:17, Leviticus 19:32, Matthew 20:1, 1 Corinthians 12:4

Topics: "Unity in the Body of Christ", "Active Participation in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

On a firm grip in the Christian life. So if you remember, we started with understanding what the blood of Christ could do for us, and then the importance of the Word of God, and thirdly the power of the Holy Spirit, and fourth, walking the way of the cross. Now, logically, there's only one more step.

To get a firm grip on the Christian life. We can hold something with two fingers, or three or four, but the grip is firm when we have all five. Now, if you thought about these four things I've already mentioned, you would have noticed that you can have all four, and still live a very individualistic Christian life.

That's the way most Christians live. The blood of Christ has cleansed me. I'm free from accusation.

The devil can't harass me about the past. I know that my sins are blotted out. I read the Word of God.

I listen to God speaking to me, and He blesses my heart. He leads me by His Word. He's renewing my mind and making me more like Christ.

I thank God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit that's changed my life. He's given me power to serve Him, power to overcome sin, and I praise the Lord for being able to follow Jesus in His footsteps. Now, the test of all this is when I can live with other people.

So, what I want to speak fifth is the body of Jesus Christ. Most Christians who pursue after holiness have never understood the truth of the body. And there you see that we can be deceived about holiness.

Holiness without fellowship is a deception. True holiness will lead us to be able to fellowship with others, because true holiness is to be delivered from a self-centered life to a life centered in God, and one where we love God with all our heart, and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is what it means to be saved from sin.

When it says Jesus came to save us from sin, the root of all sin is to be centered in ourselves, and to always think of what we can get. This is how the entire race of Adam lives. Unconverted people, people of all religions, atheists, their life centers around I, me, mine.

How will this decision help my family? How will it help me? And it centers around that, and everybody in the world, and when they accept Christ, it's as if that also has become, now how can God help me? And this is the whole foundation of the prosperity, health, wealth gospel. God also becomes a means towards blessing me. For many years, for thousands of years, man believed that the earth was the center of the universe, right up until about 500 years ago.

For thousands of years. Because when you look up at the sky, it looks as if the earth is the center, and the sun is going around the earth, and the stars are going around the earth, the planets are going around the earth, everything is going around the earth, the earth is the center. Until somebody discovered that it was all a deception, it was all appearing to be like that, and they discovered the earth was just one little speck of dust.

In the solar system itself, it was not the center. The sun was the center around which the solar system, around which the earth was rotating. And it's when man discovered this true center of the solar system, that they got, that many things fell into place.

They understood why so many of their calculations were wrong, because they hadn't found the true center. As long as they thought the earth was the center, many things didn't fall into place. And it's something like that.

We, as children of Adam from the time of Adam's sin, self became the center. And everything revolves around how will it bless me. People also, I begin to choose those who will help me and bless me, and everything is, I mean, does that fellow fit in with me, then I accept him.

Otherwise, I ignore him. And the sad thing is, that a lot of people who are like that think they're converted. Converted from what? From self-centeredness? No.

And then God, okay, now how can God bless me? God can forgive my sin, God can heal my sickness, God can do so many things, He can take me to heaven. So I'm the center all the time. People have to revolve around me, and if they say something to hurt me, that disturbs me, because I'm the center.

Nobody's supposed to offend me, nobody's supposed to hurt me. People are supposed to care for me. When I'm sick they must come and visit me, because I'm the center.

And I'm hurt when somebody doesn't phone up to find out how I am when I'm sick. How is it they didn't hear I was sick? How is it they didn't pray for me? And if I go to a church, everybody must love me in that church. I've had, haven't you heard people come in, oh I go to that church and nobody loves me.

I say which verse in the Bible says that you should go to a church and find people to love you? The Bible says you must love others. No verse in the Bible which says get people to love you. That's, and we don't even realize the self-centeredness in all this.

When you get offended, it's a proof you're self-centered. When you're expecting people to love you and sympathize with you, it proves you're self-centered. When you're expecting God to come and do everything for you, answer all your prayers, do everything according to your needs, you're self-centered.

And that's the root cause of all our problems. And self-centered people, they'll never commit themselves to any church. Church is a place where I go, if I can get a blessing, I go.

I'm the center. I must get a blessing. And I go here to get a blessing and if that creature can bless me, I'll go and listen to him.

And I choose for myself and of course I don't want to get too close to people because if I get too close to people, they'll hurt me. And self will be very disturbed if somebody hurts me. And the amazing thing is people can live all their Christian life like this and think they are converted and born again.

I say converted to what? What type of new birth is this? Jesus came to deliver us from this self-centered life. And one of the clearest examples of that is when he taught his disciples how to pray. There's a prayer which all of us have learned.

I remember I learned it from childhood. Our Father who art in heaven, we sang it this evening. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name and so on.

Have you noticed that in the entire prayer, the word I, me and mine never come. Jesus said whenever you pray, pray like this. I, me and mine don't even occur in that prayer.

Isn't that amazing? Now compare that with the way we normally pray. And you see how much of our prayers is I, me, mine. And that's exactly what Jesus said.

We're not to pray like that. We got to pray like this, he said. In that whole prayer, you never find those words even once.

It's thy name be hallowed, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Centered in God. And then when it comes down to our needs, God's interested in our needs.

It's not give me this day my daily bread, but give us. Lord, I'm not just thinking of my daily bread. I'm thinking of my fellow believers too.

I want them to have that daily bread too. And if I've got a little extra, I'd like to share it with them. Forgive us our sins.

I don't want just to be forgiven. I want my brother to be forgiven too. And if he's hurt me, I want to forgive him.

Forgive us as we forgive others. And deliver us from evil. Lead us not into temptation.

Don't let me get into temptation too strong for me. And don't let my brother get into temptation too strong for him. But deliver me and deliver us from evil.

You know, I never understood that prayer for so many years after I was born again. I repeated it like a parrot until I saw that it's a very difficult prayer to pray sincerely. I mean, you can repeat it like a parrot or like playing a tape, but to really mean it, I would encourage you.

I was in a conference in India last week and I said to them, I said, I'd like to give you a little homework. I said, spend the next eight days praying like this. The first day, just think of our Father who art in heaven.

That's all. Don't go beyond that. And think of God as your Father.

Meditate on it the whole day. Think of how much God loves you more than any earthly father. And there's no earthly father, Jesus said, that is as kind, compassionate, and loving, and caring as our Heavenly Father.

We need to be saturated with that. We need to be secure in the fact that we have a Father who cares for the birds of the air, and clothes the flowers in the field, and will definitely care for us. If you are secure in that, we'll be free from anxiety concerning the future.

So many young people are anxious concerning their future. People are afraid of many things concerning the future. How is it going to turn out for me? Will I be able to find a job? Will I be able to find a marriage partner when the time comes? Will I get the right person? So many anxieties.

All of that we can be free from when we believe in God as our Heavenly Father. We don't have to fear sickness. We don't have to fear accidents.

We don't have to fear anything. If you're secure in God as our loving Heavenly Father. Think about that.

That He loves us as He loved Jesus. And then, it also says there, He's our Father who's in Heaven. Think of this Father.

He not only loves us so much, He's Almighty. He runs this universe. There's no problem too big for Him.

The problems which we think are so big and heavy are nothing for Him. So we meditate on that. And I say the next day, meditate on what does it mean to pray, first of all, Hallowed be Thy Name.

How much we are concerned about our name. What do people think about me? What are they saying about me? What are they saying about my family? What are they saying about my children? Forget it. It's not important.

Be converted. Be born again. Be delivered from this self-centered life where we're thinking of my name.

It's not important. Hallowed be Thy Name. Lord, it doesn't matter what people are saying about me.

Your name is so dishonored in this country. I want Your name to be hallowed and glorified. You know how concerned we are when some little scandal, some false story somebody spreads about you or your family.

And the name of Jesus is dishonored throughout the land. And it doesn't bother us. And Jesus said, learn to pray, Hallowed be Thy Name.

It's one of the most frequent prayers I pray for the land of India. I say, Lord, Your name is so dishonored in this land. I want Your name to be glorified.

You know, if you keep praying that prayer, God will use you to build His body. It's because our life is so centered in ourselves that so little is accomplished with such Christians. They drift through life just saying, I'm living a holy life.

I brought up my family well. They're all modestly dressed and well-behaved. Is that all there is to the Christian life? No.

You may stand before the Lord one day and discover, the Lord tell you, I wanted to do a thousand things more through you, but you were so self-centered. You were only interested in yourself and your family. I couldn't do anything through you because you didn't even bother about seeking my glory and my name.

Think how I'll feel if I stand before the Lord and He tells me that. Dear brothers and sisters, we have only one life to live. Make use of the rest of your life before Christ comes.

Lord, I want my life. I want to really be converted. To be converted means to be delivered from being centered in myself, to be centered in God.

Hallowed be Thy name. Lord, my name is not important. I should spend the next day, the third day, on thinking of Thy kingdom come.

My kingdom, my family is unimportant. My business enterprise, whether it's doing well or not, unimportant. Thy kingdom come, Lord.

Let your kingdom come on this earth. The church is supposed to be a miniature representation of the kingdom of God. What a thorough failure the church has been to represent the kingdom of God on earth.

Look at the number of preachers who are interested in money. Is that a representation of heaven? No. Are we concerned about that? Look at the number of Christian preachers who fall into adultery, the immorality there is in the church.

All people know is Jesus forgives our sin. His blood cleanses us. The kingdom of God must come on earth.

And then the next day I said, just meditate on Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. First of all, in my life. Meditate on that.

How do they do God's will in heaven? They don't do it reluctantly or with a long face or, oh Lord, you really want me to do that? There's no such thing. The angels are delighted to do God's will. They say, Lord, I want your will to be done in my life exactly like that.

The angels wait on God to know, Father, what is your will? And we are to wait like that upon God. Say, God, what is your will for my life, Father? That will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Like that each day.

Spend a whole day on just meditating on one aspect of that prayer. And how when it comes to your daily bread, you don't just think of your own needs, earthly needs, but the needs of your fellow believers. Give us this day our daily bread.

Lord, I want to think of my fellow believers, maybe in other parts of the world. Not just me. Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive other people. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil.

In the final day, the last day, say, Lord, when you've done it all, thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. It's when people are gripped by this in their personal life, they'll discover there's no such thing as an individualistic Christianity. Individualistic Christianity is a contradiction in itself.

It was okay in the Old Testament. And people like Elijah, he had fellowship with nobody. Most of the Old Testament prophets were lonely people.

They were rugged men who just lived alone with God. When in Jeremiah's time, for example, there were a number of prophets, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, all the other prophets, Jeremiah, they all prophesied around the same time. How is it they never worked together? They couldn't.

God kept them in different places. He knew they could not work together. They would fight with each other if they worked together.

They would compete for leadership. Even Jesus, after working with his disciples for three and a half years, they were still competing for leadership. At the end of those three and a half years, it was impossible under the Old Covenant for two people to become one.

When Jesus said, after I go, you will do greater things than I have done. There's only one possible explanation for that verse. And most Christians don't have a clue of what it means.

What does it mean? Does it mean that Jesus raised a man who was dead and buried for three days and every believer is going to go and raise people who are dead for four days? Where have you heard of a man who has raised somebody who was dead for four days? Even the apostles didn't do it. And he says, everyone who believes in me will do greater things than I have done. When you read a verse like that, my brother, sister, you've got to stop and say, what does it mean? I took many years before I understood what it meant.

I said, Lord, I don't see believers raising people from the dead who are dead for four days. I don't see people feeding 10,000 people with five loaves of bread. No, I don't see it.

What does this mean by greater things than you have done, I'll do? He's obviously not talking about quantity. He's not talking about the physical. For Jesus, the words he spoke was spirit and life.

There's only one thing that I can do, which even Jesus could not do on this earth. Only one thing. I can't live a holier life than he lived.

I can't do greater miracles than he did. I can't love people better than he loved. But there's one thing I can do, which even Jesus could not do.

According to John 14, 12, he said, I could not do it. And that is make two people one. Jesus could not do it with 11.

And the reason was no fault in Jesus. It's because those 11 didn't have the Holy Spirit in them. It's because we have greater access to resources that in Jesus' time, those disciples didn't have.

So in other words, one of the main things, I think there were people who lived very holy lives in the Old Testament. How many of us would dare to say that our lives are holier than John the Baptist's? Would you say that most Christians you've met, their lives are better than John the Baptist's? How many preachers have you heard who are more fiery than John the Baptist? Most Christian preachers are thoroughly boring. I'd rather listen to John the Baptist, that Old Testament preacher, any day than most Christian preachers I've heard in my life.

But what was it that these Old Testament people just couldn't do or have? They couldn't make two people one. This is distinctive in the New Covenant. And if our Christianity still makes us live an individualistic type of life, where I don't want to get too close to people because I might get hurt.

You know the number of Christians who say that? I don't want to get too close to people, I might get hurt. Well, you're living in the Old Covenant. Love is willing to take a risk.

Imagine if Jesus said in heaven, I don't want to go to earth and love people, I might get hurt. Well, he really did get hurt when he came to this earth. He took that risk for our sake.

And if I say I want to follow Jesus and I say I don't want to love people too much because I might get hurt, I'm not really following him at all. You know, the whole attitude of when we think of following Jesus, what does it actually mean? When he was in heaven, think of Jesus in heaven, enjoying all that there was in heaven. The angels and the atmosphere and they're so wonderful.

And when he looked down on this earth, he saw all the misery of people and he thought to himself, I can't enjoy all this by myself. I've got to get those people to enjoy this too. And so, if I have to pay a price to get them to enjoy it, I'm willing to do it.

That's the spirit that brought Jesus to this earth. It involves sacrifice, self-denial and everything only because he wanted other people to have what he had. He didn't want to enjoy heaven all by himself.

He wanted others to enjoy heaven. And when we say that we want to follow Jesus or we have the spirit of Christ, is that what we mean? Is this spirit of Christ coming to our life? Is this what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Is it the spirit of Christ? It says, I want other people to enjoy this wonderful life of victory that God's brought me into. I don't want to just talk about it.

I don't want to preach about it. I want to bring other people into this life. Jesus didn't come here and just preach sermons.

He brought people into that life. And that's our calling. Lord, I want to bring people into this wonderful life.

That's what the spirit of God does. And then we find that we can't live this individualistic type of life. We have to be built together in a body with others.

We must remember this, that the New Testament does not teach that God's going to bring a whole multitude of people to heaven, but a body. Jesus Christ is not going to come for a lot of saved souls. This

expression that's very common in evangelistic, evangelical Christianity, we've got to save souls.

Try and find it in the New Testament. Take a concordance and find if there's one single place in the entire New Testament where Jesus or the Apostle said we've got to save souls. It's one of those evangelical Christian phrases which have become popular, which have got no biblical foundation.

But it's amazing how many people use expressions which are never found in the Bible, and yet they'll say, we believe in the Bible. I'll tell you, it's not even in the King James Version. Save souls.

Do you know what Jesus came to earth for? To build his body, not to save souls. To bring people to salvation and to build the body, whereas that's been converted so much into an individualistic type of, I've got to save this soul, and I've got to save this soul. That's not it.

The Apostles never did that. When they brought people to Christ in the Acts of the Apostles, they brought them together. And when Paul writes to the Ephesians, he says, this is a mystery.

Ephesians in Chapter 3, he says, I want to share with you this mystery that's been hidden for generations. Ephesians in Chapter 3 and verse 3, by a revelation that was made known to me, this mystery. And then you can understand my insight, Ephesians 3, 5. This mystery was not made known to human beings in other generations, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Holy Spirit.

Mystery, something which cannot be understood except by divine revelation. It's not by cleverness. I mean, if you want to understand mathematics, or physics, or science, all you need is a clever brain.

But if you want to understand God's mysteries, a clever brain doesn't help. It's humility. It's a desperate sense of need.

It's a crying out to God. This mystery was not revealed. And then you say, what is this mystery? And he says, the mystery is, verse 6, to be specific, the mystery is that the Gentiles will become fellow heirs, and fellow members, and fellow partakers in the same body with the Jews.

You say, hey, that's not such a great mystery. Isn't it? The Gentiles and the Jews have been the two greatest opposites in the history of man. We have the caste system in Hinduism in India, and it's pretty strong, where the upper caste will have nothing to do with the lower caste.

They won't even drink from the same cup. It was something like you had the black and the whites in the southern United States, even a hundred years, two hundred years ago. They're the greatest opposites, much greater opposites than the blacks and the whites two hundred years ago in the U.S. or the caste system in India, where Jews and Gentiles.

The greatest opposites in the history of humanity have been the Jews and the non-Jews. And the great mystery is that through the death on the cross and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus could make them one, one body. And if you want to know how difficult it is, you see how people who are of the same race and the same community and the same doctrinal beliefs see how difficult it is for them to become one.

Go and ask any husband and wife who have the same doctrinal beliefs, who have the same community, same language, same race, and see how difficult it has been for them to become one, even after being married for so many years. It's really a mystery, I'll tell you that, for two people to become one. And then

imagine a church becoming one body.

Boy, that's a mystery. And yet this is God's ultimate goal. When we speak about the church as the body of Christ, it's emphasized so much in the New Testament, in Corinthians, in Ephesians.

And yet it's been so little thought of. When I see Christians who are never committed to a local church, you can see that they've never understood anything about the body of Christ. They're interested in the message of holiness.

The blood of Christ? Yeah, we want that. The Word of God? Yes, we want that. We want to baptize in the Holy Spirit, and we want to walk the way of the cross, but we stop short of coming together with others who have the same faith and to be built together as a body, because that's inconvenient.

I'd rather live this lonely, individualistic Christianity where I come and say, hello, praise the Lord on Sundays, but I don't get too close to anybody. Brother, I want to tell you, sister, your holiness is a deception. It's not the holiness of the New Testament.

It's not even the holiness of the Old Testament. It's just your own self-improvement program, which you've got worked on, and you've become a little better than other human beings, but still the same wretched, self-centered life of Adam inside with a little religious coating on the outside that makes you look a little better than others. It's a deception, because the root has never been touched.

The root is a self-centered life. John the Baptist came and said, Jesus has come with an axe to the root, and we don't let Jesus put his axe to the root of this self-centered life, where I'm not thinking of what I'm going to get. Like I said earlier, when we come to God and think of what I'm going to get from him, that's a self-centered life.

I must come to God and think of what God's going to get out of me. That's a life centered in God, and that's what Jesus wants to bring us to. You know where, like man discovered that the sun is the center of the solar system.

The earth revolves around the sun, and I discovered that Jesus has come to bring God back into the center of my life, where God doesn't revolve around me. No, he's not my servant, but I revolve around God. Even prayer to many Christians, is God revolving around me like that story of Aladdin's lamp, where he rubs it and a genie comes up and says, what do you want? To many people, prayer is exactly like that.

That you rub the lamp and say, God is there to say, what do you want? And I say, I want this, and I want this, and I want the other thing, and it's a big shopping list we give to God. That's what many people call prayer. It's not that way.

That's not true Christianity. Lord, what can you get out of my life? Why have you got me married and a family, so that God can get something out of me? So that God can demonstrate to the angels how this husband and wife have become one. They're so different from each other, but they become one.

And their oneness is increasing, and increasing, and increasing, and increasing. They don't fight with each other. They don't have suspicious thoughts about each other.

They love one another. They deny themselves for one another. And together, they are seeking to glorify me.

How many Christian homes do you find like that? They're raising their children, not for something for themselves, but something for God. And then you go to the next bigger circle. There's a church.

And here's a church where, when it comes to the family, we can say, okay, even in the world, there are families that care a lot for one another. There are husbands and wives out in the world who are not even converted, who love one another a lot. And many parents in the world who bring up their children in a good way.

But when it comes to the church, and here I'm dealing with people who are not part of my family, or probably not even part of my race, who think differently, who are different. And when God makes me one with them, and I begin to function together with them, and I'm not jealous, and I'm not in competition, that's an amazing thing that God can show to the angels in heaven. We don't realize how much God wants to demonstrate that.

It says right here in Ephesians chapter 3, further down, when he speaks about this mystery, he says, the purpose of all this, he says, the administration of this mystery, verse 9, which has been hidden in God who created all things, in order that, listen to verse 10, that through the church, verse 10, this amazing wisdom of God can be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. That means God's trying to teach the angel something, and the demon something, through the church. Have you ever thought about that verse? And we thought the church is only here to witness to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the outermost parts of the earth, to give the gospel to everybody, that Christ died for your sins.

What about this verse, which is that through the church, through this mystery where the church has become one, God's going to demonstrate something to those in the heavenly places. These angelic beings are going to learn something through the church becoming one. What is God trying to show them? The first book of the Bible that was ever written, I believe, was the book of Job.

It was written long before Genesis. Genesis was written by Moses just 1,500 years before Christ. Whereas the book of Job was written, Job lived long way before Moses, and that is the first book of the Bible.

And it's very interesting that when God decided to write a book for man, the Bible, the very first of his 66 books, and the very first chapter of the first book was where God says, I wanted a man about whom I could boast to the devil. Isn't that interesting? That that's the very first thing that God wrote in his book for man, about a man on earth that he looked for, about whom he could boast to Satan, in the midst of all the hypocritical preachers. And there were a lot of hypocritical preachers in Job's time, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Satan could have talked about them.

God, you look at those fellows, they talk about you, and look at the hypocritical way they live. And Satan said, I've been all around the earth, he told God. And God said, okay, you've been all around the earth.

Have you seen Job? He's not like the others. He's different. I know a lot of them are hypocrites, but you haven't seen this fellow.

Have you seen Job? And I believe it's the same today. The devil says, God, look at this fellow who preaches. He's been a pastor so long, and he's discovered to be a homosexual or adulterer.

And look at these other guys that are always running after money. And look at this other church, they're all selfish, self-centered people. But God says, but have you seen this church? Do you see that? Do you see God's desire? In the midst of all the pathetic testimony of Christians in every country in the world, if God

can find one.

He didn't find many in Job's time. He didn't say, Satan, have you considered this person, this person, this person, this person? He said, have you considered this one man? That one man was enough. One testimony on earth.

And I believe that God's looking for today, not one man, but expressions of his body. In the Old Testament, it was one man. But now, God's looking for expressions of his body.

Not just one mighty creature, or one mighty man of God, or one holy man over there, or one person who brings up his family well. But for expressions of his body. Here, in that country, in this state, in this place, that God can point to the devil and say, okay, I know there are so many big mega churches which are just like cinema theaters.

People go for entertainment and listen to sermons. But see this one. See how these people are so dissimilar from each other? See how they belong to different cultures, but they become one? That's a mystery.

There, it says in verse 10, he's going to demonstrate this manifold wisdom to the authorities in the heavenly places. Many of us haven't taken that word seriously. God's desire.

If you could look into God's heart. I believe one of the purposes of scripture is to be able to look into the heart of God. So many people study this book like they study a chemistry book to understand it and explain it.

But you don't study a chemistry book. You can't study a chemistry book and look into the heart of God. But when you read the Bible, if you would not study it in order to preach it, but say, Lord, I want to study this book, not to get a sermon out of it, but to look into your heart and see what you're thinking.

I want to understand your way of thinking. I want my mind to think like you think. That's the whole purpose with which I want to study the word.

I want to look into your heart and see what your heart is after. And I see that in Job's time, God's heart was after finding one man who would whom he could show to Satan as an upright man, not a perfect in the sense he had no faults, but according to the light he had, he was a perfect and upright man. And today God's looking for little expressions of his body of people who are so dissimilar from each other, but will become one.

Husbands and wives will become one who know how to deny themselves. The only place you can become one is on the cross of Jesus Christ. If you are crucified with him, you'll become one.

If a husband and wife are both willing to be crucified with Christ, they will become one because then each will be able to say, it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me. I've given up my preferences. I've given up my choices.

I don't want to speak what I want to speak. I don't want to think the way I used to think. I've died.

It is impossible for two people to become one unless both are crucified with Christ, unless they are gripped by the message of the cross. Impossible. You can try every other method, all marriage counseling and all of that.

It does not make two people one. They superficially sort of bear with each other and they call that unity. Bearing with another person.

Okay, I'm willing to bear with you, my wife. I won't fight with you. That's not unity.

What did Jesus say in John 17? Father, I pray that they will be one like you and I are one. When's that going to happen? In heaven? Is it automatic? If it is automatic, there's no need for Jesus to pray. You see the burden of Jesus' heart in John 17 that there may be one.

He didn't say that there may be large number. It's not going to be large in number. Jesus said very few find the way to life.

One of the most important verses you need to learn in the Sermon on the Mount is what he said towards the end of it. This way is narrow. This gate is narrow.

The way is narrow and very few will find it. A lot of people will want to go to heaven, but very few will find the way described in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Very few. A lot of people will understand it, but very few will find it.

Very few will find that life described in the Sermon on the Mount where they never get angry, number one, where they never lust with their eyes, where the yes is always yes, where they never let their left hand know what their right hand does. How many churches are there which don't take an offering, which never take an offering? Can you find such churches? Aren't they disobeying that command which says when you give, your left hand must not know what your right hand is doing? Here you go around, let everybody see what you're giving. Completely disobeying God's Word.

They haven't found the way to life. Just because everybody else does it, we do it. They haven't taken the Sermon on the Mount seriously.

Be anxious for nothing. Do not be anxious. That's in the Sermon on the Mount.

How many people take it seriously? Very few find the way to life. There are umpteen sermons people preach on New Testament books, but where have they found the way to life? God's heart. If we could see God's heart, how He's disappointed.

This verse, you know, has spoken to me very much in these days. Genesis chapter 6. Genesis chapter 6, this is a little over a thousand years after He made man in the time of Noah. It says here, that Genesis 6, verse 5, the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And look at these amazing words. It's really touched my heart. The Lord was sorry that He made man.

Don't read that quickly, brother, sister. Try and look into the heart of God there. Stop.

The Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth and it grieved His heart. It grieved His heart when He saw the way man was living. And I've thought of that in relation to the church.

Those of you who are married, does it grieve God's heart to see the way you live with your wife, the way you talk to your wife, the way you talk to your husband, your children, the way you talk to your parents, or your parents, the way you correct your children? Does it grieve God's heart? Does it grieve God's heart

the way He sees you sit and gossip at home about some other believers who are also God's children, but who don't happen to belong to your particular church because you're holier than them? Do you think it grieves God's heart? It grieved His heart. Many years ago, I read the Living Bible paraphrase of Psalm 139 in the last verse, and it really spoke to my heart. See, here it reads like this, Psalm 139, verse 24.

Oh God, you know, it's that well-known verse before that, search me, oh God, know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts. In verse 24, see if there be any hurtful way in me. That's how the NASB translates it.

See if there's any hurtful way in me. But it doesn't come out what this hurt is. It's not that which is hurting me, it's what's hurting God.

Lord, see if there's anything in me that's hurting you. And the Living Bible says, translation paraphrase was like this, Lord, point out anything in me that's making you sad. And I got that verse printed on a lot of cards and gave it out to everybody in our church.

And I said, keep that in your room, in one room somewhere, and meditate on it. Think about it every day. Lord, Lord, point out anything in me that's making you sad.

Not that's making you angry. I don't think God's angry with his children, but he's pretty sad with a lot of things that his children do. Particularly with their unwillingness to, you know, be built together with one another.

This individualistic type of life where I think of myself alone. It grieves his heart. In the Old Testament, it was not possible because the Holy Spirit was not poured out.

You know what happened actually on the day of Pentecost? When the fire of God fell upon those 120 people. They were like 120 pieces of iron. And those 120 pieces of iron were put into the furnace of the Holy Spirit, and they came out as one piece.

That's what the fire did. It melted all of them into one. And they were a one accord.

That was the greatest miracle that took place in the day of Pentecost. That 120 people became one. And Jesus in three and a half years could not make 11 people into one.

Because they didn't have the Holy Spirit within them. He was with them, but not in them. When the Holy Spirit comes in me and in the other person, he will lead us along the way of the cross, and he will make us one.

Like the Father and Son are one. I said, I don't mean bearing with one another. That's pretty good.

That's a human level of, I mean, what is the unity of the Father and the Son in heaven? Is Jesus sort of bearing with his Father? Okay, I can tolerate you. Is the Father bearing with the Holy Spirit? Okay, I can tolerate you. I won't fight with you.

No, they're totally one. They love and they're one. And Jesus' prayer was that we should be like that.

It is impossible to be like that if I'm not willing to be crucified. If I want to hang on to my way of doing things and I refuse to yield, we'll never know that unity. God's given me the privilege of working with a number of elder brothers in our churches in India, and I've learned something about what it means to work together.

That it is impossible for me to work together with another person if I'm not willing to yield. If I hold on to my position and say, listen, I'm the senior brother around here, I'll never get anywhere. There's no question of senior and junior in the body of Christ.

Which member of your body is senior and junior? This idea, whenever a brother thinks, I'm sort of a senior brother. He's the biggest hindrance to the unity of the body of Christ. You remember the story of the people who came to work at six o'clock in the morning, and who had worked for 12 hours.

And the other guys who came to work at five o'clock in the evening and worked only for one hour. And when they both got the same wages, you remember what the fellow said who came at six in the morning and worked for 12 hours? How, it's in Matthew 20, how can you make them equal to us? Equal to me? I'm the brother who came along 20 years ago to the church. This guy just came yesterday.

How can you make him equal to me? What a lesson to learn. Let me ask you honestly, brothers, sisters. Do you feel a sense of superiority to some other fellow believers? You acknowledge that they are born again, but you're a little superior, right? You're a little senior.

You are a hindrance to the building of the body. I'll tell you that straight. God equalizes us at the cross.

If you haven't been equalized, you haven't come to the cross. One of the pictures the Lord gave me was, we're like many trees in a forest. Some are very tall and some are very short.

But when they're all cut down, they all become equal. That's what God does in us. And then I can, it's very easy for me to obey that command which says, let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus.

Consider the other person as more important than yourself. This is the way the body is built. There is no competition.

There's no jealousy. Do you feel jealous of someone who's better than you? Who's more gifted than you? Who's wealthier than you? Who, the Lord, you feel jealous of someone whom people are more attracted to in your church than you? That shows you haven't seen anything about the body of Christ. I'll tell you this.

This became more real to me when God showed, opened my eyes. It is a mystery. God has to open our eyes to see the body of Christ.

When I saw that I was only a member in Christ's body. There's only one head. And however, whatever function God gave me, the other brother's function was also equally important.

And it is God who put me in a particular place. And if God gave another brother a much superior gift and a much superior ministry, I would rejoice in it. Because he's a member of the same body.

You cannot be jealous when you've seen the body of Christ. I'll tell you honestly, I'm not boasting about it, but I saw that God delivered me from jealousy 100% when I saw the body. When you see it.

Many Christians haven't seen it. All competition disappeared from my life. I was no longer in competition with any other person or any other ministry.

Not here to show that we're doing better or any such thing. They're doing their part and I've got to do mine. There's no jealousy and that liberated me in my ministry.

I was not in competition with anybody anymore. If somebody did, who was half my age, did a job, did the ministry which was 10 times better than mine, say praise the Lord. God's given him a tremendous gift.

Wonderful. There's so much of jealousy and competition in the body of Christ. So much of trying to show that our church is better than somebody else's.

These are all people who have not seen the body at all. People trying to show that I can pray better than somebody, I can preach better than somebody, or testifying to show that I'm doing something more for God or something like that. We need to see the body of Christ.

Otherwise we'll continue to grieve God's heart. It's a mystery. But when you see it, I believe that we shall be able to bring joy to God's heart.

He's looking all over the world for people who are willing to be a part of the body. You remember how Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 of the eye and the ear and the hand, nobody can say I don't need you. And nobody can say I'm all important.

I'm more important than you. You know even if you got that little feeling, I'm a very important member of the body of Christ. People have got to respect me.

It's a lot of rubbish. You got to respect that brother too. I discovered this in the Old Testament.

There was a law which said in Leviticus 19, you prove your fear of me, God says, when you stand up before a gray-haired man. You shall stand up when you see a gray-haired man and respect. Thereby you prove your fear of me.

It's in Leviticus 19. But in the New Testament, I read in 1 Peter 2, that we honor all men and thereby we prove that we fear God. 1 Peter 2 17.

So I saw that in the New Testament, it's not just the older person I honor. It's not just the wife who must honor her husband. The husband is going to honor his wife.

And I have to honor the younger brother. It's not just that the young brother has to speak to me respectfully. I have to speak to him respectfully.

Have you seen that? It liberated me when I saw that I had to speak to every young brother in the body respectfully. Because he was a member of the body of Jesus Christ. He was a younger brother of Jesus Christ.

She was a younger sister of Jesus Christ. Many things change when we see the body. And we long to work together.

And we're happy to do our little part and encourage the other person to do his part. In so many churches, it's just a one-man show. One gifted person doing everything.

It's not a body. That's just a one-man ministry. Most churches are like that.

But the Bible says in the last days God will pour out his spirit upon all flesh and your sons and daughters will prophesy. Is that in your Bible? That in the last days he'll pour out his spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters will prophesy. Think of the number of churches where they just tell the women to keep their

mouth shut.

They can't even testify. Which covenant is this? There's so much we need to see about the body of Christ. And I believe we will discover when we stand before the Lord that many of God's people have stood against God and his word.

They say this is the Bible. This is God's word. They don't seek to fulfill it.

The Holy Spirit has been poured out so that each member in the body has a function. And I must make sure that I do not hinder that person's function by occupying all the space in the body that I don't give freedom to the other person to function. You know a layman's definition of cancer.

It's not a medical definition. But a layman's definition of cancer is one cell in the body that takes the nourishment that's meant for all the other cells all to itself and grows and grows and grows and grows and grows way beyond the size it's meant to be. That's a cancer.

And the only solution for that is to cut it out and get it out of the body. Otherwise it'll kill the whole body. Do you know the number of cancers there are in the body of Christ today? Of people who want to be much bigger than God ever intended them to be.

And who don't give room to other people to develop. Because their ministry. This is what's hindering the development of the body of Christ.

We need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit where the sons and the daughters will prophesy according to Acts 2 17. And where we shall be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now let's not, I remember years ago when I saw the extreme fanaticism in the charismatic movement in the Pentecostal church.

And I reacted against all that. And the Lord said don't let your theology come as a result of a reaction to the extremes you see in other people. But it was like that.

My theology and understanding of scripture came as soon as I read something I would think of those fellows who'd gone to a fanatic extreme. I said I don't want anything of that. Jesus is my example.

Can you imagine what Jesus' ministry would have been like if he had no gifts of the Spirit? Supposing he could not preach effectively. If he was a boring preacher. Or if he was just like the scribes, a great scholar who began to explain scripture.

And not an anointed prophet. Or if he didn't have the gift of healing. What could he have done? The 1 Corinthians 12 says that the gifts are like the different functions in the body of eyes and the ears, hearing, vision.

You can have life in the body and be blind and deaf and paralyzed. Think of Jesus' body. Had a lot of physical health in it but he was blind and he was deaf and he was paralyzed.

That's a pretty good picture of Jesus' body today which is called a church. Many don't value the gifts of the Spirit. Some have taken it to a fanatical extreme.

Many people instead of seeking God for his anointing they use their clever mind to try and do God's work. They don't know what it is to live in humble dependence upon God in prayer and seek for the anointing of God. And that it's pathetic.

Why is the church called the body of Christ? Think of the first body of Christ in Nazareth. How did he live? It was God Almighty walking on this earth. He could say to people, if you have seen me, you've seen the Father.

And then he said to his disciples, as the Father sent me so send I you. The church is supposed to be walking on this earth. Whether it's in Loveland or in Bangalore and some other place, moving around so that we should be able to say to people, if you have seen me, you've seen Jesus.

That's the body of Christ. So I wish you young people would be gripped by that from early in life. Say, Lord, I want to live on earth in such a way that people who come in touch with me that have seen something of Jesus in the way I speak, the way I live, in my attitude to money, in my helpfulness, in my compassion for them, in my freedom from being self-centered.

This is our calling. The body of Christ. It's a fantastic title.

The same thing that the body of Christ did on earth is now to be fulfilled by us. But we need to repent the areas where we have grieved the heart of God. And it's wonderful if you young people can be gripped by this right from the beginning and say, Lord, I don't want to live an individualistic Christian life.

I thank God for all these things. But finally, I want the body. That will give me a solid grip on the Christian life.

I'm not meant to live alone. I'm meant to live with others who also understood the value of the body of Christ. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray that you will help us, each one. Especially these dear young people here in the face of the devil constantly saying, it is impossible, it is impossible, it is impossible to confess our hope. If God has said it in his word, it is possible for us to be one with each other, to demonstrate the reality of a functioning body.

Where Christ alone is the head. Lord, help us to be that on this earth, in the different places where you've kept us. Give us a burden in our heart to see the forming, even if it's a small group, functioning as a body of Christ in the different localities where we live.

Give us a cry in our heart like Hannah had a cry for a baby and how she wept and prayed until she got Samuel. Give us a cry in our heart like that, where we desperately pray until we see a body come forth, which will glorify your name in the place where we live. Help us, Lord, to bring glory to your name, that your will may be done on this earth as it is done in heaven, that everything that Jesus died for will be fulfilled in our earthly life.

Thank you for these days. In Jesus name. Amen.

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