

(The Better Covenant) 6 - Fellowship in One Body

by Zac Poonen

The new covenant is about fellowship in one body, and our sanctification is tested through our relationships with one another.

Duration: 56:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 13:35, Romans 8:14, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 3:24, Ephesians 1:22-23, 1 Timothy 1:9

Topics: "Faithfulness Of God", "Body Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the faithfulness of God in providing for His children. He shares personal experiences of relying on God's provision and how seeking the kingdom of God first leads to the fulfillment of other needs. The speaker also discusses the importance of selflessness and contributing to the body of Christ. He encourages individuals to embrace their unique contributions and not imitate others. Lastly, the speaker concludes by discussing the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant and the significance of fellowship in the body of Christ.

Transcript

So we come to our concluding study on the better covenant and I trust in the last five sessions you've seen something of the reason why God decided to abolish the old covenant. The old covenant was meant to show man his need. It was a step to the new covenant.

It was not an end in itself. Like it says in Galatians 3, the law was our tutor to lead us to Christ. To a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

And once we come to Christ, we don't need that old covenant anymore. The Bible says that if you are led by the Spirit, you're not under the law anymore. Of course, if you're not being led by the Spirit, then you need the law.

For the law is made for ungodly men, as it says in 1 Timothy 1. So I want to now speak about fellowship in one body. A lot of Christianity deals with personal godliness and almost everything that we have spoken in our last five sessions, whether it's knowing God as a Father or coming unto grace or living by faith or the fullness of the Spirit or resisting Satan. You could do all that personally, but Christianity was never meant to be an individualistic matter.

It's not personal holiness only. Personal holiness must lead to being built together with others in one body. And our holiness is tested in our relationships.

If you can't get along with your brother, your holiness is pretty shallow. So God gives you a brother, a sister, a wife, a husband to show you whether your holiness is genuine or counterfeit. Isn't that good? Sanctification without fellowship is a deception.

Our sanctification is tested through fellowship. It's no use preaching holiness if you can't get along with each other. I'll never forget as a young Christian knowing a missionary couple, a very elderly missionary couple who preached holiness, who came to India.

They were there for many years, much older than me. But they couldn't get along with each other. It was so bad they lived in separate houses.

They crossed the oceans to come to our country to teach what? Personal holiness? What type of personal holiness is this, where you can't live with another person in the same house, even as husband and wife? There are so many theories of holiness. I have studied almost every one of them in my pursuit of a godly life. And I've come to see in the vast majority of them, they cannot get along with other people who differ with them.

They can get along with people who agree, who toe the line. That's not fellowship. That's dictatorship, where one man calls himself a leader and gets a whole lot of subservient sycophants and people who say, yes sir.

That's not fellowship. In Christianity, God makes us different. One compliments the other, so that there can be a body.

The ultimate purpose of God is not a bunch of holy individuals. It's one body. Jesus Christ has not been given as head to any one of us.

Did you know that? The Bible says in Ephesians 1, God has given him as head to the church. Not to any individual holy brother or holy sister. It's to the church, which is his body.

The fullness of him that fills all in all. The last verse of Ephesians 1 says that. So, holiness must ultimately lead to fellowship in a body.

Jesus said, all men will know you are my disciples. Not when you sing well. Not when you heal the sick.

Not when you carry a Bible around with you. Not when you speak in tongues. Not when you do miracles.

Not even when you come for deeper life conventions. When you love one another. That is one distinctive mark that Jesus said would identify his disciples to the world.

All men will know you are my disciples. Not when they see you live a holy life. Not when they see you doing social service, feeding the poor, educating the unlearned.

No! These things have an appeal to our senses. Show your Christianity by compassion for the poor. Yeah, I agree with that.

But Jesus said, all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another. And you can't go beyond that. All these other methods of showing Christian love and compassion are subservient to the one mark that Jesus said was the mark that would identify people as his disciples.

It's got nothing to do with how they sing. It's got nothing to do with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It's got nothing to do with anything other than love.

And love requires another person. When you love one another and people have got to see it. John says that at the age of 95.

After having walked with God for 65 years. He says in the last verses of 1 John 4. If a man says he loves God and he cannot love his brother. He is not a believer.

He is a liar. Those apostles use strong words. James says you are adulterers.

John says you are liars. You say you love God and you can't love your brother. You are a liar.

For if a man cannot love a brother whom he sees. How can he love God whom he cannot see. That is the test.

So isn't it easy for all of us to love the dear brothers and sisters in South America. Have you had any problem with loving them. Or the dear brothers and sisters in Japan.

Or the suffering brothers and sisters in China. Oh we feel such compassion for them. Our problem is with the brother whom we see every week in our local church.

But that's the one who tests our love. Not the suffering saints in China or Albania or Cuba. Or somebody in prison for the gospel.

It's very easy to shed tears of compassion for these people who never trouble us or irritate us. It's this brother whom we see. The brother whom you see sisters in your home every day.

Your husband. The sisters whom you see every day in your home. Dear brothers.

Your wives. They are the first ones. If I cannot love their I am not manifesting the primary mark of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And that's why it's important that this worldwide body of Christ finds expression in a locality. As a local body of believers who love one another. That must be the distinctive mark.

You know when I travel around different places people want to know what type of church ours is. They ask different questions like do you have pastors? Do you break bread every Sunday? Do you speak in tongues? Do you do this? Do you do that? Nobody has ever asked me do you folks love one another? It's all these other things. The other things which Jesus never mentioned.

What is the distinctive mark of the local church? All men will know you are my disciples by what? There are many other things needed. But the one thing Jesus said is the one thing that the devil turns us away from. Because that is the most difficult.

You can speak with the tongues of men and angels. You can understand all the mysteries. You can have faith to move mountains and have all knowledge.

Tremendous Bible knowledge. But if you don't have love in your church in God's eyes you get zero. Zero.

All of that is useless. How many churches? Theoretically we will all say yes to that. But how many actually believe that? How many husbands and wives believe that? That with all their zeal for God and their devotion and their singing and their praying and their spiritual gifts and everything if they don't love one another at home God gives them zero.

Fellowship is fundamental. In the Old Testament fellowship is not even mentioned. The word doesn't even occur.

Whereas when John writes his letter it was the last letter written. Some say even after the book of Revelation one John. He says these things have been written that you might have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is with the Father. This is God's ultimate goal. Do you know what John writes about in his letter? The two things that existed from eternity.

If you go back in time before creation, before heaven and earth were created, before there were any created beings when only God existed. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There were no doctrines there.

There were no supernatural gifts there. There were two things. Life and fellowship between the three persons of the Trinity.

And this is what John says is the primary thing. Life and fellowship. And that was the goal towards which God was working.

The law was only a temporary stage. The old covenant was only a first step. The ultimate goal of God was.

Let me turn to this verse in Ephesians. In chapter 1 verse 22 and 23. He has put all things in subjection under Jesus feet.

And given him as head over all things to the church which is his body. God's ultimate goal was the church. Ephesians speaks about the worldwide church.

Which includes a lot of people who have gone to heaven in the last 2000 years. Not all of God's church is here on earth. A lot of people who are still not saved, who are being saved today in different lands.

And a lot of those who are already saved in every nation. That's the worldwide church. But then 1 Corinthians also speaks about the local church.

Paul writes to the Corinthians and says you are the body of Christ. The people in Corinth had to see Christians loving one another. That's what they said in those early days of Christianity.

Behold how these Christians love one another. And we must get back to that. To function together as a body.

I am not saying that everybody in one city should congregate in one place and become one huge massive organization called a church. It would be unwieldy. I personally thank God that in large cities there are many many many different churches.

I think our witness is far more effective when we are little little scattered all over the city than if everybody were meeting in one building. But each little church must be an expression of Christ's body. There may be

differences in doctrine and peripheral things but it doesn't matter.

This little church here must be an expression of Christ's body. And that other little church in another area of the same city must be an expression of Christ's body. People who see that must see these are the disciples of Christ because they love one another.

And so God brings together people who are different. In the Old Testament as I said there was no body. Israel was called the bride of Jehovah.

The people of God. Many titles like that but one title that was never given to Israel was the body. That's a distinctively New Testament word.

And we understand what a body is. The body's got one head or one brain that controls the whole body. That's Christ.

But in this body there are members that are so different from one another. We're not supposed to be the same. We are supposed to be as diverse in the body of Christ as the eye is from the ear and the fingers are from the liver and the kidneys and many many different parts of the body.

And not all the visible parts of the body, the ones who stand up in the pulpit frequently, are necessarily the most important members. Do you think the visible members of your body are the most important? No. The heart, the liver, the kidneys which you've never seen, these are far more important than fingers and eyes and ears.

You can live without your eyes and your fingers but you can't live without your heart. Some of those invisible members in the body of Christ who have a ministry of prayer are far more important than we think. I've often recognized that in my ministry, public ministry, that I can speak because behind me there's a heart that's pumping blood.

The mouth could not speak if the heart did not pump blood. And those are the prayer warriors who you will never see stand in any pulpit. They don't have the gift of speaking.

Like the heart doesn't have a gift of speaking. It's the tongue that does the speaking. The heart doesn't get any credit.

Nobody ever pats it on the back or anything. It just keeps on pumping the blood. But you'll know when it stops.

Praise God for those hidden members in the body of Christ who do a secret ministry, who will never get recognition perhaps till Jesus comes again. Your ministry is important. There's diversity in the body.

The first body of Christ was of course Jesus himself. And the Bible says in John's Gospel chapter 1 and verse 14. The word became flesh.

And that was the first body of Christ. It was the physical body of Jesus Christ which was the first body of Christ. And we beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father in that body full of grace and truth.

Why is the church called the body of Christ? Because it's supposed to carry on the same function and ministry that that first body of Christ fulfilled for 33 and a half years in the land of Palestine. 2000 years ago. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit baptized those 120 people.

He baptized them into one body and Jesus got another body. This time a spiritual one. He still has his physical one up in heaven at the right hand of the Father.

But now he got another one. He is still the head of that physical body which he has in heaven. But he's also the head of the spiritual body that was formed on the day of Pentecost.

What was that body supposed to do? Exactly the same thing that the first body of Christ did for 33 years in Palestine. What was that? Manifest the glory of God to a world that did not know what God was like. Jesus came to show the glory of the Father full of grace and truth.

None of us, beloved, none of us, no matter how spiritual we are, can manifest that glory fully. We can only manifest a small portion of it. We need our brothers and sisters to manifest it fully.

That's why the body is needed. And the body, there's a balance in the body. It was full of grace and truth.

The Bible says in Romans 11, Behold the kindness and the severity of God. God is kind and God is strict. Jesus, the glory of God, is full of grace and full of truth.

None of us can present that balance perfectly. Take this one area of grace and truth alone. The best among us, no matter how much we strive, are a little imbalanced one way or the other.

You see that in a home. Sometimes the father is over kind, lenient, and the mother is strict. Or the father is strict and the mother is kind.

That's beautiful balance. It's terrible if both are not straight or both are straight. A balance of grace and truth is the same in a church.

God does not want one man leadership of any church. That is old covenant. I want to point this out to you.

In the old covenant, there was an Abraham, a Noah, there was a Moses, a Joshua. You never read of them having fellowship or joint leadership with anybody. It was an Elijah.

If you read the Old Testament carefully, there were prophets in Israel, prophesying in the time of some of these other prophets. But they never worked together. They all worked individually.

Isaiah. Even if there were other prophets in Israel, they never worked with Isaiah. Isaiah minded his own business and the others minded their business.

They were individuals, great men. John the Baptist. But he was the last.

As soon as you come to the pages of the New Testament, you find Jesus starting something new. He sent his disciples out two by two. Not one by one.

This was a new covenant. It was not one single man now. It was two people going together here and two people going together there.

Because when two people are together, they demonstrate the principle of the body. Fellowship. Which is a distinctively new covenant message.

And it was perfected after the day of Pentecost. Two becoming one. Two people becoming one was something that even Jesus could not accomplish in his earthly lifetime.

Because the Spirit was not yet given. Notice the greatest preacher that ever walked on this earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, worked three and a half years with eleven people. And yet he could not even make two of them one.

He longed for it. He prayed, Father I will that they will be one as you and I are one. How many times he expressed that in John 17.

But he knew it could never take place till the Holy Spirit came into those eleven disciples. His exhorting them, his demonstrating the godly life before them. None of these things could help.

At the last supper they were still discussing who is going to take over the directorship of this mission once Jesus dies. The same old discussion that goes on in many mission fields today. It was not the will of God.

But once the Spirit came they no longer wanted to be the leaders. They wanted to be servants. Peter and John so diverse in their personality.

Such opposites, fiery, tempestuous Peter and the more meditative type of John could work together. We read in Acts chapter 3. They go together. When the Holy Spirit wanted to start the first missionary program from the church in Antioch as they fasted and worshipped the Lord.

The Holy Spirit said through the elders, separate me not one person. No, that day was over. This is the new covenant.

Separate to me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them. Why Saul and Barnabas? Because they were opposites. Saul was the fiery, tempestuous man and Barnabas was the gentle, gracious son of consolation.

Ideal combination. That's how God unites people in leadership in a church. Two people completely different from each other.

Do you think these two hands are exactly alike? They are not. They are exact opposites. In this hand my little thumb is on the left, in this hand the thumb is on the right.

In this hand my little finger is on the right, in this hand my little finger is on the left. They are exact opposites. How terrible it would have been if they were similar.

How could I put it together? How could I ever put it together? Thank God they are exact opposites. Isn't that beautiful? Let me pray it looks so beautiful. Perfect.

It would be terrible trying fitting this in like this. Has God given you a wife who is exactly the opposite of what you are? Praise the Lord. That must have been God's choice.

Without a doubt. Has God given you a co-worker who is exactly the opposite of you? Different temperament, different personality, different vision, different outlook, but a common love for Jesus. That's the brother you need.

That's the sister you need. Separate me Saul and Barnabas because grace and truth have to be manifested. I've seen the tremendous difference it's made in my married life.

God gave me a wife united with me in a common devotion to Christ but exactly the opposite of mine in personality, temperament. I make all the enemies and she makes the friends. But I've learned things from her.

I make more friends now. But you know how it is when we are young and zealous and we want to serve the Lord and we do all types of stupid things. Thank God there is someone who can manifest grace when we are standing for the truth.

God gave me co-workers in my church who were gracious when I was standing for the truth. I praise God for them. I've learned to appreciate them at home and in the church.

I would have been a very poor man if I had to do it all myself at home or in the church. Learn to appreciate the partners God gives you. Learn to appreciate that co-worker who is totally different from you.

He is the very man or the very woman you need. It's a body God is building. Forget these two hands.

Just draw a central line through this body. Isn't it an exact opposite? This side to this side. That's why the body looks beautiful and both are needed to grow together.

Don't suppress your co-worker. He needs to develop not in the way you are, in his own way. Have you ever seen a body builder who has built up one side of his body muscular, the other side thin like a skeleton? I've seen a lot of Christian workers like that.

Where one man suppressed the other fellow's personality. The poor fellow has never been able to develop in that church or the organization. It's one man.

It's one side of the body developed like anything. Maybe it's truth. Over-emphasis on truth and there's no grace.

Or it could be an over-emphasis on grace. As if God were a grandfather who just let grandchildren do what they like. No, God's a father.

There's kindness and strictness in him. It's just like the human body. I think of truth like the bones in our body.

That's what makes me stand erect. If I didn't have bones I would be like jellyfish. I wouldn't be able to stand here.

You know, jellyfish have certain advantages. They can fit through any opening, whatever shape it is. I can't, because I've got bones.

Because of my convictions. I can't fit into any type of theological opening. Some things I can't go through.

Sorry, I don't agree with that. I've got bones. But it's not just bones.

The Pharisees had bones. Jesus had more bones than them. He had all the truth.

But why were sinners attracted to Jesus who had more truth than the Pharisees? Because those bones were covered over with flesh. When you see people who bang away on truth, it's something like seeing a skeleton approach you on a dark night. Every bone is there.

How do you feel? That's exactly how a lot of people felt when the Pharisees came near them. You feel like turning around and running. And a lot of Christians like that.

Their entire emphasis is, brother, we need the truth. I'm not going to compromise on the truth. They think they're standing for the truth.

They're just driving people away. They're skeletons. Do we need all those bones? Sure.

I don't want even one of these 200 odd bones in my body to be missing. I want the whole truth. But I don't want to be a skeleton.

I want truth to be covered over with grace. That's what makes us attractive. Yes.

Let's learn this. And sometimes we cannot do it on our own. That's why God gives us a partner at home and in our work.

I've used a couple of illustrations when I counsel young couples who are going to be married or just married. And one of the diagrams I draw for them is a broken eggshell. I say, here's a whole egg when it's broken.

Do you see the two halves full of jagged edges? Very ugly. They poke you. I say, that's how each of you are.

But when put together, wherever there's a projection here, there's a depression there. And wherever there's a depression here, there's a projection there. A perfect fit.

Wherever there's a projection here, there's a depression in the lower one. It's a complement. Where one has a strong point, that's a projection.

The other has a weak point, a depression and vice versa. This is what marriage was meant to be. This is what leadership was meant to be in the church.

A number of brothers, maybe two or more, together manifesting the unity of the body of Christ. Just like the human body. I use another illustration for young couples.

I say, don't ever try to make your husband or your wife like yourself. You'll be the biggest fool if you ever did that. Because your wife's view may be completely the opposite of yours.

But think of it like this. That you are taking a photograph of a building from the northern side. And your wife is at the southern side, exact opposite.

And she's taking a view of the same building from the southern side. You put both pictures together, they look so dissimilar. But you get a total picture.

Now if you were a dictator at home and determined to browbeat your wife and make her come around to the north side, to have the same viewpoint as you, you get two identical photographs. You see how you've lost the full picture? Isn't it good that two different viewpoints can put their photographs together and guide their children in the right path? Isn't it a good thing if leaders with different visions, but with a common devotion to Christ, recognizing there is room for these different ministries in the body, come together and put their photographs on the table and we get an all round picture. One from the west, one from the east,

one from the southeast, one from the northwest, one from the north, one from the south.

You put it all together, what a beautiful picture of the whole building. Of the project, of the plan, of the program. That is the body of Christ.

And the people you need the most in your church, in your organization, are the people who are totally different from you. The ones who don't have the strengths that you have, but who can complement your weaknesses. This is the meaning of the body, to fulfill the same ministry that the first body of Christ fulfilled on earth.

To manifest the glory of God, full of grace and truth. This is not for your glory or my glory, it's for the glory of Jesus Christ. When I was a young Christian and I knew that God was calling me to leave my job in the military and to serve Him, my first desire was to be an evangelist.

I wanted to go to north India to some place the gospel had never been preached and to go there for the rest of my life. And in preparation for that, I sought to do the work of an evangelist. While I was in the Navy, in the town I lived in, twice a week, I spent two or three hours in fasting and prayer and go out twice every week into the streets of that city, sun or rain, and preach the gospel.

And I think I covered every single street corner in that whole city during the two or three years I was there. But I never saw a soul saved. I learned how to preach.

I got boldness. I learned to preach on the streets. I was too young to be asked to preach in the church I was going to.

But I learned to preach on the streets. The first place anybody called me a devil was out on the streets. And I learned to face that too and to love people who disagreed with me.

But I never saw a soul saved. But then I would meet in homes with little groups of people in the naval base I worked in. And as I began to teach, I found people were getting light on things they never understood in scripture.

And I found even at that young age, God gave me an ability to expound scripture in a very, very simple way. And I realized, God doesn't put square pegs into round holes. He knows exactly what He needs in His body at a particular time.

And though I wanted to be an evangelist, He showed me by my failure in evangelism that that was not my calling. And He showed me by, it was a trial and error method, that's how I discovered my calling. And He showed me by the tremendous freedom and liberty and anointing and blessing that came through teaching that that was my calling.

And so as I grew up and I finally left my job, I went into a teaching ministry. Now as I look back with greater maturity and I look over the work all around in India, I see there are many evangelists, hundreds, we've got hundreds of missionaries doing evangelism. But I saw the great dearth of teachers, of prophetic anointed teachers of the word that could build up these converts into disciples and build them together as a body of Christ.

And I realized God didn't make a mistake. I thought it was the second best, it was my second choice, but it was God's best. Sometimes God does not allow you to go where you want to go or be what you want to

be.

But if you seek His glory and His will, He will guide you sovereignly in such a wonderful way to fulfill that particular ministry that He designed you for from childhood. And has prepared you for through many, many trials and circumstances because that will be your unique contribution to the body of Christ. You've got to be yourself.

I want to say to all of you young people especially, don't let anybody try to make you like himself. God doesn't want a duplicate, a clone in His body. He wants unique members.

He wants only one Zach Poonen. Thank God, that's enough. He doesn't want one more.

He wants you to be uniquely yourself. You know how when people admire someone, they have a tendency to imitate him. And I've had to face this danger in the flocks that God has given me grace to nurture and bring up in India.

And I've had to warn the young people in our churches, don't any of you try to preach like me. You'll make a mess of your life. Don't try to imitate my calling.

Don't try to preach like me. Be yourself. God wants you to be yourself.

Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. Not follow me and become an apostle or follow me and become a healer. We need to distinguish where to follow a man in the Christ likeness that we see in him.

If you see humility in a brother, by all means follow that. If you see love, goodness, graciousness, uprightness, follow that. Don't try to imitate his ministry because each person has got a unique ministry in the body of Christ.

The eye is different from the hand. Each needs the other. There's no question of one being superior or other being inferior.

There's no superior and inferior members in the body. Every part of the body has been designed by God with a particular function. Some may have a more important function or a more visible function, but all are equally important.

The important thing is cooperation. The race of Adam can be identified by many characteristics, but one of the primary characteristics of the race of Adam is this, all men seek their own. We read that in Philippians 2 concerning even some of Paul's co-workers.

Paul says concerning his co-workers when he was wanting to send somebody to Philippi, he said, I don't have anybody except Timothy to send to you because Philippians 2 verse 20 and 21, they all seek after their own interests, not the interests of Christ. We can use that expression to say that this is characteristic of the entire human race. They all seek after their own interests.

Now when we come to Christ, we're supposed to be like Timothy, where we no longer seek our own interests. That's the law of the body of Christ. If there's one law for the body of Christ, it's the law for this human body.

You don't seek your own interest. Do you think this left hand of mine is seeking its own interest? Not at all. It's seeking the interest of the head.

What about my eye, my ear, my leg, the liver, the kidneys, every part of my body? One thing can be said about every part of my body. None of them seek their own interests. Not one of them.

Do you want to be an effective member in the body of Christ? Start here. Lord, let me die to self-interest. Let the interests of Christ be primary in my life.

When I was a young Christian, I read that verse in Colossians chapter 1 where it says that in all things he might have the preeminence. Colossians 1.18. That God was working that in all things Christ might have the preeminence. And I remember the Lord spoke to my heart and said, if you also desire to give preeminence to Christ in everything in your life, you'll have my power backing you always.

But if ever a time comes in your life when you want to be preeminent, my power will withdraw. This is what's happened to many ministries. It's what's happened to many people in the body of Christ.

Do you want to be a useful member in the body of Christ? Decide from today that your only goal is that in all things Christ might have the preeminence, that you'll never seek your own interests. That you'll seek the interests of Christ, not the interests of your family. Many years ago I made a little exchange with God.

I said, Lord, I'll look after your family, you look after mine. And I'll tell you, he's done a better job than I have. He always does.

You think your family will suffer? My wife and I have gone through times of tremendous poverty, particularly in our early days. We lived in a little ten foot by ten foot room. We never had a home of our own.

That's how we started. Two, three years it was like that. But God never let us down.

We learned lessons there. We could never have learned in a large palatial building. God designs our education perfectly.

But my children have never starved. Those who seek the kingdom of God, first is righteousness. The other things are added to them.

God doesn't make us millionaires, but he takes care of us. He never lets us down. Seek his interests.

That is the law of the body. Nothing in this body seeks its own. You are an effective member of Christ's body if you live by that law.

That in nothing you seek your own. You want to give your unique contribution to the body of Christ. I remember when I started preaching, I said, Lord, I don't want to imitate these American preachers.

Because a lot of Indians were imitating them. You know, they have different ways. I've got nothing against them.

They are Americans. I'm Indian. So, I said, I'm Indian.

And I want to study the scriptures and see how Jesus preached. And that's the way I want to preach. And if I could picture Jesus running up and down the platform preaching, I would do it.

But I don't get that picture from the Bible. And that's why I don't do it. I've got nothing against it.

I couldn't get that picture when Jesus was preaching to his disciples that he was always running up and down. So, he seemed to be standing in one place. And I don't get the impression that Jesus was screaming and yelling at people.

I think he spoke very gently, but he spoke very powerfully. I said, Lord, that's the way I want to preach. I don't want to imitate anybody.

I want to be uniquely myself. I'm not criticizing anybody. God bless all those people who feel they should do it another way.

But I want you to see how... Can you get a better example than Jesus? Tell me. No. He was the greatest healer, the greatest preacher, the greatest evangelist, the greatest apostle, the greatest man.

You can follow him in every area. Make him your example. Be uniquely yourself in that particular contribution God wants you to make in the body of Christ.

You're valuable. Your contribution is valuable. Very important.

I remember when I studied something about the human body many years ago. I saw how there were glands and different organs, I don't even know their names, that would determine right from childhood, right from the time you're a little baby, how much iodine or potassium, different chemicals should be in your blood stream. And it had to be some small fraction of a gram.

If it became too much or too little, you'd be an idiot. Do you know that it's just a small fraction of a gram difference, that balance that allowed us all to be normal human beings? Amazing, the functioning of this human body. Do you think those little, little things which were controlling this were not important? What an important function they fulfill.

We don't value them. Every brother and sister is valuable. I remember once I was speaking in a meeting in the United States where I saw in the congregation a number of children with Down syndrome, retarded as some would call them.

And I asked the congregation, see these young men with Down syndrome, they can't intelligently accept Christ, but I believe they're going to heaven. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them. But, therefore, I consider them as members of Christ's body.

And if you're a member of Christ's body, you have a very useful function in the body. I said, can you tell me what function these young men with Down syndrome are contributing to the body of Christ? How are they blessing the body of Christ? I said, I'll tell you how they've blessed me. Every time I see some little child with Down syndrome, I feel a little compassion.

I'm a hard man by nature, but that boy makes me a little compassionate, a little bit like Jesus. He's ministered to me without His even knowing it. He's blessed me without knowing it.

Has He contributed to the body of Christ? He certainly has to me. Think of that. There is no one who is unimportant in the body of Christ.

We need to see our worth. Don't ever demean yourself. Don't ever have a low estimate of yourself.

Say, oh, I'm useless. I'm good for nothing. You're not good for nothing.

That's the devil's lie. You're redeemed by the blood of Christ. Something more precious than gold and silver.

Be yourself. Do the little you can. You don't have to do great things for God.

You know, James and John once wanted to sit at the right hand, left hand of Jesus. And Jesus said, I can't give you those places. Those places have been reserved for those whom the Father has determined.

Who's going to sit at the right hand or the left hand of Jesus? I don't know. But you know, it may not be the Apostle Paul. Maybe, it may be him on one side.

Even if he's on one side, who's going to sit on the other side? It could be some unknown widow in some remote unknown third world country. Who loved Jesus and did her little bit. Nobody ever heard her name.

Nobody wrote her biography. But who faithfully did her part in the body of Christ. I will not at all be surprised if she sits at the right hand of Jesus in the final day.

Because God looks for faithfulness. Not gifts. Not ability.

Men are impressed by ability. Such widows never get thanks publicly here and nobody knows their names. She doesn't write books that are on the bookstalls.

But she may be at the right hand of Jesus in the final day. So don't think your contribution is unimportant. I want to say, as I said, in this body no part seeks its own.

Let me give you one illustration. My right hand signs all the checks. Does all the important work.

Supposing one day my right hand is injured badly in an accident. It's in a sling. What does my left hand say? Ah! Now is my chance to show how important I am.

And it decides to start signing checks. The bank won't accept it. It says it doesn't look like your signature.

It's crazy if the left hand thinks like that. It doesn't. It does everything possible to restore this right hand to its function as soon as possible.

Are you like that? When you see another brother injured. I heard a statement the other day. It's an old statement.

You probably heard it. The Lord's army is the only army that shoots its own wounded. Sad, isn't it? No army shoots its own wounded soldiers.

But in the Lord's army, one battalion will shoot the soldiers in another battalion who are wounded. Because they don't belong to our battalion. How sad.

The name of God is blasphemed among the heathen. Because of this critical judgmental attitude that Christians have towards one another. Where instead of cooperation there is competition and jealousy.

What shall we say? Whose fault is it? Not theirs. Ours. We have sinned.

Have mercy on us Lord. Help me to value the members of the body of Christ who are different from me. One man esteems a day.

Another man doesn't. One man eats vegetables. Another man eats meat.

Let each esteem the other. That is the body of Christ. Otherwise we'll be building cults.

Where everybody has to be exactly the same. Dress the same way. God's not looking for uniformity.

Unity. Unity in diversity. When God plants ten trees down a street, all ten are different.

Even if the original seed was the same. Different number of leaves, different number of branches, different height. But if a man builds ten blocks of apartments down that road, they'll be exactly the same down to the last nut and bolt.

That's the difference between man's work and God's work. In God's work there's diversity. In man's work there's uniformity.

You build a church where everybody prays alike, talks alike, does things alike. I say that's man's work. I'm not interested in it.

I want to see a church where people are different. Where they pray differently. They all love the Lord.

But they are different. And the leaders are wise enough to allow them to be different. Such a church can manifest the glory of Christ.

Such an organization can manifest the glory of Christ far better than this uniform bunch of people who've been programmed to act and behave in a certain way. One last thing. There's tremendous power when a church is united.

Two brothers together, Jesus said, if two of you agree concerning anything, it shall be granted. Because where two are gathered together like that, I am in the midst of them. What about when one person is alone? Yeah, one person alone can do a lot of things.

But when two people are together, Jesus is in the midst. Because there's an expression of the body. There's a lot more to be said on that.

But let's learn to value the body of Christ. It's the body of Christ that's going to triumph over Satan. Not just one individual.

Let's pursue that unity in the days to come in practical ways in the town in which you live. Amen. Let's pray.

There are many things that we have heard this weekend. You don't have to remember all of them. The Holy Spirit will bring them to your remembrance at the appropriate time.

When you need to be reminded, you can trust Him to do that. All I say is, be open to hear the voice of the Spirit. And when He does speak, respond.

When you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Let Him break down the prejudices that you have built up through many years. Let Him destroy those man-made traditions in your life that have hindered the building of the body of Christ in your town, in your locality.

Say, Lord, I don't want to promote my own interests or the interests of my church or the interests of my organization anymore. Send revival to the city. Send it through another church.

Let it not be through my church. It doesn't matter. But let the heathen know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Help me to do my part. Heavenly Father, help us each one. Thank you for the freedom of the Spirit in these days.

For the open heavens that you have granted us in answer to prayer. And I pray that the effect of these words that you have given us from heaven will be seen in the days to come. They will be fruit that lasts for all eternity.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you very much.

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