

The Functioning of the Church

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God's thoughts and working together as a body in the church, highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit and the significance of encouragement and unity.

Duration: 1:15:48

Scripture: Proverbs 27:17, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:20, Ephesians 6:12, Hebrews 8:11

Topics: "Church Unity", "Corporate Prayer"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and love within the body of Christ. It highlights the power of prayer and agreement among believers to overcome the forces of darkness. The speaker shares personal experiences of how prayer and unity in the church have influenced government decisions and protected against anti-Christian laws. The message encourages humility, valuing every member of the church, and being willing to surrender personal opinions and traditions for God's will.

Transcript

You know, the most, I was saying the other day, the most private part of our life is our thoughts. We are very careful that other people shouldn't know what we are thinking. You can be married 50 years, your wife can't know what you are thinking.

It's a very private area of our life. But if you are willing to share even your thoughts with somebody, then that shows that you have got a real love and confidence in that person. Think of it.

Would there be anybody with whom you can share all your thoughts? Now I want to show you something absolutely amazing. 1 Corinthians chapter 2 1 Corinthians chapter 2 It says here, verse 9 That things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, which is not entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. Now when you read that verse, what do you think of? I think a lot of Christians think of heaven.

And there are so many things which our eye has not seen, ear has not heard, can't enter into our mind, but that's not what it's talking about. It says in the next verse, God has revealed these things to us through the Holy Spirit. There are some amazing things which our eyes cannot see, our ears cannot hear, and which can never enter into our mind.

Which the Holy Spirit can show us are the wonderful things God has prepared for us now, not in heaven, now. What has God prepared for those who love Him? God has revealed them through the Spirit. And now you understand why I asked you that question beginning about your thoughts.

Verse 11, Among men, who knows the thoughts of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? I don't know whether you know that the devil can't read your thoughts. If you pray in your thoughts, the devil doesn't know what you are praying. God knows your thoughts.

The devil can only hear your words. He cannot hear your thoughts. It says here, no one knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man in him.

That's why you cannot cast out a demon with your thoughts. I mean if I think in my mind, get out of him in Jesus name. If I think of it, the devil won't go because he can't hear it.

Even Jesus had to speak to cast out a demon. So, the devil can't know our thoughts. But it says here, just like that, the thoughts of God, no one knows except the Holy Spirit.

Verse 11, And now we have received, verse 12, the spirit that is from God, so that we can know the things freely given to us by God. That means God wants to reveal his thoughts to us. I asked you earlier, is there anyone to whom you will be happy to reveal all the thoughts in your mind? That must be someone whom you really love and have a lot of confidence in.

Isn't it amazing that God wants to reveal all his thoughts to us? For me that's a very exciting thing. I feel that a lot of churches who emphasize the baptism in the Holy Spirit have confused people about what the Holy Spirit is for. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is that I might know all the thoughts of God.

It's to enter into God's heart. For me anyway, the baptism in the Holy Spirit has been that. More than all the other gifts God has given me.

That I can enter into God's thoughts, look into his heart, and understand what he is thinking about me. How much he loves me. How much he loves people.

And his disappointment, you know, sometimes you look into God's heart and you see he is disappointed with some people. Not angry, but he is sad with some of his children who are not living the way they should. I want to show you a verse which relates to this in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139, it says in verse 23, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any hurtful way in me.

I don't know whether you are familiar with the paraphrase called the Living Bible. Unfortunately it is not published nowadays. But it is a very beautiful paraphrase.

And I have used it a lot. And that paraphrase, the Living Bible paraphrases this verse as Lord, point out anything in my life that makes you sad. Lord, point out anything in my life that makes you sad.

When it says hurtful way, hurtful way means, Lord, is there anything in my life that is hurting you? You know how you can hurt a loving father by the way you do something wrong. So, the prayer here is, Lord, point out anything in me that is making you sad. And this verse gripped my heart so much many years ago, I made little, I printed out little placards with that verse.

And I told all the brothers in our church, sisters also, I said, keep this in your room and look at it often. Lord, point out anything in my life that makes you sad. I have kept it in front of me for many years.

And it's been a tremendous help to me. I would encourage you to pray that prayer. Lord, point out anything in my life that's making you sad.

I want to get rid of it. So, that's, I don't want to be a disappointment to God. I know if any of my children do something wrong, it will be a disappointment to me.

Just like when they do something good, there is a delight in my heart. In the same way, I say, Lord, I want to be a delight to your heart all the time. Everything I do, the way I conduct myself, the way I say things, the way I behave when other people are not watching me, I want to be a delight to your heart because you are always watching me.

See if there is anything in my life that's making you sad. Especially in the way I live at home. Because the home is the place where we are very careless.

We are very careful when we come to church. We are very careful when we are in our place of work or other places. But it's in our home that we are careless.

And so, that's where we need to ask the Lord to help us. Psalm 101. Let me read this in the Living Bible.

Psalm 101, it's really very good. Okay, Psalm 101. I am reading from the Living Bible.

Verse 2. I will try to walk a blameless path, but oh how I need your help, especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should. What a beautiful paraphrase. Lord, I want to walk a blameless path, but how I need your help, especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should.

And there in my home, please help me to refuse all the low and vulgar things. Help me to hate all the crooked deals of every kind. To have no part in them.

In my home, help me to reject all selfishness and stay away from all evil. I will not tolerate anyone in my home who secretly speaks evil of others. I will not permit conceit and pride.

But I will make the godly people my heroes. And I will invite them to my home. So, when we look into the heart of God, we can understand what He wants for us.

And when I read the Bible, I am reading the thoughts of God. Because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. And you shouldn't read the Bible just like a ritual.

I say, Lord, I want to see what your thoughts are. What's in your heart? What are you trying to say to me? What are you thinking? It's wonderful that God has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can look into His heart. And if you look into His heart, you will see that He longs that His children love one another more than anything else.

That they have a good attitude in their hearts towards one another. That they don't judge others but judge only themselves. For many years I had another verse in front of my table.

For 20 years at least. The happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves only and never judge others. I don't need that in front of me today because I had it in front of me for 20 years.

I printed it out and stuck it on my wall in front of my table. The happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves always and never judge others. That's what God desires.

And when that happens, we become like a body. Functioning together. Valuing one another.

Bearing with the weaknesses of those who are weak. In the church of God, like a family, there are mature people. There are children, just like in a home.

There are some who are mature. And there are some who are babies. And we don't get upset with babies in our home.

We are so happy to have babies in our home. Even though they mess up so many things. So, I found that in the church also there are babies.

There are those who don't have wisdom. We can bear with them. And as we bear with them, we become mature.

So, don't think that you will become spiritual just by fellowshiping with those who are spiritual. We like to fellowship only with those who are spiritual. But you may grow more when you try to help those who are weak.

The church of God is meant to function exactly like a human body. And if you look into the heart of God, He wants us to function like that. Without strife, without competition, without jealousy.

See how these hands work together. How is it when a person is playing a keyboard, for example. His fingers all move so perfectly.

And if they got pedals, even the feet move in coordination. And the eyes are looking at the music. And the ears are listening.

So many parts of the body, all functioning together so perfectly. It's a beautiful picture of how a small local church should function. So, if God wants to build a church here, we must have this as a goal.

How, I mean a person playing the keyboard is a very good example. How all work together. No, this finger is not in competition with this finger.

And this finger is not trying to show I am smarter than this finger. And no, it's all coordinating together and everything for the glory of Jesus Christ. And recognizing that some have got a greater gift than another.

There is no competition. For example in our body, the tongue does all the speaking. But the ear is not jealous of that.

Why can't I speak? It's fine. God has given that ability to the tongue. But we shouldn't think that in a body, it's only those visible members which are most important.

They get more attention and prominence. But think of the heart. I cannot speak if my heart is not pumping.

In my own home, I think my wife is like the heart. I am more visible but she is invisible. But without that, I wouldn't be able to do what I am doing.

And in the church, I find so many people pray for me. I am absolutely amazed at the number of people who pray for me. Paul used to tell people, please pray for me.

Not for my sake, but that I might preach the gospel and spread the word and build the church. He wasn't seeking his own. And that's what I tell people everywhere I go.

I say, you can be like a heart while I am the tongue. All you have to do is, whenever God puts my name in your mind, anytime, take 15 seconds, just to pray that wherever I am, God will give me a word to speak and give me health to travel and protect me from evil men and preach the gospel. It's a great ministry.

And you will discover when you stand at the judgment seat of Christ that those who have had this hidden ministry like the heart have got an equal reward compared to the tongue. So, we should never feel, oh, I am so useless. I can't preach.

No. Is there anybody who can say, I can't pray for somebody? You can do that anywhere. Another ministry that every one of us can do is the ministry of encouragement.

I mentioned that the other day. Encouragement is like scratching somebody's back. Is there anybody who will say, I don't know how to scratch somebody's back? We can all encourage one another.

And you know how nice a person feels when somebody scratches his back? Encourage, just one word, you know. There are certain things every one of us can do. And if you become a person like that, people will long to be with you.

Other believers. They say, I like to be with that brother or that sister. Because every time I meet them, there is always a word of encouragement.

Is that difficult? It's not difficult. It's one of the most important functions in the body of Christ. Even to somebody who has failed.

To say, never mind, it's okay. God will forgive you. Don't give up.

Just try again. You can make it. Few words like that.

What does it cost us? To smile at somebody. Even that's something great. I read the story of a man.

It's a true story. In San Francisco, they have a big bridge called the Golden Gate Bridge. And there was a man who jumped off that and committed suicide.

So when the police picked up his body, they found his address and went to his room. They found he was a lonely man, living all by himself. And before he went and committed suicide, he wrote a note, which he left on his table.

And the note said, I'm going to commit suicide today. I'm fed up of life. I don't find any purpose in living.

But on my way to the bridge, from where I'm going to jump off, if one person smiles at me, I'll come back. I don't know how many hundreds of people he met on that way. Nobody smiled at him.

Nobody cares for me. Let me jump off. What's the use of living? I've never forgotten that story.

I'm not saying we should go smiling at everybody we see on the street. They may misunderstand us, whether we're off our head or something. But I'm saying within the body of Christ, you know, in the church, in the family, what I'm trying to say is, you don't need much to encourage somebody.

Just got to be a little cheerful. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 says, speaking about the body, I believe the most important thing that God wants to do today is to build the body of Christ. Just like in Noah's time, there was only one important project on earth and that was building the ark.

There may have been so many building projects in Noah's time, they were all waste of time because they were all going to be destroyed. Think of somebody building buildings in Noah's time. They were not doing the most important thing.

The most important project going on in earth in Noah's time was only one thing, building the ark. Now I want to say to you in Jesus' name, the most important thing, project going on on earth right now is building the church of Jesus Christ. And the church of Jesus Christ is not all these big organizations and places where they have a lot of entertainment and music and boring sermons.

That's not the church of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is a group of people who really love one another, who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, who are committed to one another, who are determined to become one and function like a body. And I want to tell you, I have seen God do this in small little groups in different houses in different parts of the world.

In the remote villages and cities and towns, God is gathering together. Not a big institution or like a theater or place of entertainment, but small groups of people who really are centered in Jesus Christ, love one another and come together to share God's word, to challenge one another, to live a godly life in these last days and to put Christ first. And that delights the heart of God so much.

I have seen that happen in so many different places, that it has delighted my heart. I can imagine how much it delights God's heart. 1 Corinthians 12, he says, Verse 12, As the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though there are many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

So also is the Christ. Not the body of Christ. The church is called Christ.

Have you noticed that? As the members of the body, though there are many, are one body, so also is the Christ. It's like, you know, if I point to my body and say, this is Zakpoonan, you say, agreed. It's not only this is Zakpoonan, this is also Zakpoonan.

Do you agree or not? So, the body of Christ, so also is the Christ. That means, we are so one with Jesus. I'm just excited about it.

That I'm so one with Jesus Christ, that He considers me His body. I'm part of Him. The word Christ means anointed.

I'm anointed with Him. It's wonderful. And by one spirit, the Holy Spirit, baptised means immersed, put us all into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves, free, we were all made to drink in one spirit.

You see, one of the things that the Lord did, when He started forming a little church in Bangalore where I live, was He brought together people of different races. In India, we are people of many races, different cultures, different languages, and He brought together people who spoke different languages, but we all

could speak English in Bangalore, and they spoke different languages at home. And different communities, completely different in many ways.

Like it says, you are Jew and Greek. They didn't build a separate Jewish church, and a separate Greek church. I think God would have been disappointed if He had seen that.

Because who made the Jews? God. Who made the Greeks? God. I wouldn't feel happy if some children of mine don't mingle with some other children of mine.

No. I say, these are my children, these are my children, I want them to mingle together. The thing that united this, and Jews and Greeks were so opposite in those days.

For 1500 years, the Jews people kept to themselves. They would have fellowship with nobody. Nobody.

Even the Samaritans who are half-Jews, they wouldn't even walk through that town. That's how much they didn't have any contact. Very proud.

God is with us. We will not fellowship with others. And then Jesus came and broke down all those distinctions.

Do you remember the first sermon that Jesus preached? In Luke chapter 4. In Nazareth, in His hometown. In Luke chapter 4, verse 18, He said, The spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Luke 4, verse 18.

He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. And then He goes on to say, You know, people when they heard it, They said, boy, verse 22, What gracious words are falling from His lips. They were all praising Him.

But then He began to say something which really disturbed them. He said, do you remember when the Prophet Elijah was hungry? And there was a famine? To whom did God send him? God did not send him to a Jewish widow to take care of him. God sent him outside Israel to a place called Zarephath where a non-Jewish Gentile widow fed him.

And these Jews got angry. Because Jesus was trying to say, I don't think that you fellows are the only ones whom God cares for. God cares for those Gentiles also.

That's why He sent His Prophet to one Gentile widow to take care of him. That is in verse 25, 26. And then, He said there were many widows in Israel.

So why God didn't send Elijah to one of those widows? To show His love for these outsiders. Then He said another thing. There were many lepers, verse 27, in Israel.

But none of them got healed. Elijah was there who could heal the sick. But none of the lepers in Israel were healed.

But one Syrian leper who is from another country, and that also one military man, He comes and Elijah heals him. So what He was trying to say is, God does, don't be so exclusive to think, Oh, we are the only people of God. We must only meet with each other.

God loves those Gentiles also. Have a large heart like God. It's convenient of course if the Jews all meet together because we all have the same culture and the same language and we celebrate the Sabbath

together and we do all this together.

And then you mix with the Gentiles whose cultures are all different. It causes a little inconvenience. But that inconvenience is what will make you spiritual.

When you learn to bear with that difference. And they got so angry. The same people you know, previously verse 22 they said, Oh, what gracious words.

In two minutes they changed their mind. It says in verse 28, They were filled with anger. And they stopped him in the middle of the sermon and they got up and pulled him out from the pulpit.

In verse 29, they took him out to kill him. How quickly these people changed. And just because he said, Don't be so exclusive.

And don't sit just with people of your own community. So, what did we read in 1 Corinthians 12? God unites Jew and Greek. Verse 13.

And He also unites slave and free. It says in verse 13. And that's the other difference in the body of Christ.

One is different communities. And I remember when we started meeting in Naina Church now. We have people of so many different India is like a continent.

Not like a country. India is like Europe. In Europe you have Italians and Greeks and French and Spanish and Norwegians and Romanians and all different, different.

India is exactly like that. Each state has got a different culture. Very often different races.

And God brought people from all these different, not all, number of different states and countries to our church. And He made us one. I really praise the Lord.

And I became so rich spiritually by mingling with people who are not part of my background or language or community. And the other thing God did, it says here, not only Jews and Greeks, verse 13, but slaves and free. Slaves are the uneducated, illiterate people who haven't gone to school, don't know how to read and write.

The Greeks and the free are those who maybe have got college education. That's the other thing God did in our church. In our church we have PhDs.

Got a doctorate. And we have some who cannot even read or write. Illiterate.

You give them a Bible they can't read it. They have never learned how to read or write. But they are born again.

And God has put these highly educated PhDs who are totally illiterate in one church. And made us one. And we value one another.

And we don't care if somebody is rich or poor. We don't care if somebody is educated or uneducated. We value a person if he is humble.

And if he fears God. That's all. That's all I care for.

Is the person a humble person? Does he fear God? Then he is great in my eyes. And I will honor him in the church. But if he is a big shot in the world, I don't care for that.

Or he is highly educated. I don't care for that. Makes no difference.

Or he is the same community as me. I don't care for that. Is he humble? Is he God fearing? Then I don't care what community he belongs to.

I don't care what education he has. I don't care what job he has. We have brothers and sisters in our church who live in five bedroom houses.

We have brothers who live in a whose house is the size of this room. That's their whole house. That is their bedroom, sitting room, kitchen, everything.

They and their family sleep there. We are one body in Christ. I praise the Lord for what God has done.

And I want to say, dear brothers and sisters, I believe God wants to do that in every place. That there is no Jew or Greek or this community or that community or this language or that language. Education makes no difference.

The standard of living makes no difference. We are not communists. We don't say, okay all the rich people give your money to the poor people.

No. We care for one another, of course. I believe in the body of Christ.

It says, if one member suffers, see what it says here. Verse 26, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

So, that means if one member has a need, the other members rally around and help that person. If one member is honored, everybody rejoices. Praise the Lord.

He is part of us. This is a family. You know, in a family there is no jealousy.

Do you find yourself sometimes jealous of some other person who is honored? Are you ever jealous if your own son is honored? Or your own daughter gets some honor? Or your own brother or sister in your own family gets some honor? Your husband is honored, your wife is honored. You don't feel jealous then. Or your father and mother are honored.

You don't feel jealous then. You feel so happy. Why do you feel happy? Because that's a member of my family.

Jealousy comes in when somebody else's family or somebody else's children got some honor. Now, when God pours out His spirit upon us and makes us one family in Jesus Christ, we feel exactly like in our own family. I don't feel jealous if somebody else got an honor.

I say, great! That's me. It's like in a soccer game, football game. I mean the goalkeeper, he never scores a goal.

He can play in 30 games and he never scores a goal. It's the center forward or the front, the wingers and all that who score the goals. But, when they score the goal, the goalkeeper is excited.

And that's our team. It doesn't matter if I scored it or not. It's my team.

We're winning. You know, it's sad that Christians don't feel like that. Lord, we are one fellowship.

That's what God wants. Jesus said, all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another. So, one member suffers, all suffer with it.

One care is honored, all honors. And the other thing I want to say is this. How does God work? It says here, you know, in the body there are some members which have got more honor.

Let's read verse 23. The members of the body which we deem less honorable, on those we bestow more abundant honor and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness. And our seemly members, verse 24, don't need it.

But God has composed the body giving more abundant honor to the member which lacked. So, in the church there are some people who lack gift. Now you know the most prominent gifts in the church are speaking or singing.

Those are some of the prominent gifts and you always admire somebody who can preach a powerful sermon or you can sing in a very moving way. But it says here, you look at another brother who can't speak properly, who can't sing. But maybe he is just a very helpful type of person who does so many odd jobs in the church very faithfully.

And it says here, God has given more honor to that weak member. I love that. Men give honor to the one who has got more gift.

But God uses that weak member to do his work. I'll tell you a story that took place in China. It was in the 1950s just before the communists took over that country.

Just after the second world war in 1945, when the war was over, there was a young American couple that wanted to go out as a missionary to China. And they went there, those days, before the communists took over. And they said, please send us to some remote area of China where the gospel has not been preached because we'd like to share the gospel with those who never heard it.

So, they were sent right inland to somewhere near Tibet. Some place, a village where nobody had heard about Jesus. And this young couple worked and worked and worked and worked for seven years.

Not a soul was saved. And at the end of seven years they had a little baby. I don't remember, seven years or four years or something.

They had a little baby. And then as that baby grew up two, three, four years old, I think totally they had spent about seven years, maybe the baby was born after two, three years there. The baby was three, four years old.

They would teach the baby little choruses in the local language. And this four-year-old child would go into the other homes and sing these choruses over there. If the man came singing that, they'd turn him out.

But the children and all, they don't turn out. So, the children were, and they would and everybody liked this little child. And like that they got their first convert after seven years.

So, whom did God use? He couldn't use these grown-up people. He had to use a little child to bring the first person to Christ in that village. That's an example of how the person who thinks he's very clever and he's very smart is not necessarily the person whom God uses.

You know, there were very clever, smart people in all the seminaries, Bible colleges in Jerusalem. But Jesus didn't go there to call even one of them to be a disciple. He went and called these simple fishermen whom everybody considered illiterate and used them, not only to bless Israel, but to shake the whole world and turn the world upside down.

And these simple fishermen, who knew about Peter? Illiterate fishermen. You read in Revelation his name is on the foundation stone of the church. Can you imagine? Whom does God choose? Let's take another.

It says here, God gives more honor to the member which lacks. It doesn't mean that he doesn't use everybody. He uses the preacher, he uses the singer, he uses everybody.

But lest you think because you got a gift or you are very smart that you are very special to God, it's not true. I often say to myself, I am not so important for God's work that God can't do his work without me. He can do his work very well without me.

God's work went on in this world for many years before I arrived and it will continue long after I am not here. I am here for a short time and I will do a little work and move on. It's good for us all to have very humble thoughts about ourselves.

Not to think that we are so smart and so capable. We are all needed in the body of Christ. You and I. Even the nails that scratch are needed.

The tongue is needed. The heart is needed. We are all needed in the body of Christ.

Many years ago, I read a little poem which was speaking about if you think you are indispensable. You know, indispensable means some people think I am very important. I am a very important member of the of some church and the church is dependent so much on me for so many things.

And this poem said, anytime you feel that you are a very important person, just do this. Take a bucket of water and put your hand right inside it and that's you. And pull it out and the hole that is there left behind will be how much you are missed when you are gone.

That's all. You were there for some time. Did a great work.

When you leave, the hole gets filled up. That's a very humbling thought. Don't think you are so important.

It's very easy to be in a church and think, boy, I am so important. I am doing such a great ministry. This or that or the other.

God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. And the humble person is the one who always recognizes Lord, I am a nobody.

I was a nobody. I am a nobody. I will always be a nobody.

But because you have given me grace, I can do something. If you withdraw the grace, it's finished. I am nothing.

Those are the most useful members in the body of Christ. They may only bring somebody to the meeting. That may be their ministry.

And God can use them. So, God gives more abundant honor to the one that's lacked. I want to show you another thing about the body of Christ.

I am trying to tell you how they could never do this in the Old Testament. Because in the Old Testament it was just a big congregation where they all came to listen to Moses. And there are churches like that where there is one great preacher and 10,000 people come to listen to him.

That's not the body. It's a congregation of people. It's like going to a cinema theater and you watch somebody, some performance.

The body means everybody has a function. Everybody is valued. It's like a family.

There is a proverb in English that home is a place where you can never make a mistake. I like that. Home is the place where you can never make a mistake.

It means that even if you make a mistake, people in the home love you so much and they say, oh, it's not a mistake. It's alright. Imagine if the church was like that.

If we can build a church like that where everybody feels so much at home. Nobody is here to judge one another. We are not here to find fault with one another.

We are here to make everybody feel at ease and we are here to say to everybody this is your family. You can't make a mistake. Even if you do, you are forgiven.

It's like if a child makes a mistake in a home, what do you do? It's alright. It's a child. We are ready to bear with one another.

We are patient. Think how patient we are with children in our home. So, further you read here about the body in 1 Corinthians 12.

If the foot says, you see there are two types of problems you can have in the body. One is an inferiority complex and the other is a superiority complex. Both are dangerous in the body of Christ.

Here is first the inferiority complex. And it's possible that some of you sitting here may have this. So, see if this applies to you.

The foot, see the foot is right at the bottom of our body. Foot says, boy, I am always dirty. Every time I walk I get dirty.

And right at the bottom nobody looks at me and admires me. And if the foot says, because I am not a hand, the hand everybody sees what all it can do. I am not a part of the body.

Is it therefore not a part of the body? This is speaking about some members in the some Christians who feel oh well, I don't have any gift. I am so shy. I can't speak and I even when they ask everybody to pray, I don't pray.

I am so shy. I am so weak and I am so small. I don't know much about the Bible.

God says, you are also important. You are important. You know, if children are sitting around the table and supposing I am a father and sitting around the table and here is my 14 year old son saying, dad, I have got something important to say to you.

And in the corner my 2 year old son says, daddy, daddy, daddy who am I going to listen to first? I know who I will listen to. I will tell the 14 year old, you just keep quiet, let me listen to the 2 year old first. Do you believe God is like that? I will show you a verse.

Hebrews chapter 8. Hebrews 8 and verse 11 They shall not teach everyone his fellow This is talking about the new covenant. Not the old covenant. This is, verse 10 This is the new covenant that I will make.

Verse 11 is part of the new covenant. In the new covenant they shall not teach every man his fellow citizen and every one his brother saying, know the Lord. Everyone will know the Lord personally, that's what he is saying.

All shall know me What does it say? From the greatest to the least or least to the greatest? In the world, how do we say it? From the greatest to the least. See how God says it differently? From the least to the greatest. I say, hey, you 2 year old I want to listen to you first.

14 year old can wait. From the least to the greatest. God gives more honor.

And if God gives more honor I want to give more honor too. I love to speak to little children. I love to speak to little children in our church.

Really small ones. I really love to talk to them. After I finish preaching when I see one of them, I say I talk to them and I say, did you understand what I said today? I want to know their opinion.

All the PhDs and all can wait. I'll ask these people what is their opinion. And if they say, no uncle Jack, I didn't understand you.

Oh, I'm sorry. Next Sunday I'll have to be more simple. They are the ones who help me.

To preach the gospel in a simple way. Because if they can understand the PhD will also understand. So, the fool cannot say Oh, I'm nobody.

I'm useless. So, I want to say to all of you, nobody here if you have given your life to Christ you should never think that you have no function in the body. You are a very, very important member.

Even if you are a very shy person, you are a very important member of Christ's body. Even if you are, maybe you are still defeated by sin. Okay.

So what? You will overcome one day. You keep coming to the fellowship in the church, the love and warmth of the church will help you to become an overcomer. You know they say that in a coal fire, many coals put together and there is a fire burning.

If you take the hottest coal and keep it outside, what will happen? It will die. And you take a weak coal that is not burning and put it in that fire, it starts burning. There is a tremendous power in fellowship.

That is the meaning there. So, even if you think you are very smart and very spiritual, if you try to live by yourself, there are many lone people like that in the body of Christ. They are not in fellowship.

Most churches today, there is a lot of preaching, but a lot of activity, a lot of programs. Saturday to Sunday to Saturday, there is program, program, program. But fellowship and care, concern, love for one another, so little.

That's why we decided 35 years ago to leave all those to start meeting on our own, in our homes. We want to build a family. We don't want to build a system or an organization.

We want to build a family where everybody is valued. The foot will not say, I am useless. And the ear should not say, Oh, I am not an eye, so I am useless.

The other is the superiority complex. Where the eye says, where you know, Verse 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. Or the head to the feet, I don't need you.

You must never have an attitude to another member of the body of Christ, saying, I don't need you. Listen what it says. Verse 21.

Just read carefully. What does it say in verse 21, the last part? The head does not say to the feet, I don't need you. Who is the head? Who? Jesus Christ.

He does not say to the lowest member in the body, I don't need you. How can we say to any other brother in the body of Christ, I don't need you. You need me, but I don't need you.

Boy, even Jesus doesn't say that to the lowest member in the body. This is the church. This is the church where every brother and sister is valued.

Because Jesus has purchased them with his blood. How do you decide the value of something? It depends on how much money you paid for it. You know, there are some, I don't know whether you have seen some things called modern paintings.

They look so stupid as if somebody just splashed some paint over there and they call it some great work of art where somebody pays ten million dollars to buy it. I said, boy, I wouldn't pay one dollar to get that one. Doesn't look like anything.

It looks as if somebody just put some paint and a car drove over it or something and they call it a big work of art. But some guy feels it is very valuable and pays ten million. It's the amount of money you pay for it that gives something its value.

Not whether it looks nice or not at all. So, you look at some brother and sister and say, hey, he doesn't look so smart, he's pretty dumb. But Jesus paid his blood to purchase that person.

So, I may think that painting is useless but that guy thinks it's worth ten million dollars. And you may think that that person is pretty dumb and useless but Jesus says, no. I paid my blood to purchase him.

He's valuable to me. I want to be a part of a church like that. Where every brother and sister is valued.

Where nobody is made to feel small. That if somebody makes a mistake, he's not condemned because he's in a home where you cannot make a mistake. That's the type of church I've always wanted to build.

That's the type of church I've tried to build in Bangalore, wherever I go. A church where even if you're not acclaimed and respected, every person there feels, I'm important. I may not know the Bible but I'm

important.

And if I make a mistake, people will forgive me and accept me. And I'm valued because, not because I'm smart, I'm valued because the price Jesus paid for me was his blood. So, imagine if we can build a church like that.

Can you imagine how God's heart will be so thrilled? You know, I'm always excited when I see my children. I have four sons. And they are such good friends.

Always ready, even the oldest one is over 40. But, they're such good friends. They used to live together before they were married.

For years, people wondered how they could live together for so long without fighting. And I was so delighted. Even today, after their marriage, they help one another.

They care for one another. But they live in their own homes. They don't interfere with one another but they help one another if there's a need.

That brings so much joy to my heart because I'm a father. So, that to me is a picture of, I mean, think how I'll feel if two of them have a little fight with each other. Or they won't talk to each other.

Or they won't visit somebody's home point. They may not feel as bad as I feel bad. Do you think how God feels when there are two of his children who don't get along with each other or a husband and wife who don't have had a little dip with each other, won't talk to each other.

Don't think of yourself. Think of how God feels. Lord, point out anything in me that is making you sad.

Pray that prayer. Pray it every day. Otherwise, write it in a piece of paper and put it in your Bible someplace where you will see it frequently.

I believe God wants to build a church like that which will be like a body where you know, if a stone comes to, if somebody throws a stone at my face, my face cannot protect itself. My hand will immediately come up to protect my face against that stone. That's how the body of Christ is where I rise up to defend another member of the body of Christ.

Because it's a member of my body. I'm not here to find fault or criticize. Of course, there are weaknesses.

All of us have weaknesses. But we bear with one another. In the book of Proverbs, it says, Proverbs 27, Iron sharpens iron.

It's true. If you want to sharpen a knife, you need another iron knife. You cannot sharpen iron with wood.

You cannot sharpen iron with clay. Iron must sharpen iron. So, if you find that you are a strong brother and in church there is another strong brother, that's wonderful.

You will both sharpen each other. Or you are a strong husband and you got a strong wife, you are really lucky. You will really sharpen each other.

Because iron will sharpen iron. Or you take another example, two rough stones. It's like two brothers or a husband and wife, both very rough.

They keep rubbing against each other. They both turn out smooth. That's how God puts us in the body of Christ and brings us into difficult situations where we get rubbed.

It's not to separate us. It's to make both of us smooth. So, it's a wonderful thing.

I mean, I am speaking from some years of experience now of have seen what God has done in different places. The tremendous result of functioning as a body. I want to say one more thing in relation to how the body can overcome Satan.

In Matthew 16, Jesus said that, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, will not overpower it. Now the gates of hell or the gates of Hades is an expression to describe the powers of spiritual darkness. That means when we build a church, the forces of darkness are going to do everything to destroy it.

Some criticism, some misunderstanding, some jealousy I have seen sometimes in a married couple, the devil will whisper some misunderstanding to the wife and whisper some misunderstanding to the husband and then a little distance comes. No. The gates of hell, the powers of darkness will not be able to overpower the church, which I build.

That's been my prayer. I say, Lord, You build the church. I cannot build it.

You said in Matthew 16 You will build the church. You can use me, you can use anybody, but you are the builder of the church and the church you build, the powers of darkness will never be able to overpower it. And this such a church will be united.

It may not be large in number. To me, one of the finest definitions of the church is here. How many people should there be in a church? To call it a church.

Matthew 18 verse 20 2 or 3 Supposing Jesus had said wherever 200 or 300 people are gathered together, there I'll be in the midst of them. I wouldn't even be sitting here. A waste of time sitting here.

I'll go look for some place where there are at least 2-300 people. But thank God He said where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst. But these are not just any 2 or 3 people.

It says in verse 19 See, we must not have the bad habit of reading a verse out of its context. If 2 of you agree on anything they ask it'll be done by my father in heaven such 2 or 3 people, that means not just 2 or 3 people who say I believe in Jesus, but 2 or 3 people who are one in their spirit Whatever they ask God will grant.

You know, I've been serving the Lord full time now 44 years I've been married 42 years and you know, quite naturally when you serve the Lord, the devil targets you he targets me, he targets my family, my children and with so many ways but whenever there has been a problem in our 42 years of our married life with children, whether in school or sickness or anything my wife and I would kneel down and claim this promise verse 19, if 2 of you agree concerning anything it'll be granted say Lord, the devil is not going to get the victory in our home The same thing in our church there is a problem in our church me and the other elder all of our churches have got at least 2 elders and we pray together and say Lord now 2 of us are agreed the devil is not going to come into our home or into our

church and we have seen so many miracles happen and the purpose of this is, verse 18 that when 2 of you or 3 are united and Jesus is in the midst whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven heaven means not where God is dwelling that is the 3rd heaven between the 3rd heaven and the 1st heaven which is this universe, is a place called the 2nd heaven, where the devil is in Ephesians 6 we are told he dwells in the heavenlies that is the heaven where we've got to bind something because the devil's headquarters is not in hell Ephesians 6.12 says the devil's headquarters is in the heavenlies which is the 2nd heaven from there he does things he does things on the earth, he does things in churches he does things in our homes and when 2 people here in Jesus name bind that activity the

devil's from his headquarters gets bound and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven that means if the devil has bound somebody here we can release him in Jesus name tremendous power the church has got to be able to function like that and the world is full of people who need deliverance not just counseling and advice but to be set free from bondage and one person can never do it alone you can't do it alone, you can't do it as a family it's the church church means a group of people who love one another you know we've had situations even where our little church when we were very small we influenced even the government in our country by prayer changing things I'll give you one example this is way back in 1977 I was in another part of India and about 2 o'clock in the morning I was

woken up and I saw like in a vision the those days prime minister of India and another senior minister in the cabinet and I saw faces of a lot of Indian people and I heard a voice saying the power to free these people is in the church but I didn't know what the vision meant but I saw this prime minister and another minister so when I came back to Bangalore I shared this with other people in our church and I said brothers I don't know what this means but it's something the lord has shown me so we used to pray most of the time I used to pray in tongues because I didn't know what I was supposed to pray for so I said okay I don't know what I am supposed to pray for so I keep praying concerning the prime minister and this other person and pray in tongues alone and within one month that man

resigned the other senior minister and then he left the party also and there was a conflict between the two I knew something is happening I didn't know what it was but I knew as a result of our prayer something is happening here in the central government in the cabinet and then this is in April or something then in around August or so four months later again people would try to unite these two people again a burden would come upon me to pray again we would be praying in tongues most of the time and they wouldn't get united four months later in December in the parliament the anti-christian people in the party tried to pass a law against conversions it was an anti-christian sort of law they wanted to pass that banning people from being converted from one religion to another but it could not

be passed because of this division in the party then I understood why eight months earlier God had given me this burden concerning these two people to bring a division so that they would not pass the law eight months later see how God prepares we were a small church but we could influence and since that day it's 1977 till today no government has been able to pass an anti-conversion law for the whole country a few states have passed it for their own state but nobody has been able to do it for the whole country they tried to do it once and they failed I learned something then I said Lord what fantastic authority the church of Jesus Christ has it's not by voting and going on processions with banners and all that it's by people who are united in prayer and binding the activities of Satan

sometimes when there is confusion in a home what shall we do supposing there is some confusion in your home you need to bind the activities of Satan at least two people any two people in the house I remember

somebody telling me once oh brother Zach what shall I do mom and dad are not united they are always clashing I said you what about you, are you united with your dad ok you and dad pray together the two people are united you can drive the devil out the devil cannot have power where two people are committed to Christ and say Lord confound Satan I believe we are going into days all over the world just before the coming of Christ where Satan is going to be angry and the church of Jesus Christ has got to stand with authority and that is why God is building in different places little

fellowships that are meeting in homes here and there around the world in different places with authority they love one another and though the world despises them and other big big churches despise them that is the real church of Jesus Christ so I pray that the Lord will build that here also lets pray so just think while our heads are bowed has God spoken something to your heart don't worry about what other people think are you willing to count the cost you will have to pay a price if you want to follow the Lord there are some people you will have to offend some people who will misunderstand you when you take a stand maybe some people in your family will not understand but if you say Lord I want your best I don't want your second best in my earthly life what I have seen of your purpose in

the scriptures that's what I want I have only one life and I can't waste it I want to use that one life totally for your very best I don't want to I am willing to break with every tradition I have had in my life so far tradition means nothing to me God's word is more important I am willing to give up my opinions willing to give up the approval of my friends and church members and everything I want to do your will 100% I want to be a little expression of the body of Christ here for your glory to accomplish your purposes thank you Lord we believe you can do more than we can ask or think we believe you have a fantastic purpose for every little group of people who are meeting in different parts of the world with whom you can accomplish your purposes on earth help us each one we pray to be

encouraged to encourage one another and if people disagree with us help us to love them and let them go their own way you don't compel anybody, we don't compel anybody thank you Father in Jesus name Amen

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