

Ecclesiology

Semester 2 – Topic 4 – Body Relationships

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The “Body” Metaphor

The church is expressed metaphorically as a “body” in several NT passages. This is perhaps the best known of the metaphors. The body figure shows that the church is not an organization, but a living organism. It illustrates the diverse-unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27). Some thoughts on the body figure:

- Christ is the head of the church

²²And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and **gave Him as head over all things to the church,** ²³**which is His body,** the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Eph 1:22-23

¹⁸**He is also head of the body, the church;** and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. Col 1:18

- Christ is the nourisher of the church.

²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as **Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.** ... ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for **no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,** ³⁰**because we are members of His body.** Eph 5:23, 28-30

¹⁸Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹**and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.** Col 2:18-9

- The members of the body are united in Christ.

⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵**so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** Rom 12:4-5

²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26-28

- The members of the body are united, interdependent, diverse, and caring for and serving one another (1 Cor 12:12-27)

- ❖ **How might this image impact your own pride/humility, your view of other believers, and your attitude toward each member of the body?**

Believer-to-Believer Relationships

Being a member of Christ's body comes with responsibilities toward the head and the other members. Our motivation for striving to excel at relationships in our life is the incredible mercy and grace we have been shown. We once walked in those things for which the wrath of God will come. We have been chosen by God, separated from sin, and beloved by Him. Therefore, we should put on those qualities that build unity in the body (Col 3:5-15).

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Col 3:12-15

❖ Is relational unity in the body something you think about and purpose to pursue?

The "one-anothers" are those commands in Scripture that describe how members of the body of Christ are to interact. Almost always in these commands, the Greek word for "one another" is used which means one another, reciprocally, mutually. It speaks of a mutuality or sharing of sentiments between two persons or groups of persons. It is a reciprocal pronoun which denotes that there is to be a mutually beneficial activity; as each believer obeys the command, other members benefit. In other cases, the pronoun for "each other" is used. Since this speaks to the mutuality of the action, we will lump "one another" and "each other" into the same category.

One-another Empowerment

We are going to look at a list of "one-anothers", but we must first understand that it is only possible to fulfill God's one-another commands as we walk in the Spirit.

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit,** ¹⁹**speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,** singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; Eph 5:18-23

¹⁶**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,** with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing one another** with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col 3:16

Living a consistently God-glorifying life is possible only through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in the believer's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through us.

When a believer is submitted to God (Eph 5:18-6:9) and His Word (Col 3:16-4:1), the indwelling Holy Spirit fills (or controls) them and produces Christ-like character, heart motives, attitudes, words, and reactions. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. This is the usual, expected state of a believer. Being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) is also described as "letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col 3:16); "abiding in Christ" (John 15:1-11); "setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart" (1 Pet 3:15); "living by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20); and "presenting your body a living and holy sacrifice" (Rom 12:1-2).

As we bow before God in complete submission, we will be filled with the Spirit and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. If we find ourselves sinning and therefore bowed before a master other than the Lord, then we must repent and bow again before the Lord. As we repent and once again bow before the Lord as master, we will be filled with the Spirit and the life of Christ will flow through us. We will have the power to live a God-glorifying life and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

❖ Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?

Love one another

Love is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another's needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another's highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

¹²“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. John 15:12

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 1 John 4:11-12

¹⁶“For **God so loved the world, that He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

⁴Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Cor 13:4-7

❖ **Whom do you sacrificially love? Whom do you intentionally choose not to love?**

Love is significant in the life of the body in that it demonstrates tangibly that we belong to Jesus.

³⁴“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

❖ **Is this true of VBC, your Growth Group, your family?**

Forgive one another

Forgiveness is the unconditional, gracious act of not holding personal sins (relationship breaking acts) against a person. It freely and unconditionally cancels a debt of sin, sending it away. It must be unceasingly initiated by the one sinned against. It is a conscious choice to not bring a sin to memory or judgment and to not take into account a wrong suffered. It is that act and attitude toward those who have wronged us which can restore relationships and fellowship. For additional study on forgiveness, see the studies on forgiveness on the VBC website's Biblical Counseling page.

³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.** Eph 4:32

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and **forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** Col 3:12-13

⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Pet 4:8

❖ **Is there someone in your life that you choose not to forgive?**

Build up (edify) one another

“Building up” or “edifying” means literally to build a house and came to refer to any building process. When used figuratively, it refers to spiritual growing, improving, or maturing. The word expresses the strengthening effect of teaching and example upon oneself and upon others. Within the body of Christ this is the act of building up the spiritual lives of each other; bringing each other to completeness in Christ (Col 1:28-29).

¹⁹So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the **building up of one another**. Rom 14:19

¹Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but **love edifies**. 1 Cor 8:1

²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is **good for edification** according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Eph 4:29

¹¹Therefore encourage one another and **build up one another**, just as you also are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

❖ **Do your interactions within the body build up or tear down?**

Give preference to one another

“Give preference” means literally to lead the way before and so to show deference to the other person. The Greek word gives the sense of taking initiative and continual practice.

¹⁰**give preference** to one another in honor; Rom 12:10b

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves**; ⁴**do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others**. Phil 2:3-4

⁵You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another**, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 1 Pet 5:5

❖ **Do you initiate thinking about and placing other believers before yourself?**

Encourage one another

“Encourage” includes the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action. Sometimes the word conveys the idea of comfort, sometimes of exhortation but always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation in a God honoring way.

¹¹Therefore **encourage** one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

¹³But **encourage** one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Heb 3:13

²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:24-25

¹⁸Therefore **comfort** one another with these words. 1 Thess 4:18

❖ **Are you actively looking for ways to encourage believers by word and deed?**

Admonish one another

“Admonish” conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It speaks of encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment; counsel with a warning involved. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem. It presupposes an obstacle that must be removed or changed.

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing** one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Col 3:16

¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and **able also to admonish one another**. Rom 15:14

❖ **Even though difficult, do you admonish other believers?**

Serve one another

“Serve” means to minister by way of rendering service in any form or to take care of by rendering humble service. It represents service of whatever character, and especially voluntary service.

¹³For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do* not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. Gal 5:13

¹⁰As each one has received a *special* gift, **employ it in serving one another** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pet 4:10

¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. John 13:14

❖ **In what ways are you serving the brethren?**

Accept one another

“Accept” or “welcome (ESV)” means literally to take to or toward. Here it has the meaning to accept the presence of a person with friendliness, to welcome, to receive hospitably, to receive into one’s home or circle of acquaintances, not cliquish.

⁷Therefore, accept (welcome ESV) one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. Rom 15:7

❖ **Are you friendly and welcoming of the brethren?**

Be devoted to one another

“Be devoted” pertains to love or affection for those closely related to one, particularly members of one’s immediate family, in this case referring to God’s family composed the brethren.

¹⁰*Be* devoted (love ESV) to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; Rom 12:10

❖ **Do you have familial love and affection toward the brethren?**

Be affectionate to one another

The kiss among the brethren was culturally a greeting of brotherly affection.

¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ. 1 Pet 5:14

❖ **Do you greet the brethren warmly?**

Be hospitable to one another

“Hospitable” is a compound word from “to love” and “strangers.” Thus it literally means “to love strangers.” A stranger, by definition, is someone you do not know personally. Hospitality is not about entertaining friends, but about using our resources to minister to strangers who come across your path.

Romans 12:13 speaks of practicing hospitality where the verb indicates not only that hospitality is to be furnished when sought, but that Christians are to seek opportunities to exercise it.

¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing hospitality.**
Rom 12:10-13

1 Peter 4:9 speaks of our attitude in hospitality – without complaint (grumbling). Hospitality is a privilege not a drudging duty.

⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.
⁹**Be hospitable to one another without complaint.** 1 Pet 4:8-9

Hebrews 13:2 speaks of the need to be careful that practicing hospitality is not neglected as well at the unknown far reaching impact of hospitality.

²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Heb 13:2

❖ **Are you seeking ways in which you can practice hospitality?**

Do not lie one another

“Do not lie” means to communicate what is false, with the evident purpose of misleading; to tell a falsehood, attempt to deceive by lying, to speak falsely or deceitfully. It involves not only the communication of a falsehood, but also the intent to deceive.

⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹**Do not lie** to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him Col 3:5-10

The context in Colossians 3:9 and the change in address from a list of sins to a one-another is instructive. What is the subject of the lies? It appears from the context that the lying is about the evil practices of the old self. The sins that we are in the process of putting off. Here the lies are that we are doing better than we actually are at putting off the old self. We can deceive the brethren into thinking we are doing well in the battle against sin, when in reality we are not. We should not deceive each other in this area. The care of the body cannot be brought if we lie about the battle.

❖ **Are you honest with the brethren about your battle?**

Bear one another's burdens

“Bear burdens” means to carry or support another's heavy physical or emotional load.

²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:2

❖ **Do you know your brothers' burdens and are you actively seeking to provide support?**

Live at peace with one another

“Live at peace” is the state of harmony and freedom from disturbance which is opposite of war, division, or dissension. This is a lifestyle (present tense) to continually maintain peace.

^{13b}**Live in peace with one another.** ¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thess 5:13b-14

⁵⁰Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*? Have salt in yourselves, and **be at peace with one another.**” Mark 9:50

¹¹Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, **live in peace**; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Cor 13:11

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace with all men.** Rom 12:18

❖ **Do you strive to continually maintain peace within the body, as far as it depends on you?**

Show tolerance for one another

“Showing tolerance” means to put up with, to bear with, to tolerate, to forbear. It pictures restraint under provocation and includes liberal allowance for the faults and failures of others. It is in the present tense which calls for this to be the believer’s lifestyle.

²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **showing tolerance** (bearing ESV) **for one another in love,** Eph 4:2

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³**bearing with one another,** and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Col 3:12-15

❖ **Do you show tolerance for the faults and failures of other believers?**

Be kind to one another

“Kind” means good, virtuous, mild, pleasant, sweet, amiable. It includes the attributes of loving affection, sympathy, friendliness, patience, pleasantness, gentleness, and goodness. Kindness is a quality shown in the way a person speaks and acts. It is more volitional than emotional. The opposite is harsh, hard, bitter, sharp, caustic.

³²**Be kind to** one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Eph 4:32

❖ **Are you soft-hearted, mild, pleasant toward the brethren?**

Do not judge one another’s exercise of freedom in non-moral issues

This is an unloving attitude of contemptuous superiority by strong believers. It could be rendered “Let us no longer have the habit of criticizing one another.” Those that are “weak” and therefore limit their freedom in non-moral issue for conscience sake are not to be criticized or judged by the “strong” who understand freedom in non-moral issues.

¹³Therefore let us **not judge one another** anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. Rom 14:13

❖ **What is your heart attitude toward those who think non-moral issues are sin?**

The Bottom Line

The body of Christ is an interdependent organism that suffers when any one member is not living out the one-anothers. Only as we walk in the Spirit will we be able to consistently live out the one-another commands.