

Body-Building

It is Sunday morning. In church entryways and fellowship halls around the world Christians are greeting one another.

“Good morning!”

“Good morning!”

“Fine, how are you?”

“I’m good.”

“Do you think that storm they’re talking about is going to hit us?”

“I hope not, we’re going to a picnic this afternoon.”

That’s a pretty typical exchange. How often do the conversations in your church entryway stay at that level? Do you ever see people hugging in your fellowship hall? What about tears? Is there much exuberant laughter in the lobby of your church? Do people have an earnest look in their eyes as they speak to their brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Our Lord tells us, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor 12:27) We are the body of Christ? That sounds a little strange at first, but it’s actually quite a beautiful analogy God uses in his Word to describe how his believers on earth are connected to Jesus and to one another. Christ is described as the head, and we the members are each a unique and essential part of his figurative body. “From [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Eph 4:16) What a wonderful picture! There is support. There is love. There is work. There is connectedness. All of it is from Christ, our head.

It gets even better! The head of our body doesn’t just direct and connect. He also sacrificed. “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Eph 5:25-27) Christ really did that for us – even if that’s not the immediate impression we get when we look around in the fellowship area. We are full of stains of sin, wrinkles of worry, and blemishes of bad decisions. But by his amazing grace, even as we continue to struggle with sin, worry and bad decisions, we are radiant, holy, and blameless in Jesus! He makes each one of us a perfect, unique, essential part of his body. With that in mind, our conversations can get a little deeper and more personal. We might make ourselves a little more vulnerable. We might get a little more invested.

“Good morning!”

“Good morning, how are you?”

“I’m good – just tired.”

"Everything okay?"

"Yeah, everything's fine – it's just that yesterday the kids were bickering and fighting all day long. By the time they were finally in bed, we were so exhausted and frustrated that we stayed up way too late watching a movie. I hope I don't start nodding off during the sermon."

"Ugh. We've had days like that. They *are* exhausting. Should we sit behind you and poke you in the shoulder from time to time?"

(laughing) "Maybe you should! Hey, whatever works, right? Anyway, what about you?"

"Doing well. We're really excited to go to a picnic this afternoon. Did I tell you about that neighbor of ours who's been going through cancer treatment?"

"You did. How is he doing?"

"He's good! He finished his treatment and his most recent scans were clear. The treatment was successful."

"Oh, that's wonderful! So many answered prayers..."

"Yup, so this afternoon they're having a picnic to celebrate, and we're planning to go. I just hope it doesn't rain..."

Jesus, our head, gives us opportunities to build one another up, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13) As we express genuine interest in our fellow believers, and as we share our own hopes, fears, joys, and struggles in a way that is more intimate than casual, we are building up the body of Christ!

When we talk to each other about how God's Word applies to the intimate details of our lives, the word of Christ dwells in us richly as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. (Col 3:16) As we encourage one another in our lives of faith through the Word, the Holy Spirit works in us. The body of Christ increases in unity, in knowledge of the Son of God, and in maturity. Day by day the body of believers grows closer to attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Together we look forward to the day when we enter into our heavenly fellowship hall, and that process will be complete.

Suggestions for Prayer

- Praise God for his beautiful design for the family of believers.
- Confess times when you have not taken the time or risked the intimacy of investing yourself in your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Thank Jesus for making you a member of his body, for giving you the other parts of the body for mutual support and encouragement, and for his sacrificing headship.
- Ask the Lord to work within the body of believers so that we grow in unity, knowledge of him, and maturity.

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