

The Church: Christ's Body

Joe Slater

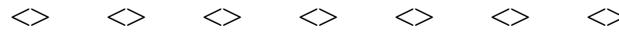
Salvation is an individual matter; each person must decide whether or not to obey the gospel and live a faithful Christian life. Nevertheless, part of being a faithful Christian has to do with the church. God adds all who are saved to His church (Acts 2:47). To help us know what is expected of us as Christians, God has described the church as a body, a bride, a temple, a family, and a kingdom. What do we learn about the church, and our individual responsibilities in it, by looking at it as the body of Christ?

“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Just as the human body has many members, so has the spiritual body of Christ. Each individual member is connected to all the other members. We are to work together and cooperate with one another. When we do, the whole body benefits, and God is glorified. God *desires* *“that there should be no schism (division) in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25).

While individual Christians are members of the body, Christ Himself is the head. *“And He is the head of the body, the church”* (Colossians 1:18). Members of a body take their instructions from the head. Even so, individual Christians, as members of the spiritual body of Christ, take their orders from Him. When members of a physical body do not respond to the impulses sent by the head, we recognize that a serious problem exists requiring prompt medical attention. How much more serious is it when members of the body of Christ are unresponsive to the will of their Head? Christ's will is communicated to us through His word. Refusal to submit to the Scriptures constitutes rebellion against Jesus; such

misbehavior dishonors the Head, disrupts the entire body, and endangers the eternal welfare of the malfunctioning member.

A properly-functioning body is a wonder to behold! We have the most excellent Head, Jesus Christ. Let us, as members of His spiritual body, be obedient to His will, working together and cooperating with one another to accomplish His work on earth.



Would You Be Missed?

After serving many years as a journalist, Arthur Brisbane was offered six months of paid vacation by William Randolph Hurst, publisher of the San Francisco Examiner. Brisbane refused the kind offer for two reasons: “If I quit writing my newspaper column, it might affect the circulation of the newspaper. The second reason is that it might **not** affect the circulation of the newspaper.”

Mr. Brisbane's answer was profound. In view of it, let's ask ourselves: “If I dropped out of sight for six months and did absolutely nothing for the Lord, would I be missed?” Would the Lord's work suffer, or would there be no difference?

As members of Christ's body, each of us has a responsibility to do the Lord's work and build up the church (Ephesians 4:11-16). We cannot hire someone else to fulfill our responsibility for us (Galatians 6:4-5). We are individually accountable to God for what we do with the time with which He has blessed us. *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:15-16 ESV).

Brethren, let us resolve from this day forward that we will become more involved in the Lord's work! *“And let us consider one another, in order to stir up love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24).

Mike Riley (via Bulletin Digest, adapted)

The Wrong Orders

Many years ago, a passenger train speeding through New York crashed head-on with another train that was just emerging from a tunnel, taking the lives of many precious people. Pinned beneath the wreckage was one of the engineers dying in agony. In his dying moments, he waved a piece of yellow paper clutched in his hand, saying to the team of rescuers, "Somebody gave me the wrong orders."

Someday, at the day of judgment, many unsaved souls will point to false teachers and say, "He gave me the wrong orders." Today, in this pluralistic culture where anything goes, there are millions who are following the wrong orders. Jesus said, *“If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit”* (Matt. 15:14).

The question is often asked, "Just how much false teaching will condemn a person to hell?" We must first recognize that it is possible to be turned away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:3,4). False teachers may lead the vulnerable from God. *“They will bring in destructive, untrue doctrines, and will deny the Master who redeemed them, and so they will bring upon themselves sudden destruction”* (2 Peter 2:1 TEV).

In answer to this question, we need to be honest with the word of God who draws the line, and not us. To say that you can believe and practice anything as long as you believe in Jesus is drawing the line where God does not draw the line. If we are teaching this, we may be leading others astray and "giving the wrong orders" that may lead to their spiritual death, as well as our own.

If someone was driving up a mountain on a narrow road, would it be wise to drive as close to the edge as possible? No, you say, that is foolish! Many are just as foolish who are not playing it safe with their souls.

Let's make sure we aren't giving people spiritual advice that might just be the thing the Devil delights in. Let's make sure we are following the right orders!

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