

Members of the Body

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Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Just as a thumb or an ear is a member of your physical body, so you (if you have obeyed the gospel) are a member Christ's spiritual body. This fact has several implications. As members of His body, we . . .

DO THE WILL OF THE HEAD. Jesus is "head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). His authority is absolute. Just as your arms and legs move as your head directs, so we are to be completely subject to the will of our Head, Jesus Christ. When members of your physical body do not obey the orders of your head, you consult a physician to determine what is wrong and how to remedy it. Just so, when Christians do not do the will of their head, something is drastically amiss and must be corrected!

ACT AS ONE. "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20). Within the spiritual body of Christ there is to be "no schism" (i.e. no division, v. 25). If you were moving a piece of furniture, how practical would it be to lift it with one hand while pushing down with the other? Or how much progress would you make by moving west with your left foot and east with your right? No, each member of your body cooperates with each other member. Christ's body also has many members, but the body functions as one unit. As members of Christ's body, we are to work together in harmony.

CARE FOR EACH OTHER. "The members should have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25). In a physical body, a smashed thumb find protection in the opposite hand, comfort in the mouth (where it will be

placed by a cooperative bending elbow), and sympathetic tears from the eyes. Members of Christ's body exercise similar care. "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). There is no competition, rivalry, or jealousy among members of a physical body; there ought not to be any in the church.

HAVE ACCESS TO THE BLOOD. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Life-sustaining, healing, cleansing, nourishing blood is available only to the members of your body. Likewise, only members of Christ's body enjoy the continuous cleansing from sin afforded by His blood. Therefore, the idea that one may be saved without being a member of His body (church) is erroneous.

We are members of Christ's body. What a privilege! What a responsibility!

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APPRECIATING GOD'S CREATION

I've always felt the need to occasionally get away to the mountains in order to find refreshment for my soul and be reminded of God's greatness in the grandeur of nature. While there's certainly nothing wrong with that, it recently struck me that the pinnacle of God's creation - His image bearers - are all around me. So, instead of trying to get away from our neighbors all the time, in order to be refreshed by God's creation, we need to see the beauty of creation in them; and love them accordingly.

--Wes McAdams, (via Facebook)

Be Kind To One Another

Whoever said, "Pick your friends, but not to pieces," knew what he was talking about.

Any healthy relationship will thrive in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual forbearance; but continual carping criticism does nothing but destroy. Pettiness and selfishness too often drive deadly spikes into the very heart of otherwise healthy friendships.

The Bible instructs, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

And again God's word admonishes, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers; be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8, 9)

And still again, "With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2).

In short, we are expected to get along with one another; to be kind and forgiving toward one another; to have genuine compassion for one another; to bear with one another "in love."

And what is this but the "golden rule" in practice, doing for and loving others as we would have them do for us (Matthew 7:12)? We would have others show kindness to us. We would have them minimize our weaknesses and emphasize and encourage our strengths. Should we not, then, treat others as we would have them treat us?

Too many people are lonely because they have spent a lifetime building walls instead of bridges. And is it any wonder? Nobody enjoys petting a porcupine!

The time is always right and ripe for being kind!

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*