

We Are One Body

July 2, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

In typical “guy” fashion, I like movies about war, spies and most any kind of action flicks. When I watch T.V. that’s typically the kind of television shows I like too, except for Everybody Loves Raymond. That show is a kick in the pants.

One of the shows on now days is a show called the Unit. It basically covers an Army ranger squad through various missions to save the world and rescue damsels in distress. Its pretty typical and very predictable and still I enjoy it. One of the things about this particular Unit that I enjoy is the way they work together. Of course this is a scripted performance, but its fun to watch how just an eye movement is enough to give a command. The Unit knows each other so well that they seem to be able to read each other’s thoughts. They take their cohesiveness so seriously that in one recent episode, one of the unit’s wives talks about the unit to an outsider. Because of that wife’s conversation, her husband is removed from the squad.

Within the unit there are a number of qualities that indicative of what I think the church should be like: trust, understanding, mutual correction and support, to name a few.

Today we are continuing our series on discipleship. We have discussed the inner disciplines of the disciple and today we move to the outer disciplines. The outer disciplines are those that affect our relationships with others. We call them horizontal. The first of our inner disciplines is fellowship. We want to talk this morning about this body of believers we have here today as well as those who are usually with us or part of our sphere of influence.

I believe that in the present time and in the coming days our relationships within the body will be more important than ever. As we spoke about last week, the world is becoming more hostile to Christianity. This hostility arises from our unwillingness to budge on matters of truth. If we are going to stand up for the truth we are going to be pegged as intolerant people. We need one another to whether these times. When we join with other believers it is time to recharge our faith batteries. Let’s look at what God’s Word has to say on this subject. We’re going to be in the book of Romans chapter 12.

THE BODY AS A SINGLE UNIT - ROMANS 12:3-5

You have probably heard this illustration before. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul goes into greater detail, showing how the human body compares to a congregational body. The body cannot operate at full capacity without any of its limbs, just the

like the congregational body needs all of its people to operate as God has designed it. Usually we think of this illustration in terms of spiritual gifts. Each part has its spot and its purpose. However, for this point I want to focus on the simple truth that we *need* one another. First of all, we need each other for the reasons I stated earlier. When we come together we should be providing a place where it is safe, away from the pressures and temptations of the world. I'm not talking about any specific, physical location. I'm talking anywhere where we as believers join together. That place should be a supportive one. One where we are free to share our struggles, fears and pain.

In a very real sense, as Paul explains, God has designed it so we belong to each other. I believe that God assigns us to the body we belong to. When we know we are where we are supposed to be, we need to find our place in that body and offer ourselves in some way. I'm yours no matter my warts, scabs and scars and you belong to each other. Each of us has an important part to play in this body.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Paul expands on this in v. 10. Look just at the first part of v. 10 with me.

THE BODY IS COMMITTED TO EACH OTHER – ROMANS 12:10A

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;"

This teaching actually introduces another analogy to illustrate the functioning church. It is a family unit. The concept of the family adds a dimension of warmth, concern, and loyalty. The term "brotherly love" refers to the love Christians should have for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christians are to be just as devoted to each other as they are to the individual members of a close-knit family unit. We are all related if we are Christians. A common Father has adopted all of us into His family. Are best friends with all your siblings? I know I was not and still am not. But I'll guarantee you one thing, if one of my siblings were to call me today seeking my help, I would jump on a plane ASAP to help them.

That's the way it should be our body. We may not be best friends with everyone in the congregation. There may even be people you don't like very much. However, when it comes right down to it, we need to be there for one another. If one of us hurting all of us are hurting.

Look now at the last part of v. 10. This goes beyond support.

THE BODY IS HONORING TO EACH OTHER – ROMANS 12:10B

“...give preference to one another in honor.”

The example is given of an excellent pianist who desires to help other people “look and sound good” - especially when he accompanies them. He is admired not so much for his musicianship but for his honoring others above himself. He watches his volume so he doesn't compete. He assists the singer in hitting difficult notes and even covers up a person's mistakes. He is always excited and satisfied when a vocalist he has accompanied is honored by others for a job well done. He is an example to us. Every Christian should strive to make other believers “look and sound good.” Every Christian should rejoice when others are honored, when others are successful. When this happens, the body of Christ will function beautifully and mature and grow in Christ.

Christ set the example in honoring others above Himself. At an evening meal, Jesus filled a basin with water and stooped to wash His disciples' feet. Then He exhorted them to do the same - to “honor one another above themselves.” Peter had things politically correct when he said no to Jesus and asked to wash Jesus' feet, but Jesus had something to teach. He wanted them to know honor and humility.

Living in community asks us to honor others above ourselves. To do our best make others look good. To lift each other up and to be helpful. This is honor. This is “affirming the value of every life.”

THE BODY AS A PURPOSEFUL UNIT – ROMANS 15:5-6

Satan's strategy involves destroying unity among Christians. He is the author of confusion, insensitivity and false doctrine. In the Bible we discover the power whereby Satan's strategy can be defeated. It's the power of “one- mindedness” in the body of Christ. In Christ's prayer to the Father in John 17, He made a request - that His disciples might experience unity and oneness. “Holy Father,” prayed Jesus, “protect them by the power of Your name - the name You gave Me - so that they may be one as We are One” (John 17:11). It is a visible unity - a oneness - that reveals the essence of the Gospel.

In unity we move together towards a common purpose. Our purpose is glorify God by working towards the purpose He has for the Olympia Corps. This is a purpose that many of you have been thinking about in recent months. This is a purpose that we need to continue to pray for and understand deeper in our thinking. Our purpose is to reach the needy, the unwanted and the forgotten of our community; to touch the lives of people who society steers away from.

We have that purpose set before us. To accomplish it, all of us need to get behind it. All of us have to think that way and move in that direction. In unity we can accomplish great things in Christ's name. But as long as we continue

divided or with out people getting on board, we're going to limp along... because we are one body and without all the parts we are ham strung.

CONCLUSION

Are you a part of this body and in the game or are you a spectator? Everyone has a part to play in our game. Every position is important and every position is needed. We do not want any spectators; we want game-day players.

You notice that today I've not referred to congregation as a family. Sometime in the last year someone said something to me about the church as a family that rang very true in my heart. Families, generally, are hard to break into. It takes months and months, if not years to feel a part of a new family. Although we can talk about the church as a family we must be careful we do not become exclusive to outsiders.

We are unit, a body. We are supportive and honoring to one another. We work with a common purpose. Are you in or are you out?