

Lesson 17

GOD'S CALLED-OUT ASSEMBLY THE CHURCH

Thinking About the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)

The human body has been wonderfully made by God the great Creator. When David thought about the body he said, "I will _____ thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully _____, marvelous are thy works" (Psalm 139:14). Your body is a marvelous living organism made up of billions and billions of tiny cells. There are more cells in your body than there are people in the world! [No one knows for sure how many cells are in the human body, but scientists estimate the number to be anywhere from 10 to 100 trillion cells.] Here are some of the wonders of the body:

1. Our blood is circulated through 60,000 miles of tubing reaching to every part of the body. This tubing could be stretched around the world more than seven times (if all the veins, arteries and capillaries were laid end to end).
2. Every day the heart pumps 5,000 to 6,000 quarts of blood. The heart is an amazing pump which never seems to get tired and which never takes a rest.
3. An adult has over 200 separate bones. Also within the bones there is an amazing blood manufacturing factory. Blood cells are made inside the bones.
4. There are more than 600 muscles in a person's body. These muscles, along with many perfectly designed joints, enable man to move his arms, legs and body with amazing coordination.
5. The nervous system may be likened to a highly organized postal system or telephone system, carrying messages to and from the brain. Nerve impulses can move at a speed of nearly 350 feet per second. They can zip up from a person's feet and back again more than 30 times in one second.
6. The world's most complex computer is the human brain. In fact, the entire human body is the world's most incredible piece of machinery. Men have made different kinds of robots, but they have never made any robot which can even begin to do what the human body can do!

1. THERE IS ANOTHER BODY WHICH GOD HAS PUT TOGETHER.

The human body is a wonderful thing, but there is another body which God has put together in a wonderful way. It is called the body of Christ!

Consider Ephesians 1:22-23--"And hath put all things under His (Christ's) feet, and gave Him (Christ) to be the _____ over all things to the _____ (believers), which is _____." This verse teaches us that the Church (made up of believers) is His Body! The Church is the body of Christ! Who is the Head of this body (Ephesians 1:22)?

We learn the same truth in Colossians 1:18--"And He (Christ) is the _____ of the body, the _____." The Church is called the Body of Christ. Who is the Head (Colossians 1:18)? _____

Just as a human body has members (feet, hands, heart, lungs, liver, etc.) so the **body of Christ** has members. Let's find out who these members are. Consider 1 Corinthians 12:27--"Now _____ (believers) are the _____ of _____ and members in particular." Every believer (every saved person) is a member of the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head and we are the members!

2. THERE IS ONE BODY BUT MANY MEMBERS.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12. How many **times** do you read the word "**one**"? _____ How many times do you read the word "**many**"? _____ Which word goes before the word BODY (**one** or **many**)? _____ Which word goes before the word MEMBERS (**one** or **many**)? _____

The human body has many members: eyes, nose, stomach, tongue and ears to name just a few. What are some of the others? Every person has **many** bodily members but only **one** body. How many bodies do you have? _____

"For the body is not _____, but _____" (1 Corinthians 12:14). What if the whole body were nothing but a big eye (see 1 Corinthians 12:17)? This body would be able to see very well, but would it be able to hear very well? _____ Would it be able to run or walk very well? _____ Would it be able to eat and taste things? _____ Would it be able to shake hands with someone? _____ What else would it not be able to do?

What if the whole body were a big ear (see 1 Corinthians 12:17)? This body would be able to hear very well, but would it be able to smell very well? _____ Would it be able to see very well? _____ What else would it not be able to do?

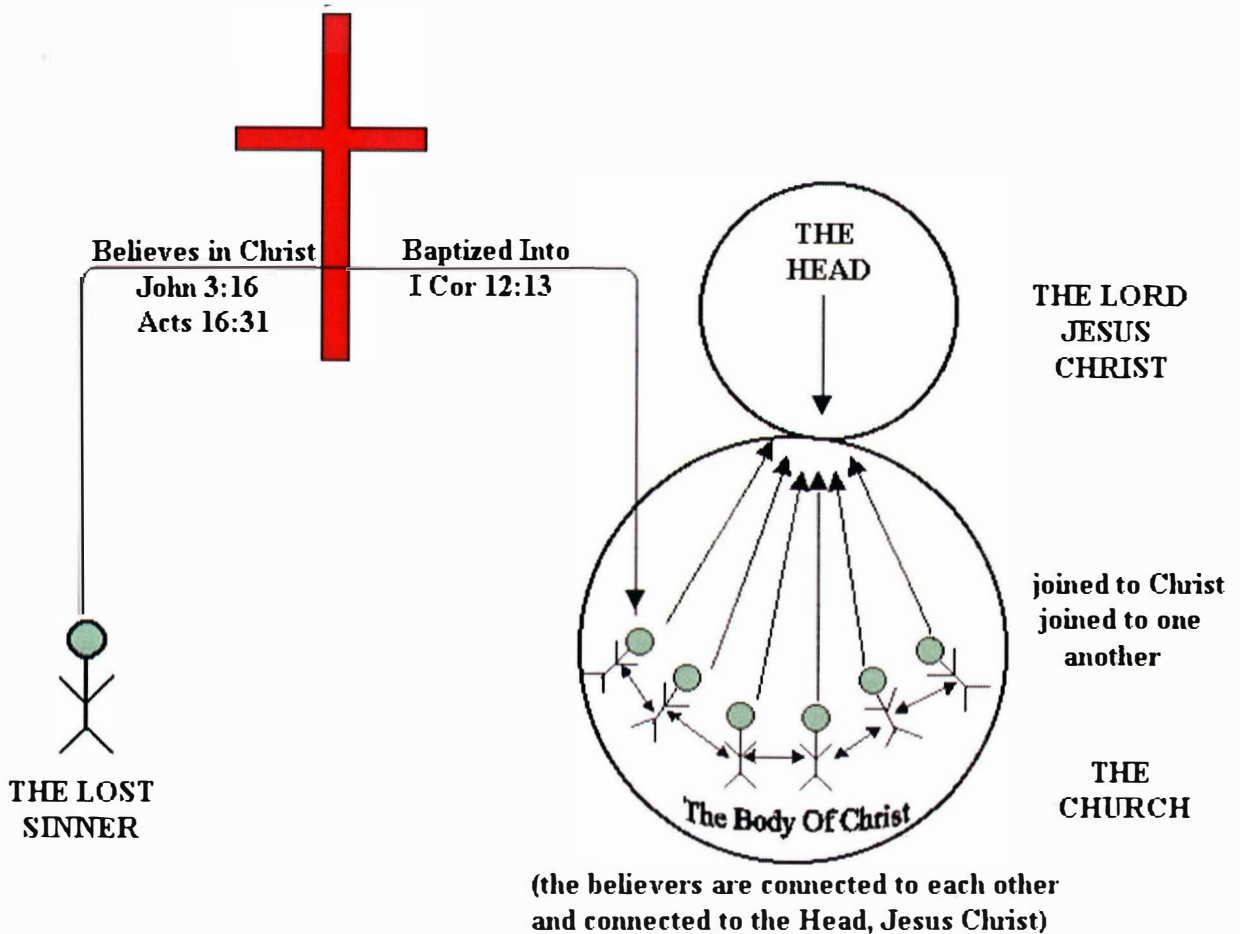
If the body were made up of just one member, then we would be in trouble!

For the body to function and work in the right way, it is necessary to have many members. The same thing is true with the body of Christ. It takes more than just one believer to have a Church. The Church is made up of **many believers**, just as a body is made up of **many members**. If you are saved then you are **one** of these members. But you are not the **only one**. There are many other believers who are in the body of Christ.

3. HOW DOES A PERSON BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?

How did I become a member of the body of Christ? This happened to me the moment I received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and believed on Him. But how did this happen? The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13--"For by one _____ are (were) we all _____ into _____ body."

The word "BAPTIZE" means "to immerse, to place something into something else." When a person is baptized in water he is immersed (dipped into) into the water. He is placed or submerged into the water. If you put a piece of paper in your Bible and then close the Bible, you could say that the piece of paper has been "**baptized**" into your Bible. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we learn that God has baptized or placed believers into the body of Christ. This happens the moment a person is saved, and this is illustrated below:



The moment you were saved, you became a member of this wonderful body! You became a member of the Church. You are not the only member. You are **one** of **many**!

4. EACH PART OF THE BODY IS LIVING.

The human body is a **living organism**. Each cell in the body is living. There is a big difference between you and the mannequin at the store. The mannequin looks human but has **no life**. You are a living person--a living organism.

The same thing is true with the body of Christ (the Church). The Church is not just an **organization**, but it is **living organism**. Every member of the body has life: "he that hath the _____ hath _____" (1 John 5:12). Every member of the body has the Holy Spirit living within (Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 6:19). Spiritually speaking, are you dead (Ephesians 2:1) or alive (1 John 5:12)? _____. Do you have the Holy spirit or not? Is the believer a living part of a living organism? Why?

5. THE HEAD OF THE BODY GIVES THE ORDERS.

In the human body it is the **head** that directs the members of the body. Your hand cannot do anything unless it receives an impulse from the brain telling it what to do. Your legs do not just start running whenever they feel like it; rather, they must wait for an impulse from the brain which tells them what to do. The head (with its brain) is the very center of all the operations of the body.

Here is another illustration of this: Suppose your hand takes something that it should not take (**stealing**). You cannot blame your hand for this sin. Your hand just did what you told it to. Or suppose that out of your mouth comes a lie. You cannot blame your mouth or your tongue for this sin. It is not your tongue's fault, it is **your fault!** The tongue only says what it is told to say. If you punch someone in the nose, you cannot blame your fist. Your fist only obeyed orders! Your fist did what you told it to. Could you imagine a criminal saying, "Judge, I'm not guilty. I did not shoot that person. It was my finger that pulled the trigger. I did not do it. If you want my finger to go to jail, that is up to you, but I'm innocent!" This would be silly! The finger only does what the head tells it to.

Who is the **Head** of the body of Christ? Who is the **Head of the Church** (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians. 1:18)? _____. Therefore, who should tell the members of the body what to do? _____. Where should we get our orders from? Who is our Boss? Who is the One who tells us how to operate and how to live? The members of the human body always obey the head. The sad thing is that the members of the body of Christ do not always obey the Lord Jesus Christ. We should and we must, but sometimes we fail to follow His orders. Where do you think His orders are found?

- | |
|---|
| <p>a. In the dictionary
 b. In the Bible
 c. Nowhere
 d. In the daily newspaper</p> |
|---|

6. NOT EVERY MEMBER HAS THE SAME GIFT OR FUNCTION.

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:15. Is the foot part of the body? _____ Is the hand part of the body? _____ Are there things that the hand can do that the foot cannot do? Are there things that the foot can do that the hand cannot do? Can you run faster on your feet or on your hands? Can you grab a baseball bat and swing it with your two feet? Does the body need **both** the feet and the hands to really work and function in the right way?

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:16. Is the ear part of the body? _____ Is the eye part of the body? _____ What can the ear do that the eye cannot do? _____ What can the eye do that the ear cannot do? _____ The body needs both the ears and the eyes!

The same thing is true in the body of Christ (the Church). God has given believers **different** gifts and abilities. Sam might be able to do some things that Hank cannot do and Hank might be able to do some things that Sam cannot do. One believer might be able to preach but he cannot sing. Another believer might be able to sing, but he is not gifted as a preacher. The ear can hear but not see and the eye can see but not hear. You need them both!

Robert McCheyne wrote about two lepers who were once seen sowing peas in a field. The one had no hands, the other had no feet--these bodily members had wasted away because of the disease. The one who lacked hands was carrying the other who lacked feet upon his back, and the man riding on his friend's back carried in his hands the bag of seed, and dropped a pea every now and then, which the other pressed into the ground with his foot; and so they managed the work of one man between the two. Each of these men could not do certain things, but **together** they were able to do the job. So it is in the body of Christ. Alone there are many things that we are not able to do, but when we work together we are able to do the job!

The same God who gave the human body everything it needs to function and to be healthy is the same God that has given the body of Christ everything it needs to function and to be healthy (see 1 Corinthians 12:6-7,11,18).

7. EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY IS NEEDED AND IMPORTANT.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21. Does the eye need the hand? Suppose the eye sees a delicious piece of candy. Does it need the hand? The eye is a wonderful member of the body, but the eye cannot touch or handle or grab or hold. The eye needs the hand to do these things. Likewise the hand needs the eye. The eye is important and the hand is important. Would you want to be without your hand? Would you want to be without your eye?

Can the head say to the feet, "I have no need of you"? (see 2 Corinthians 12:21) _____ The head may think, "I would like to get into that car and take a ride." But how is the head going to get to the car without the feet? The feet are terrible when it comes to thinking and the head is terrible when it comes to walking. The feet need the head to think and the head needs the feet to walk! Is the head important? Are the feet important?

All of the bodily members are important and all must **work together**. Think about a baseball player catching a ball in the outfield. The ear hears the bat hit the ball; the eye sees the ball. The brain tells the legs to start running in a certain direction; the arms and legs and body all move together in a certain way and then finally-- the baseball player jumps and catches the ball in his glove! For a successful catch all of the members of the body were important and needed. If the eye refused to see, if one leg refused to run, or if the arm refused to extend itself, then the ball would not have been caught.

The members of the human body work together very well, helping each other and needing each other. My lungs take air into the body. My brain, muscles and bones help my lungs. In order to move my bones I need help. My muscles help my bones move. My brain thinks and sends messages to all the parts of me. My brain needs oxygen which it gets from my blood, which got it from my lungs. My bones, muscles, brain, lungs, heart, nerves and stomach all help each other. This is the way it needs to be in the body of Christ. Believers need each other and believers need to help each other.

Before computers, people often used mechanical typewriters. A typewriter that functions well must have all of its keys working properly. Someone once wrote the following:

My typewriter works quite well except for one of the keys. Our Church is somewhat like that! Not all the keys are working properly. You may say, "Well, I am only one person. I won't make or break the Church." But, it does make a difference because to be effective a Church needs the active participation of every person!
DO YOU GET THE MESSAGE?

A carpenter's tools were having a conference. Brother Hammer was presiding, but the others informed him that he'd have to leave because he was too noisy. "All right," he said, "I'll go, but Brother Plane must withdraw too. There's no depth to his work. It's always on the surface." Brother Plane responded, "Well, Brother Rule will also have to go too. He's constantly measuring people as if he were the only one who's right." Brother Rule then complained about Brother Sandpaper, saying, "He's rougher than he ought to be. He's very abrasive and he's always rubbing people the wrong way." Brother Sandpaper was annoyed by Brother Saw, claiming that he had a very sharp and cutting personality. Brother Saw leveled his criticism at Brother Level, saying that he always tends to blame others for being crooked and unbalanced. Brother Level had a major problem with Brother Hand Drill, accusing him of coming along and sticking his long penetrating nose into other people's business. And wouldn't you know it, Brother Hand Drill was really bothered by Brother Clamp because Brother Clamp always seemed so uptight and never seemed relaxed.

In the midst of this bitter discussion, the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in. He spoke sternly to all the tools, rebuked them, and told them to hold their peace. He shared with them that everyone of them had a purpose and that they were uniquely made to fulfill that purpose. He told them that everyone of them was important and had a special job to do. The Carpenter told them that He needed every one of them in order to do His work. He then went to His workbench to make a pulpit from which to preach the gospel. He used the hammer, the plane, the rule, the sandpaper, the saw, the level, the hand drill and the clamp. Not one tool was untouched or unused. After the pulpit was finished, Brother Rule arose and said, "I see now that all of us are laborers together with God."

The same thing is true with the members of the Church, believers in the body of Christ. God wants to use all of us. Every member of the Church is needed and every member of the Church is important. Every one of us has our weaknesses and our character flaws and our sins. Sometimes the saints rub people the wrong way, but Ephesians 4:2 tells us to be forbearing one another in love (putting up with one another in love). See also Ephesians 4:32. May the Carpenter's tools remind us that if we are filled with the Spirit and yielded to God's control, then the Lord Jesus is able to use each of us in the body of Christ in a way that would please Him, so that we might build up one another and be a shining testimony to those who are outside of Christ.

If you are saved, you have a very **important** place in the body of Christ and the church **needs you!** Without the hammer, the Carpenter could not do his job. Without **you** the church would be missing one of its important and needed members!

We should also remember that some of the members of the body which are not so prominent and not so visible and not so "pretty," are very important. One member of the body which is very visible is the **eye**. The eye gets lots of attention. When you look at a person, you usually look at his eyes. Eyes are usually pretty (blue eyes, brown eyes, etc.). Some of the other members of the body are not so visible and not so "pretty." For example, the liver would not win a beauty contest. The lungs cannot be seen unless a person is having an operation, and the lungs are not the most beautiful part of the body. You can live without your eyes but you cannot live without your lungs. The heart, the lungs, the liver, the kidneys, etc.--all of these organs are very important even though they are not visible and they are not beautiful.

In the Church there are some members who are very visible and very prominent. Everyone sees the Pastor because he is always behind the pulpit. Choir members and those who play the instruments are also very visible. There are some members who are just as important even though they are less visible. There may be an elderly lady who is not seen by too many people, but she prays faithfully every day. One of the reasons the Pastor can preach as well as he does is because faithful people like this woman are praying for him and helping him and supporting him on their knees. People may not notice you as much as they might notice someone else, but this does not mean you are unimportant. See 1 Corinthians 12:22-24.

Being Content With God's Placement in the Body

A king once went into his garden and found everything withered and dying. Speaking to an oak that stood near the gate, he found it was sick of life because it was not tall and beautiful like the pine. The pine was discouraged because it could not bear delicious fruit like the pear tree, while the pear tree was upset because it did not have the lovely odor of the spruce. And so it went throughout the entire garden. Coming to a pansy, the king found its bright face as full of cheerfulness as ever. Said the monarch, "Well, little flower, I'm glad to find one who is happy amid this general scene of discouragement." "Your Majesty, I know I am of small account; but I concluded you wanted a pansy when you planted me. If you had wanted an oak or a pear tree, you would have set one out in the place I occupy. So I am bound to be just the **best little flower** that ever I can be!" The king smiled at the lovely pansy which brightened its corner of the garden, for its faithfulness gladdened his heart! Believer, you too have a unique place in God's plan—make the most of it!

8. A MEMBER (WHETHER HEALTHY OR SICK) AFFECTS THE WHOLE BODY.

If one member of the body suffers, who else suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26)?
 _____ If your thumb gets hit with a hammer, will your whole body be affected? How will some of the different members of your body react (for example, the mouth might say, "OUCH!")? If you have a stuffed up nose or a sore throat, doesn't your whole body feel miserable?

The same is true in the body of Christ. If one member is spiritually sick, the whole body will be affected! If one member is not being a good testimony at school or at work, this will affect the testimony of the entire Church. The opposite is also true. If one member of the body of Christ is healthy and doing well spiritually, then this will help the whole body.

Think about a baseball team. If one member of the team uses bad language and argues with the umpire and is a poor sport, then this will make the whole team look bad. On the other hand, if one ballplayer shows good sportsmanship and refuses to argue with the umpire (even when the umpire may have been wrong), then this good example will help the entire team. As members of Christ's body we are all on the same team. What we do is very important because it affects **the whole body!**

9. WHEN THE BODY IS HURT, THE HEAD FEELS IT.

If someone steps on your toe, immediately your head knows about it! A message is carried from your toe to your head. Whenever any member of the body is hurt a message is always carried to the brain and the head always knows about it!

When a believer is hurt, the Lord Jesus Christ always knows about it. He is the **Head** of the Church. When you touch the body, the Head feels it!

In Acts 8:1 and 9:1 we learn that Saul went about persecuting and hurting Christians. Then in Acts 9:4 Jesus met Saul and said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting _____?" Saul was hurting Christians but Jesus said, "Why are you persecuting **Me?**" (See also Acts 9:5.) Jesus was teaching Saul that when you hurt the **body** (Christians) you are hurting the **Head** (Christ).

No matter what difficulties or problems we go through Jesus knows all about them. When people make fun of us or speak against us or hurt us in any way, the Lord Jesus feels it! The members of the body have a wonderful relationship with their heavenly **Head**. We are connected to Him in a marvelous way!

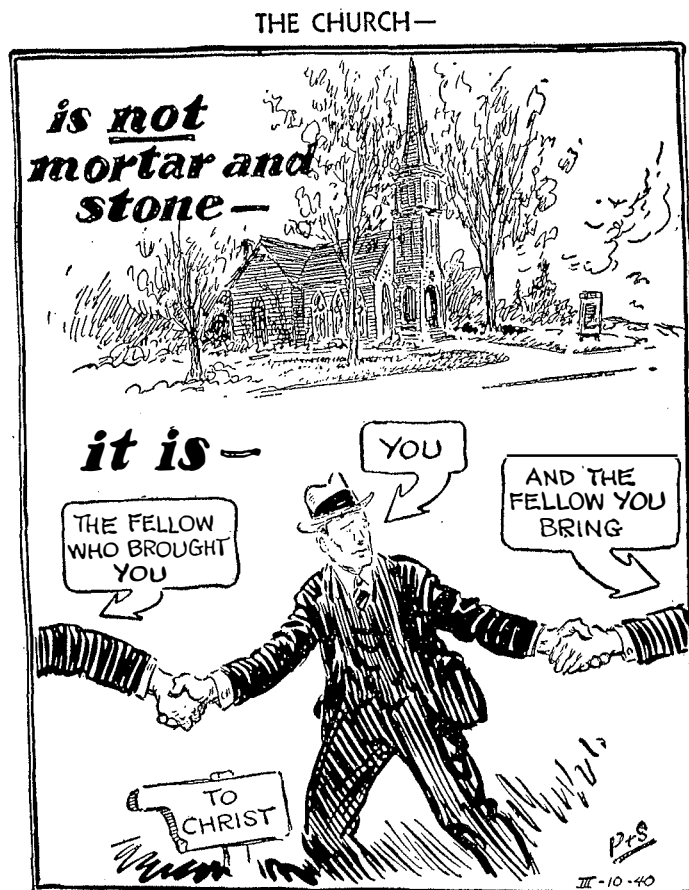
10. THE BODY MUST STAY HEALTHY.

The human body must stay healthy. This is the reason we need to take care of our body, get enough rest, eat the right kind of foods, etc. The body of Christ must stay healthy. The body of Christ is only as healthy as its individual members are.

As a member of the body, I should also remember that I do not need to be sick just because someone else is. Even if other believers are spiritually sick, God can still help me to stay healthy. The only person who can really keep me from being spiritually healthy is **myself!** If I am not spiritually healthy, I cannot blame other members of the body of Christ. I can only blame myself.

If many of the members are sick then the body will not be doing very well. How can a person be a healthy believer? What does a person need to do to be a healthy believer? How would you describe a healthy believer? What is a healthy believer like at school? at home? at church? **How healthy are you?** If other believers were just as healthy as you, would the body of Christ be doing very well?

God has given me a wonderful physical body. God has also given me the wonderful privilege of being a part of the body of Christ (if I am saved). Am I thankful for my physical body? Am I thankful for the body of believers? Am I thankful for the **Head** of the Church? Am I following His orders?



I CORINTHIANS 12

