

The Body of Christ:
The Look and Expression of Christ

- We live in a time and culture when people go to a special building on Sunday mornings, attend a 90-minute service, and call themselves members of a particular church!
- Have we ever read this in the New Testament? Do we find scripture that even slightly describes our faith this way? Do we even find anyone in the New Testament that “went to church?”
- I’m not trying to be legalistic, sarcastic or abrasive!
- I DO THINK that by the simple way we refer to this shows how we have removed the sacred and awesome mystery from what being The Church is!
- We are an assembly of The Body of Christ! We represent Him!
- Something that God has designed as a family has been reduced to an hour-long weekly meeting.

I. The one thing and priority that the Church of Jesus Christ is to be known for ...is love!

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

A. If THAT is what we are to be known for, what do you do with and how do you prioritize other important issues?

1. Issues of scripture?
2. Issues of agreement?
3. Issues of right and wrong?
4. Issues of preference?

B. Jesus makes it clear that our love is what attracts the world to us and our message!

1. Do we want to be known for great outreach...or love?
2. Do we want to be known for creative worship...or love?
3. Do we want to be known for powerful preaching...or love?
4. Clearly, God cares about this...so why do we not care?

C. Since we have received and experienced the greatest love possible shouldn't we not respond accordingly?

1 John 4:7-12 (NIV)

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

II. We have to come to the conclusion that like all other things about our salvation, loving each other comes from the supernatural enablement of His Holy Spirit!!! We need to learn to live as the Spirit enabled people we are!!!

A. Jesus prayed for us and all who follow Him!

John 17:20-23 (NIV)

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—

23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

1. What does this look like?

2. How do we get there?

3. Why do we assume that it is others who have to change?

4. Let me say that again...why do we believe that it is OTHERS who have to

change?

5. Do we even believe this is possible? Sadly, no for many of us!

B. It is not only true, it is how the Church was birthed in the beginning!

Acts 4:32-34 (NIV)

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all

34 that there were no needy persons among them.

1. One person put it this way by saying, "There is a real connection

between our unity and the believability of our message!"

2. Having the look and expression of Jesus doesn't come easy.

3. This is hard and is why SO MUCH of the scripture deals with it.

C. Churches come up with "strategies" and "programs" to draw people and the Lord has given us THE PERFECT WAY to draw people...loving one another!

1. Remember, whatever you use to draw people is what you have to use to keep them!

2. If it is a program or special outreach then you have to always "outdo" next time what you did last time!

3. Programs and outreach are great to use in ministering to people for the sake of ministering to them.

4. But if that is what you use to "capture new members" it will become a circus!

5. All of this is very difficult for us in the western consumerism driven society!

III. The lack of proper, Jesus led, Spirit empowered and relationally driven church environments are the reason we have so many people who say, "I am a Christian, but I worship Jesus on my own and am not a part of any church at all!"

A. We spend untold time and energies on so many things that exposes our lack of understanding of what a local church should really be.

1. Church attendance! Either not being a part ourselves or else fussing about others not being in service! The only real question is why do we not WANT TO BE HERE?

2. I truly believe we have lost the sacredness and value of being a part of a faith community!

3. There are several places in scripture where we see people removed from fellowship and it seems severe!

4. To us it doesn't seem like a big deal...and therein lies the issue!
5. It's not a big deal to us because we do not value our communities of faith the way we should!

1 Timothy 1:20 (NIV)

20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 (NIV)

14 Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed.

6. This is sometimes called excommunication or shunning! Why is that so bad?
7. Because of the lack of value in a church family, lack of reverence in those relationships and a lack of sacredness for the Body of Christ, it's no big deal to avoid gatherings and commitment to others! This ought not be!

B. The very center of our faith is the belief that God became flesh, lived among us and actually served and died for us!

Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

28 The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

1. As we have said earlier, most Christians attend church as consumers rather than servants!
2. Unfortunately we just accept this and learn to ignore it because they bring their money when they do come!
3. God wants us to be like His Son Jesus rather than consumers!

Philippians 2:1-8 (NIV)

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness
8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.