



LEARNING TO SERVE

a core course of Life Transformations

Del Wells

INCLUDES STUDY GUIDE

Lesson 3: Body Ministry

The Big Deal!

You are a part of Christ's body.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

The first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels, tell the story of Jesus coming from heaven to earth and ministering with compassion to people everywhere He went. After His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension back to heaven, Jesus set in motion a continuation of His earthly ministry. The church, made up of His followers, has been commissioned to carry out this global task. Every Christian has been appointed to be Jesus' personal representative.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (v.27)

Our physical bodies are object lessons to help us understand the body of Christ - what it is, what it does, and how you and I fit. The church is spiritual in essence, but operates through flesh and blood people for the cause of Christ. The church belongs to no man but to Christ Himself. We become part of Christ's body by faith in Him.

1. Why is it important to remember that the church belongs to Christ?

The body is where God produces togetherness for Christian believers through partnership in life encounters and serving. It is also where spiritual and physical health and wholeness can be experienced through prayer, the study of God's Word and community-building. In an environment of cooperation and openness, new possibilities to grow in faith are created. You are better able to engage challenging situations with confidence and minister with compassion to people in need.

Body life is the result of believers sharing their lives with one another for the sake of the whole body. This is where unselfishness can be perfected.

Body life requires honesty and vulnerability from its members in order to become authentic representatives of Jesus that positively gain the attention of those outside the church.

2. What is the potential impact upon your community as your church models healthy body life?

Benefits of Body Life

A. A Body to Belong To (1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13)

Christ only has one body, not many bodies (v. 12; Romans 12:5). This is like your physical body that is one unit but has many different and unique parts. However, all the parts still belong to your body.

Everyone who is in Christ by faith is part of one spiritual body. The body does not belong to any one of the members, but to Christ Himself. Jesus has rightfully assumed this position of authority over the body at great expense, His sacrificial death on the cross.

The body of Christ is to be a place of love, acceptance and forgiveness for all who believe in Jesus. Regardless of your age, the sins of your past or your feelings of inadequacy, every

follower of Christ is loved, accepted and forgiven by Him. This makes the body of Christ a very inviting place to belong.

3. How does the body of Christ meet your need to belong to something significant?

B. A Body to Connect With (1 Corinthians 12: 14-20)

The body is a combination of parts, not one part by itself. The individual parts of the body cannot survive on their own but must be connected to the others (v. 15, 16). No part of the body, whether spiritual or physical, can declare independence from the body and exist.

God determines what body part you are. You do not get to choose your position within the body. There may even be times when you would prefer to be another part for any number of reasons. Always remember that the arrangement of the body parts is God's idea and as the master planner of all things, He knows exactly what He is doing (v.18).

4. What is the advantage of God arranging the body and not you?

Every body part has a unique function. It is important for you to stay joined to the body for the welfare of everyone. In doing so, you can experience close connection with others.

5. How does your connectedness help you develop your serving abilities?

C. A Body to Care For (1 Corinthians 12: 21-26)

Each part of the body needs all the other parts to be healthy and growing. No part is indispensable, whether it is seen or mostly unseen (v. 21-23). You will notice that in your own physical body, the vital organs are those that are unseen and yet are considered very important. Likewise, your visibility in the body of Christ is not what determines your value to the church. Because all of the members of the body are valuable, equal concern for each member is promoted. The condition of any member of the body impacts the whole body and care is therefore necessary for every individual part so that the whole body can be fully healthy. Every body part, whether seen or unseen, must be looked after.

6. Who is responsible to meet the needs of the members of the body?

It is unproductive and ineffective to designate the care of the body members to a few people. For maximum health, care of the body becomes the responsibility and privilege of every member. In order to receive ongoing support and encouragement however, you must stay accountable to the body in order to mature and grow the way you should (Hebrews 10: 24, 25). The more you miss meeting with the members the more you feel disconnected and uncared for. You also miss opportunities to contribute to body health and growth as well as receiving the blessing that this can bring.

7. Why do members often resist being accountable to the body?

D. A Body to Serve From (1 Corinthians 12: 27-31)

God has designed the body to serve others according to His will. As body members, we help one another discover and use the gifts God has given us to serve with. In these scriptures you are introduced to a representative list of gift groups that God has designed to accomplish care for His body and ministry to the world.

“And in the church God has appointed...” (v.28)

a) Administrative Gifts (Covered in Lesson 6)

“First of all apostles, prophets, teachers...”

This list corresponds to Ephesians 4: 11-13 which expands to include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

The primary function of the administrative gifts is to prepare body members for ministry (works of service).

8. What do you think your pastor’s time should be spent doing?

b) Manifestation Gifts (Covered in *Life in the Spirit* Lessons 7 & 8)

“Then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing...and speaking in different kinds of tongues.”

This list corresponds to 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 which includes the message of wisdom, message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

These manifestations are special gifts God gives beyond your own abilities as they are needed, to help you accomplish your mission.

9. Name some ways that these gifts would assist you in serving God and others.

c) Ministry Gifts (Covered in Lessons 4 & 5)

“Those able to help others, those with gifts of administration.”

This list corresponds to Romans 12: 6-8 which includes prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership and showing mercy.

The ministry gifts are the spiritual means for your service. They describe your designed function to make the best impact as part of the body ministry.

10. Which of these ministry gifts do you think is the most important?

God has provided your church body with the necessary gifts to do what He has called you to do. The *greater gifts* (1 Corinthians 12:31) are not gifts of superior value than others, but are the gifts needed to bring maturity and wholeness to the body at that time.

All the gifts are vital to maximize body life. The preferred goal is to have every member of your body recognize his gift and designated place in the body and be equipped and released to enjoy effective and productive service. The well-being of the entire body is affected by your participation.

Your Response

Picture your church as the body of Christ:

Thank God that He has made you a part of it.

Think about all of the different people that are also members of the body. Name some of them and thank God for including them.

Ask God to show you how you can contribute more effectively to the health of the body.

Ask God to prepare you to serve with a greater understanding of the gifts He has made available to you (Lessons 3, 4, 5).



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Lesson 3: Serving With Others

The Big Deal!

Emphasize that every Christian is a member of the Body of Christ and has a part to play in ministry.

Question 1 – It is easy to forget that the church exists to accomplish Christ’s purposes and not yours. You may be tempted at times to ask what the body can do for you instead of what you can do for the body. Also, keep in mind that Jesus sets the agenda for the church and not those with money or power.

Question 2 – Body life will not become ingrown and mundane if new people are being added to it regularly. This happens as the community is positively impacted by transformed people in the everyday world by Christians modeling honest and healthy relationships.

Question 3 – Most people today are looking for somewhere to belong where they are loved and accepted regardless of age and imperfections. The body provides that place of belonging.

Question 4 – God is the master planner of all things who knows precisely where each part of the body belongs. You are limited because you don’t have perfect knowledge.

Question 5 - Belonging puts the onus on you to do your part to encourage and facilitate overall growth of the body. You are being counted on.

Question 6 – It is an impossible task for a designated few people to meet the needs of the whole body. It was never Christ’s intention that the leaders do all of the pastoral care. Ministry to the body is a responsibility of all of the members.

Question 7 – People often feel like they are losing their freedom when they make themselves accountable for their spiritual growth and actions. However, the cost of being unaccountable includes feeling disconnected to the body and uncared for.

Question 8 – Listen to the common ideas about what a pastor does, then make the point that the pastor, along with the other administrative gifts, actually has the primary function to prepare the body members for ministry. There will be further opportunity for discussion of this concept in lesson 6.

Question 9 – Manifestation gifts are special enablings of God beyond our own natural abilities, given to help us accomplish God’s agenda as they are needed. These gifts are covered in greater detail in lessons 7 & 8 of *Life in the Spirit*.

Question 10 – The ministry gifts are all equally important in accomplishing Christ’s mission. These will be discussed in lessons 4 & 5 in greater detail.

Discussion Group Questions – Lesson 3

1. Why do you think the Bible describes the church as a body?
2. What advantage is there for you to be part of a body rather than being on your own?
3. How important is the fact that there is only one body of Christ? What are the implications?

4. Why is the body of Christ a good place for every person to belong?
5. What parts of the human body can survive without being connected to the whole body? Why?
6. What things do you do to take care of your physical body? Why do you do these things?
7. Who benefits when the body of Christ is taken care of and grows healthy?
8. Is your function in the body of Christ to serve or be served? Explain.
9. What are you doing to promote a healthy church body?