



**PARKSIDE**

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*The weekly newsletter article of Parkside Chapel*

# LIFE NEWS



## Part of the Body

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Scripture uses several metaphors for the Church in the New Testament. The Church is the body of Christ, each member is needed for the body to function properly. The Building - we are each being formed into living stones so that the full building can be completed. The Family - we are the children of God and therefore brothers and sisters. These metaphors give us the different vantage points from which to understand the Church. As I write this month, I want to encourage you by discussing your place in the body of Christ.

In order to speak to our place in the body of Christ, we must first understand what the Church is. On the one hand, we have the universal Church. This is what the Church Fathers called the catholic Church. This church includes everyone in the body of Christ around the world.

As a Believer you are part of the universal Church. You are brother or sister to all those who have believed in Christ Jesus. Often as the biblical writers speak to issues in the church, they are not speaking to the universal Church but to the local church. A local church is a group of believers who gather to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, learn from the apostles' teaching, fellowship together, and practice the ordinances together. When Paul speaks to love for one another or bearing burdens or any other issue in the church, these commands apply to the universal Church for sure but are meant to be applied to your local church.

The writers of scripture assume involvement in the local church, and that to believe in Christ is to be part of the Church and therefore part of a local church. In many

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Christian circles this assumption cannot be made. Instead, we believe that we can make it without the church. Or we have been hurt by the church and so no longer wish to be part of it. According to scripture, we do not get much of a choice. Hebrews 10:25 makes it clear that we are not to neglect gathering together. Hebrews, which is written to those scattered throughout the near east, instructs the readers to not give up getting together for church. That even as they find themselves in strange cities and cultures, they are to find the local body of Christ and become part of it. Hebrews 10 also makes it clear that there will be those who are in the habit of neglecting gathering together. They do not see value in it or are afraid of the cultural implications and so they give up on the local body of Christ.

I fear that often the reason we are not being pushed to good works done in faith is because we do not know where we fit into the church. We neglect coming together because we believe the lie that we have nothing to offer. 1 Corinthians 12 tells us that we each are part of the body that is essential. As a Christian, you have been given gifts which God wants you to use in the church.

*4 "Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. 7 A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good: 8 to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, 9 to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues. 11 One and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as he wills.*

These gifts were given so that the church could function properly. Without your gifts the church cannot function properly. We find them as we are together with the body

of Christ. As we focus on Christ and take time to study scripture together and as we encourage each other in our gifts, it is in this kind of coming together that we find unity. Not simply attendance but engaging with Christ, his word, and his people.

Hebrews continues to give us the reason to not give up: it is in the church that we are able to encourage each other and spur one another on to good works. The Church is not meant to simply be a place I come to hear a message and sing songs. It is a body and a family. There is obviously more to gathering together than simply occupying the same room. In the church we belong to each other. We are brother and sister not simply fellow church attender.

This level of relationship requires us to show up and to be open with each other. This is often uncomfortable and difficult. Because it is in the church that we can share our burdens. It is in the church that we can help others in their time of need. It is in the church that we can rub shoulders with those who are nothing like us. It is in the church that we are confronted for our sin and called to repentance. Or at least it should be.

My question then is this: is Parkside Chapel this kind of Church? Are we pushing each other to do the good works of the kingdom? Are we confronting sin? Are we comforting each other with the comfort we have received from Christ? Or have we allowed the disunity of the world to come into the church? We can only answer these questions as we gather together and engage with one another.

This year may we engage together as we grow into the image of Christ.



by Jeremiah Shawver, Youth Pastor