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## Committed to His Church



### QUESTION 1:

*What are your first memories of church?*

## THE POINT

Commitment to Christ includes a commitment to His body, the church.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“Any friend of yours is a friend of mine.” Many of us have used that timeworn phrase, but as we get to know a friend’s friend, we may change our tune. Just because we have something in common with a friend doesn’t mean we have anything in common with his other friends.

Friendships are one thing, but it’s a whole different matter with those we love. If someone said to me, “I love you, but I can’t stand your wife,” I would be devastated. My wife is a part of me, and someone can’t truly love me without also loving my wife.

Such a negative attitude toward my wife would always be a barrier in our relationship.

We hear a similar statement in our culture: “I love Jesus, but I don’t love the church.” Maybe they’ve been hurt by people in the church or they found commitment to the church is too demanding or difficult. Whatever the reason, this sentiment is far from the heart of God. The church is the bride of Christ.

We are to love that which Christ loves, and that includes His bride, the church.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ROMANS 12:3-5

**<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. <sup>4</sup> Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.**

Regardless of our view of the church, if we are connected to Christ as His followers, we are connected to the church. “We . . . are one body in Christ” (v. 5). We do not lose our individuality or uniqueness, but we have an inseparable connectedness with other Christians. We can be different in our race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, but we are all one in Christ.

Our physical bodies provide a great illustration of how we are one in the church. Look at your hands. Look closely at each individual finger. Now look at your feet. Grab a mirror and look at your nose and eyes. Consider how incredibly different your hands, feet, nose, and eyes are from one another. Each one functions separately, and they certainly don’t look at all alike, but every one is a part of you. You are one singular body, made up of different, unique, and amazing parts. While your right thumb or your left eye

is a distinct part of your body, both are still parts of your body—and that reality simply cannot be changed or altered. So it is with the church.

Paul took it a step further. It’s not just that you are connected to Christ and I am connected to Christ, but we are “individually members of one another” (v. 5). We need each other, and we belong to each other! My role in the body of Christ is integral to your role in the body of Christ, and your role is equally essential in how I carry out my role. Christ has formed His church so that we need each other if it is to function as a healthy body.

### QUESTION 2:

***What does it look like when a church sees itself as one body in Christ?***

All this is only possible because we are “in Christ.” The world looks at diversity and creates divisions (and unfortunately, believers have often bought into those divisions). The world sees black and white, Republican and Democrat, blue-collar and white-collar, and on and on. With that mind-set, we separate ourselves into camps, tending to stick with those who are “just like me.” But within the church, those divisions are meaningless. Christ reaches into all these silos of distinction and brings people to faith in Him. He loves us all equally and brings us together through our shared faith.

Consequently, this means no believer is “to think of himself more highly than he should think” (v. 3). Rather, we are to “think sensibly,” acknowledging that none of us is better than another. We are unique—and uniquely gifted by God—without degrees of importance or superiority. We truly are “one body” in Christ.

## ROMANS 12:6-8

**<sup>6</sup> According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one’s faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.**



We need one another to grow, flourish, and become everything God has called us to be. Other believers help and support us through the different gifts He has given to each one of us. We often refer to these gifts as “spiritual gifts.” When we are saved, each one of us—each member of the body of Christ—is given a unique gifting that we are to use for the purpose of helping the body of Christ—the church—be everything she has been created and called to be.

Paul only listed a few of these gifts: prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, and showing mercy. This is not an exhaustive list of the gifts. Paul also referred to gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:11, and each list is slightly different. Paul meant to provide examples of spiritual gifts and how they are to be used. For instance, if we are gifted with service, we are simply to “use it in service.” Paul offered no deep explanation; in fact, he did quite the opposite: he stated the obvious. “We are to do that which is obvious to us and which we feel compelled and capable of doing.”<sup>1</sup>

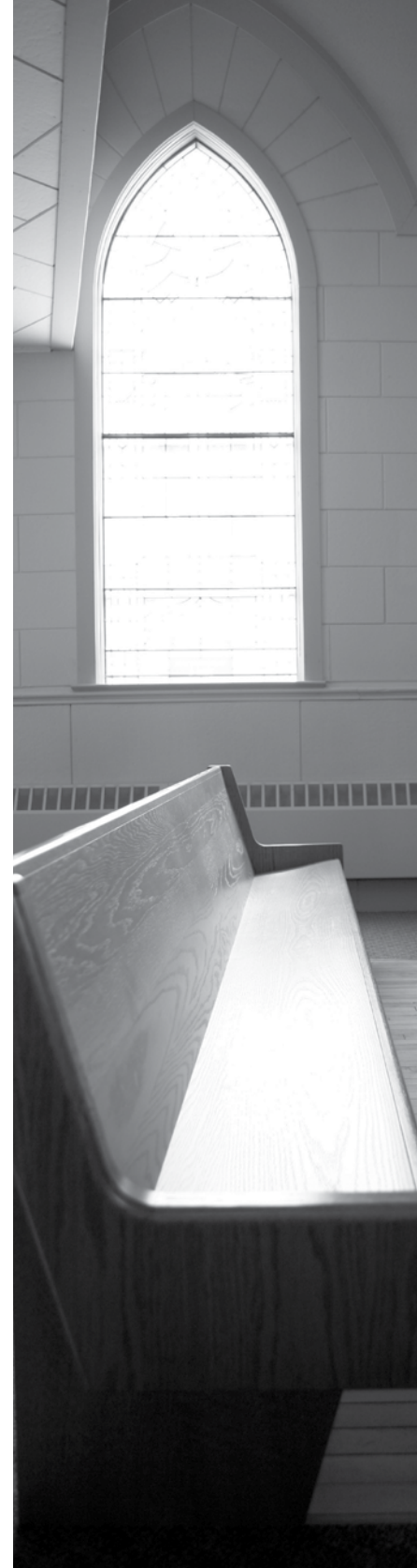
Our human tendency is to think some gifts are more important than others. Conversely, far too many Christians believe they don’t play an important role in the kingdom of God. That idea cannot be derived from this passage!

The church does not function and grow only because preachers preach and missionaries do missions. The body grows as each one of us uses the gifts God has graciously given us. Regardless of whether you are young or old, rich or poor, male or female, you are a critical part of the body of Christ! The church can never reach its full potential until all the individual parts use the gifts God has given them for the good and the growth of the body.

If your church is anything like my church, it has problems—just like every church in the world. Unfortunately, no perfect church exists this side of heaven; no matter how hard you look you simply will not find one. But we create a greater problem when we point the blame at different parts of the body. “If only my pastor were a better preacher.” “If only my church had this kind of music or that type of program, then the church would become healthy and grow.” “Evaluating and assessing blame” is not included in any of the biblical lists of spiritual gifts! Instead we are to exercise our gift “according to the grace given to us” (v. 6) and we are to do our part to build up and work for the health of our church.

**QUESTION 3:**

***When have you been encouraged by someone using his or her gifts in the church?***



## ROMANS 12:9-16

**<sup>9</sup> Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

In verse 9, Paul gave us the “secret ingredient” that enables the body of Christ to grow, thrive, and become the healthiest version of itself: “love.” This is the Greek word *agape*, a word that expresses the essential nature of God (1 John 4:8). This is not a term that describes emotions; it’s a word about how we act. We are not called to have just warm and fuzzy feelings about the church; rather, we are to love the church by serving her with our hearts and lives. We act with a love-infused, “all-in” commitment.

### QUESTION 4:

***How does humility promote harmony in the church?***

Paul built on this *agape* love by referring to *philadelphia*: brotherly love. We are to “love one another deeply as brothers and sisters.” This is all too often contrary to how we view love. I’ve sat in countless marriage counseling sessions where a husband or wife will look

at me and say, “You know, I’m just not in love with my spouse anymore.” What that individual means is that he or she doesn’t have the warm and fuzzy feelings once experienced toward the spouse with whom they entered into the covenant of marriage. I tell them, “I understand that you may not be ‘in love’ with them, but now more than ever you need to LOVE THEM.” They may not have feelings they once had toward their spouse, but now more than ever they need to act with love, serving and caring for their spouse.

Why should we love and serve the church in this sacrificial way? Because that is exactly how Christ loved us. Since Jesus loves us—His bride—in this sacrificial way, how then can we not love her in the same way?

### QUESTION 5:

***What are some ways being part of a healthy local church help us live out these verses?***

## A CASE STUDY

*Read the following scenario.*

*Then develop a response based on what you've learned in this study.*

**A friend tells you she doesn't see any need for attending a local church. She says she studies her Bible at home, listens to a Christian radio station for worship, and subscribes to several sermon podcasts.**

**Based on this study, how might you respond?**

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*“Church attendance is as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man.”*

DWIGHT L. MOODY

