

life group study guide

ON3 BODY

MAY 20, 2012



On3 Body (Eph 4:1-16)

One of our greatest allies at present is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the Church as we see her spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy. But fortunately it is quite invisible to these humans.

Screwtape, a senior devil, instructing a junior devil on how to tempt and trap humans. C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters.

God made the human body, and it is the most exquisite and wonderful organization which has come to us from the divine hand. It is a study for one's whole life. If an undevout astronomer is mad, an undevout physiologist is madder. Henry Ward Beecher

Discussion

In our culture today, church attendance is declining.

- Why do you think this is?
- Why do you attend church?

Introduction

Bible study – 1 Cor 12

Paul writes to those at Corinth explaining spiritual gifts, the church, and Christian unity. In this parallel passage to Ephesians 4, we see the Trinity expressed in and through the body of Christ.

Read 1 Cor 12:1-3

Before becoming Christians, Paul describes individuals being led astray to “mute idols”.

- What are “mute idols in our society today”?
- How are we led astray?
- Who leads us into a confession of Jesus as Lord?
- How can we discern the wise choice among competing interests seeking to lead us?

1 Cor 12:4-7

- What things among the church are in variety?
- What things are in unity?
- How are the three persons of the Trinity mentioned in these 4 verses?
- For what purpose does Paul say these manifestations of the Holy Spirit are given?

The United States adopted the phrase, E Pluribus Unum, as a motto.

- What does this phrase mean?
- How does it apply to the church?

1 Cor 12:8-10

- What are the specific gifts listed in these verses?
- Do you know your spiritual gift?
- How do you learn what your spiritual gift is?
- Is it wrong to desire a certain spiritual gift?

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1 Cor 12:11-13

In verse 11, Paul reiterates the “sameness”, or unity in the gifts.

- What is that unity?
- Why do you think he continually stresses the theme of unity in these verses?

In verses 12-13, Paul begins his analogy of Christ’s church to a physical body.

- How does one become a member of the body?
- What divided the Corinthians prior to being a part of the body?
- How are these divisions manifested today?
- How can we work to overcome what divides people and seek unity in Christ?

1 Cor 12:14-26

Paul draws a distinction between a member of a body—with a specific role and gift—and the body itself

- What are the reasons causing disunity that Paul mentions?
- How does he refute them?
- What are some dividing lines in the church today?
- How can we work to overcome them?
- What is God the Father’s role in the body? (see vss 18 and 24)
- What purposes are mentioned for God’s actions in composing the body?

1 Cor 12:27-30

Paul again points out the diversity of gifts and the unity of the body. The church at Corinth had many problems that surfaced and created division. Jealousy, envy, gossip, self-centeredness, the desire for power or recognition all contributed to a lack of unity, purpose and power for that church.

- How do we overcome those same tendencies in church?

1 Cor 12:31

Paul points us to the solution for the problem dividing the church. This entire chapter was leading to his explanation of the missing ingredient, love. 1 Cor 13 describes the “more excellent way” and the greater gift we are to desire—love.

If time allows, read 1Cor 13 aloud. Pause and meditate on these verses in light of the teachings of 1 Cor 12. After completing this study, would you answer the first two discussion questions differently?

Application

How do you determine your spiritual gift and its application in the body of Christ that meets at Kingsway?

1. Look up – pray for discernment
2. Look for guidance – the Kingsway Church website has fantastic tools online to help you (at the home page, go to Serve Central, and then Spiritual Gifts and/or Spiritual Gifts Assessment); ask those close to you.
3. Look around – what jobs go lacking for which you are gifted to serve? (The volunteer opportunities are listed under the Serve Central area of the website—including those currently most in need.)