

If We Are The Body...

This is the title of a wonderful song by Casting Crowns. It is also the idea behind a question that I want to pose to all believers. What should the body of Christ look like? Of course, there is the follow up question; what *does* the body of Christ look like?

Love

Jesus said, "I'm giving you a new commandment: Love each other in the same way that I have loved you. Everyone will know that you are my disciples because of your love for each other." (John 13:34-35) "Love each other as I have loved you. This is what I'm commanding you to do." (John 15:12) "Love each other. This is what I'm commanding you to do." (John 15:17) The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, continued this theme. "However, one debt you can never finish paying is the debt of love that you owe each other. The one who loves another person has fulfilled Moses' Teachings." (Romans 13.8) "We also pray that the Lord will greatly increase your love for each other and for everyone else, just as we love you." (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

The writer of Hebrews and, Peter and John also were inspired to stress that we are to love our fellow believers. By looking at this I get the impression that God is serious about this issue. Doing a search of the New Testament I found twenty-two separate verses that contain the phrase "love each other". Is this why I see church groups suing each other over property ownership? Is this why I see churches saying that if you don't use their favorite translation of the Bible you are "going to hell"? As Christians we need to remember Jesus' words about love.

Devotion to God

The apostle Paul wrote, "Finally, brothers and sisters, keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable." (Philippians 4:8) While we certainly live in a corrupt world with all sorts of evil around us, this in no way means that we have to take part in this corruption. I see believers who are very familiar with the latest episodes from some very questionable TV shows. They can tell who is sleeping with whom, who "came out of the closet" and all sorts of other things that the Bible discourages. I have been told that I can be too critical of these things, and maybe I am to a certain degree. Jesus said "you don't have anything in common with the world. I chose you from the world, and that's why the world hates you" (John 15.19) I believe that He was telling us that we should avoid these kinds of things. He also said that it's what comes out of our hearts that makes us unclean. Things like "evil thoughts, murder, adultery, other sexual sins, stealing, lying, and cursing" (Matthew 15.19) are symptoms of a defiled heart, a heart that is not focused on God. Paul knew that we, even as believers, could get in this condition. That's why he told the Philippian believers to keep their thoughts on things that are right or pure. What we feed our hearts is what our hearts will become.

Jesus said to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Are we? Or are we putting other things above God? Or trying to share our hearts with other things. Make no mistake; anything that you try to place above or beside God becomes a god.

Purity

Acts 15.20, 29, 1 Thessalonians 4.3 and 1 Peter 2.11 tells us that we are to abstain from sexual immorality. Jesus tells us that we are involved in immorality if we look at what we shouldn't with lust. (Matthew 5.28) Peter said that the unrighteous “can't stop looking for sin” and they are “cursed”. (2Peter 2.14) Being a Christian is like a marriage; we are to remain pure for our Husband. In fact, we are called “the Bride of Christ.” This is not a physical relationship, so why are we so quick to say that *if* we are not cheating “in the flesh” then it's all right? The marriage union between a man and a woman is sacred and should not be defiled. Christians will readily agree to this. How about the relationship between the believer and Christ? Is this, somehow, less important? Absolutely not! It is infinitely more important. Anything that strains or tears at this spiritual relationship must be avoided. Jesus will not share you with any other. If you are His, you have been bought with a very high price. Can you say that you are not into witchcraft if you can't wait until the next Harry Potter book or movie comes out? Or that you keep up with every episode of Disney's *Wizards of Waverly Place*? Jesus will not share you with any one or any thing. Can you say that you are pure when you give in to peer pressure on issues that the Bible clearly calls sin?

One final thought: The apostle Paul said that we are to “avoid the appearance of evil” (1Thessalonians 5.22). Maybe a particular thing isn't wrong. You know that you are right with God and it's not a big deal. But how does it look to others? Paul said that he would stop eating meat if it caused his brothers to stumble. God is working with me on some things in my life. Is there anything that He wants to talk about with you?

© 2009 Rev. Tim Lehmann – 21st Century Christian Ministries

<http://21stCenturyCristian.org>

<mailto:info@21stCenturyChristian>

Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are made using GOD'S WORD® translation of the Bible. GOD'S WORD® is a copyrighted work of God's Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.