

## **The Church is a Body of One**

It was called “the greatest scab and cancer on the face of Christianity in two thousand years of Church history.” Brought on by a class action suit on behalf of more than 160,000 onetime believers who contributed as much as \$7,000 each in a ministry that over the years amassed an empire worth \$158 million dollars. However, this so-called Christian ministry didn’t appear to be very wise with the use of this money.

For instance, one time they spent more than \$100 on a purchase of cinnamon rolls. Not eat them, but just so they could smell them in their hotel room. But not only that, they had a regular practice of spending over \$100,000 on a private jet just to fly their clothing across the country. Then they spent \$60,000 in gold-plated bathroom fixtures and thousands of dollars on an air-conditioned dog house that turned out to be too noisy for the dog so he never even slept in it.

And on top of that, this husband and wife duo received annual salaries of \$200,000 each and even awarded themselves over four million dollars in bonuses. And because of this, they owned a six mansions, lots of luxury cars and had forty-seven separate bank accounts. And of course I’m talking about the Church scandal of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker.

Now how many of you guys **after that scandal** could never look at eyelashes the same again? But folks, believe it or not, big creepy eyelashes weren't the only scary things about that scandal. **Get this.** The creepiest thing was how it forever overnight changed **the way people viewed the American Church.** I mean, correct me if I'm wrong but ever since that scandal, does not your average person today think the Church is full of nothing but weird greedy hypocrites who only want to swindle you out of your money, right? But folks, believe it or not, as creepy as that scandal was, did you know there's one even bigger than that. And it's not only being repeated **every single day**, but it's being repeated by **millions of Christians all at the same time.** And can anybody guess what it is? Hey, that's right! It's when Christians act like they've got **practical amnesia!**

Oh, we say we know who we are as the Church, but half the time, with our lips and with our lives, we act like we've forgotten who we are. And it's not only detrimental in our walk with Christ. It keeps others from believing in Christ. Therefore, to avoid this **atrocious** of Christian's living like they got practical amnesia by not knowing who they are, we're going to continue our study from the Word of God on the people of God entitled, **"Will the REAL Church Please Stand Up?"**

And we've already seen the **first thing** we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we've got practical amnesia is that the Church is the **Body of Christ**. And then last time we saw the **second thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Brides**. And there we saw how the American Church no longer acts like we've got a beautiful loving intimate bride-like relationship with Christ. No! We act like we've got a dry stale stupid boring religion with Christ. **Why?** Because we've not only treat it like one, we celebrate it like one!

But people, believe it or not, did you know that's not the only thing we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we got practical amnesia? The **third thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of One**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

**Ephesians 4:1-6** "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. You and I the Church are made up of many different "bodies" **physically** but **spiritually** in the eyes of God we're considered what? A **Body of One**. **Why?** Because our **unity** is not achieved on the basis of external appearances but because of an

internal spiritual truth. That is, we all have one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one hope, one God, which makes us all what? **One** right? **And here's my point.** Surely, we all know that, right? I mean, surely every Christian who's ever lived knows that the Church is a **Body of One**, right? Well, you'd think so, but we've got some problems. **Why?** Because if you look at most Churches it doesn't look like we've got a **unified bond of peace** with each other. Are you kidding! It looks like we got a divided wall of separation with each other!

So why in the world would Christians **behave so divisive** when the Bible says we're already unified? Hey, great question. I'm glad you asked. It's pretty simple. The **first reason** we behave so divisive is because **We Give into Spiritual Favoritism.**

**1 Corinthians 3:1,3,4** “Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world. You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. When one of you says, ‘I am a follower of Paul,’ and another says, ‘I prefer Apollos,’ aren't you acting like those who are not Christians?”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the major issues Paul had to keep confronting over and over again with the Corinthian believers was what? **Divisions in the Church.** **Why?** Because they were being **selective** with who they we're going to hang out with. They were giving into **favoritism**, right? Oh you can hear them now, “Why, I'm only

going to hang out with Paul! After all, he comes from a big city like me.”

“Oh yeah! Well, I’m only hang out with Apollos. He’s more down to earth and after all, he’s of the local boys.”

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church would never do something like that, right? I mean, surely that was a mistake that only the Corinthians did, right? People, are you kidding! If you believe that, I’ve got a chicken ranch in Alaska to sell you! Come on man! Let’s be honest. **Giving into favoritism** was not only a problem with the Corinthian Church. It’s a huge problem with the American Church! I mean, you’ve been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don’t see the Family of God mingling together in a blessed unity. No! You see, Christian cliques separating each other week after week!

And you might be thinking, “So what? So I only hang out with the same people every week. What’s the big deal?” Big deal? I’ll tell you what the big deal is. What did the text say? When Christians act like this, they’re acting like what? Like **immature babies**, right? In fact, they’re acting like they’re not even Christians at all! **Why?** Because people we’re a Body of One! We’re the unified Family of God. **And because of that** there’s no stinkin’ reason for a Christian **to ever** have to feel like an outsider. In fact,

the Bible says we need to **go out of our way** to make sure all believers feel like they fit in, just like these boys did.

“Ian was a fifth grade boy in Oceanside, California who one day got the news that he had cancer. And so having no choice in the matter, he immediately had to begin chemotherapy.

And if that wasn't bad enough, Ian faced the reality of having his hair fall out in clumps so he had to shave his head. And this of course, as you can imagine, wasn't a very cool thing to have to do for a fifth grader.

But then that's when one of Ian's classmates, Kyle Hanslik, got an idea. He said, 'If all of us boys in the fifth grade have our heads shaved, then nobody will know who's who. They won't know who has cancer, and who doesn't.'

So Kyle, and the rest of the fifth grade boys, made their manly decision. All thirteen went to the barbershop and shaved their heads too. Why? Because as Kyle said, 'The last thing Ian needs now is to feel like he doesn't fit in.'”

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say those boys understood the importance of needing to fit in somewhere, how about you? Exactly! **But here's my question.** Why is it a group of fifth grade boys can get it, but the American Church can't? Why is it that ten year olds can sacrifice and shave their heads for a boy with cancer, but we can't even shake the hand of a fellow Christian?

People of God, there is no excuse for a Christian to ever feel like an outsider when they go to Church services. **Why?** Because our God-given unity ensures that **no matter who we are**, we should always have a place to fit in! And people, I'm telling you, the longer we give into **favoritism**, we'll

not only cease to be a unified Body of One, but we'll actually turn into a divided **Bunch of Snobs**.

Oh, but that's not all. The **second reason** we behave so divisive is because **We Give into Spiritual Elitism**.

**Acts 2:44,46,47** "And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the reasons why the early Church experienced so much growth was because of what? They not only lived in harmony with each other in Church services, but **get this**. They carried that harmony right into their homes. I mean, can you believe that? Christians hanging out with each other outside of Church services? And so when people came to check out this **unified behavior** what did the Church do? Well, apparently they welcomed them with open arms because God did what? He was adding new people every single day, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church does the same thing, right? I mean, surely we too open our arms wide to **newcomers**, right? People, are you kidding! If you believe that, I've got a box of frozen chicken lips to sell you as well! Come on man! Let's be honest. **Giving into elitism** is a huge problem with the American Church! I mean, you've been

there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see the Family of God excited to see new people coming to praise God Most High. No! You see, them giving visitors the ol' cold shoulder and the deadly evil eye!

And you might be thinking, "So what? So I'm not the warmest welcome wagon to every new person that walks through the door. In fact, I could care less if any new people walk through that door. What's the big deal?" Big deal? I'll tell you what the big deal is. People, we are a Body of One! We're the unified Family of God. **And because of that** there's no reason for a **newcomer** to ever feel like an outsider. **Why?** Because has it ever occurred to you that God might want to have **other children** in His Family besides you and I? Hello! And people, that's precisely why the Bible says we need to **go out of our way** to make sure **all newcomers** get a warm welcome, **no matter who they are** like this man did.

"One Sunday, a college student named Mike decided to go to Church services across the street from his dorm. So being a college student and all, he showed up in his regular attire, which included torn jeans, a T-shirt, some pretty wild looking hair, and no shoes.

And when he got there, not only had the service already started but the sanctuary was completely packed and he couldn't find a seat. But he didn't want to give up, so he just started down the aisle getting closer and closer to the pulpit.

Well by now, all eyes were on him and the congregation was getting very uncomfortable with his presence. And since Mike still couldn't find a seat, just squatted right down on the carpet in front of the pulpit.

Well, by now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. And it was about this time that a deacon sitting in the back of the Sanctuary, got up out of his pew and headed towards the boy. He was a very dignified man in his eighties and wore an elegant three-piece suit.

And as he was approaching the boy, the congregation was saying to themselves, 'You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and stature let some college kid sit on the floor?'

And as the deacon finally made it to where Mike was sitting, the whole congregation was completely silent. You could have heard a pin drop. But then suddenly, with great difficulty because of his age, the deacon lowered himself and sat right down next to Mike so he wouldn't have to worship God alone.

And at this the minister simply said, 'What I am about to preach, you will never remember. But what you have just seen, you will never forget.'"

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say that deacon did a pretty good job of welcoming that newcomer, how about you? **But here's my question.** Why is it an eighty year old man can get it, but the American Church can't? Why is it that an old man can sacrifice his own comfort zone and sit on the floor with a strange boy, but we can't even share a pew with a stranger?

People of God, there is no excuse for a newcomer to ever feel like an outsider when they go to Church services. **Why?** Because God wants us to welcome others **no matter who they are** just like He did with you and I.

And people, I'm telling you, the longer we give into **elitism**, we'll not only cease to be a unified Body of One, but we'll actually turn into a divided **Bunch of Bigots**.

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** we behave divisive is because

### **We Give into Spiritual Racism.**

**Galatians 3:26,28** "So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians – you are one in Christ Jesus."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. One of the most revolutionary truths **you will never find in this world** is that the moment you get saved, all gender, all racial, all ethnic barriers are what? They're forever removed, right? Therefore, the opportunity to become a part of God's family is opened to who? To anyone and everyone, right?

And **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we all know that red or yellow or black or white, they're all precious in Jesus sight, right? People, are you kidding! **Giving into racism** is a huge problem with the American Church! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see the Family of God advancing God's love to all kinds of people. No! You see, them retreating behind stained glass windows and big ol' steeples.

And you might be thinking, “So what? So I don’t reach out to different people for Christ. In fact, I could care less about reaching anyone. What’s the big deal?” Big deal? I’ll tell you what the big deal is. People, we are a Body of One! We’re the unified Family of God. And because of that there’s no reason for **anyone** to ever feel like an outsider. **Why?** Because has it ever occurred to you that God might want to have all kinds of **different children** in His Family besides you and I? Hello! And people, that’s precisely why the Bible says we need to **go out of our way** to make sure **everyone** gets an opportunity to hear the gospel, like this Church did. The following is a story about a Church in North Carolina that learned to share God’s love to anyone and everyone during the sixties in the segregated South. However, it wasn’t always that way. Listen to what they had to go through before they started behaving as a Body of One.

“In the fifties, a friend of mine named Clarence Thomas, fifties was once invited to go to a Church service in North Carolina. This was prior to the civil rights movement in the sixties and segregation was still very much prevalent. But much to his surprise, when he got there, he discovered that the congregation was totally integrated, fifty-fifty, black and white. And given the times, he was obviously surprised at this, especially in North Carolina where racism was so extreme.

And so when the service was over he asked the ol’ hillbilly Preacher there ‘How’d you get this way?’

And the ol’ hillbilly Preacher said, ‘What way?’

And Clarence responded, 'You know, black people, white people together. How did this happen?'

And the Preacher began his story. 'I'll tell you how we got this way. You see, we were a small Church and had about twenty members.' (Well Clarence said there were hundreds and hundreds in the congregation that night.)

And the preacher continued. 'And one day our Preacher died and we couldn't get a new Preacher no how. So after two or three months I went to the deacons and told them that if they couldn't get a Preacher that I'd be the Preacher. So they let me preach.

I got up there the next Sunday and I opened up my Bible and put my finger down (that's the way they do it back there in the hills) and it landed on a verse. It said, 'In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, that everybody's one in Christ Jesus.'

And I told them that the Church, when the Church is a true Church, that they don't know any of these racial divisions, they don't know any of these ethnic divisions, that everybody's one in the Church of Jesus Christ. I preached that to them. And after the service was over, the deacons called me in the back room. And they told me they didn't want to hear that kind of preaching no more.'

And Clarence said, 'Well what did you do then?'

And the ol' hillbilly Preacher said, 'I FIRED them deacons!' (Well, if a deacon's not going to 'deac' and an elder's not going to 'eld,' you got to fire them.)

And Clarence said, 'How come they didn't fire you?'

And the Preacher said, 'Because they never hired me! And once I found out what bothered those people, I gave it to them every week!' (Do you know Preacher's like that? Once they find out what bothers you, they put the knife in at the same spot every time and turn it?)

Clarence said, 'Did they put up with it?'

The ol' hillbilly said, 'I preached that Church down to four!' (You know, sometimes people, revival begins not when you get a lot of new people into the Church. Sometimes revival begins when what? When you get a lot of the old people out of the Church.)

Then Clarence said, 'Well, what happened then?'

And the Preacher said, 'Well from then on we wouldn't let anybody in that Church unless they really loved Jesus.'

And Clarence said, 'How can you tell if people really love Jesus?'

And the Preacher said, 'Well, when people love Jesus, they love each other no matter who the other person is.'"

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say that Church was doing a real good job of being a Body of One, how about you? **But here's my question.** Why is it that an ol' hillbilly preacher can get it, but the American Church can't? Why is it that a Church in the South is willing to share God's love with anyone and everyone but the rest of us won't?

People, we don't a revival in America. We need revival in the American Church! **Why?** Because apparently we can't stop **playing Church** instead of being the Church long enough for revival to take place! And people, that's why being a Christian is not a game. What we say and do not affects the eternal destiny of people around us. Therefore, it's high time we get rid of our **practical amnesia.** We've got to remember who we are! We're not a bunch of snobs or bigots and we're not a bunch of racists. The Church is a Body. **A Body of One!**

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To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

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