

Ephesians: Sit. Walk. Stand. (Adapted from HTB)

Session Three: Body - Christ's body in the world

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group, and enjoy a short time of worship together (e.g. singing, soaking, waiting on God in silence, praying through a Psalm, journalling etc.).

Introduction

(5 minutes)

[Read the paragraphs below aloud to summarise the main points of the previous session.]

Last week we thought about 'Our inheritance in Christ'. God is like a very wealthy father with plenty of gifts for his children. In Ephesians 1:18 Paul speaks of a 'glorious inheritance'. As a group recall to mind some of those things you've inherited by being a child of God.

In this session we begin looking at 'Walking as Children of Light', which is a bit like driving a car: you drive a car from the place of sitting. So it is with walking as Christians – if we want to get it right and walk in the world as children of light, then we need to do this from a place of sitting with Christ. Sitting is always followed by walking – we bring who we are with Christ in the heavenly places into this world in which we are living. The church is now the main way in which God reveals himself to the world. It is first and foremost as members of Christ's body, corporately, that we walk as children of light revealing Jesus to the world.

Bible study

(20 minutes)

1. **Read Ephesians 1:22; 2:11-22; 3:6 & 10 and 5:25.** Why is the Church, the Body of Christ, so important?
2. Teresa of Avila said: 'Christ has no body now on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours, ours are the eyes through which to look out: Christ's compassion to the world. Ours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.'
Read Ephesians 4:3-6. What does Paul say about the Body of Christ?
3. What do you think about the fact that there are thousands of denominations around the world? Why is it a bad witness?
4. Why do you think there is so much negativity surrounding the church? Increasingly young adults (20-30's) are opting out of church. What elements of these verses could encourage them to re-think things?
5. **Read Ephesians 4:11-13.** Paul is setting the church this goal: 'You, by default of being Christians, are the body of Christ. But at the moment you are infants, babies spiritually. The church now needs to grow up, and mature so that it begins to reflect Christ more and more.' How does the church do this?

We do this by all playing our parts for the sake of the whole body. We all need to know what our role is in order to play our part. If you are a Christian, this means you are a member of the Body of Christ. This means you have a role to play. And this is GOOD NEWS! It means that we don't have to worry about not being adequate or having a role. Each one of us has precious, needed gifts.

[Note: There is no DVD/audio clip for this session]

1. The following quote is attributed to Rupertus Meldenius: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity."

Diversity between people, cultures and traditions can lead to disunity in the church. How does the above quote help you to approach this issue?

2. A.W. Tozer writes: "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become unity conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and a higher life."

The way to truly draw near and be 'in sync' with each other, is to all 'bow to Christ, the individual standard'. Have you thought about this before? What problems arise when we set the standard apart from Christ?

3. In his book "The Screwtape Letters", C.S. Lewis describes the Church from Screwtape's point of view as "... spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. But it is an army of individuals each providing something special in the Divine plan if he will only allow God to help. The role of the individual has been distorted. Starting with the doctrine that every individuality is 'of infinite value', we then picture God as a kind of employment committee whose business it is to find suitable careers for souls, square holes for square pegs. In fact, however, the value of the individual does not lie in him(self). He is capable of receiving value. He receives it by union with Christ. There is no question of finding for him a place in the living temple which will do justice to his inherent value and give scope to his natural uniqueness. The place was there first. The man was created for it. He will not be himself till he is there."

Do you see God as a recruiter who 'finds suitable careers for souls, square holes for square pegs', or do you believe God created you to fulfill a unique purpose? How do the different perspectives change your sense of the role you are to play in the Body?

4. Think about what part God has called you to play? Perhaps you can go around the group and identify the gifts that you think each member brings to the Body?

Pray that you would be able to play your part in building and guarding the unity of the Church.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you where he has gifted you, and how you can use this gift to build up the body of Christ.