

"Back to School: P.E. Class"

October 18, 2015

**Welcome/Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

P.E. class was so dreadful that some folks have a life-long aversion to gymnasiums, coaches, or anything that is even remotely athletic in nature. So, ironically, they refuse to take good care of their bodies – the very thing taught in P.E. class.

1. Take some time to discuss your experience with P.E. class as a child.

Unfortunately, some folks have a similar disdain for anything spiritual. It's not because they are anti-Christian, but rather because, some time, somewhere, they've had a bad experience with the church. Many persons want nothing to do with the Body of Christ because they have tried it and found it sorely lacking. Using physical education terminology, the church is terribly "out-of-shape."

2. In what ways would you describe the church as being "out-of-shape"?

On numerous occasions, the New Testament writers describe the church in terms of being a "body." The Apostle Paul encourages the Ephesian believers to exercise proper care of it:

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. <sup>2</sup>Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup>For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. <sup>5</sup>There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.

<sup>11</sup>Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup>Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup>This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup>Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup>He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the

other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16 NLT)

3. Discuss Paul's suggestions for taking care of the Body of Christ.
4. Discuss the results of taking care of the Body of Christ in verses 14-16.

### **Ways to Keep *the Body of Christ* at Lynn Haven in Tip-Top Shape**

#### **Break It Down**

1. A common accusation leveled at the church is that it is **hypocritical**.

The word, *hypocrite*, comes from a Greek word that means "actor." *Webster's Dictionary* provides two definitions: a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion; a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.

Many people are turned off to the church because they have encountered too many so-called Christians who are just playing a role, and it's easy to see through the charade. Other self-proclaimed Christians are hypocritical because they act in contradiction to their stated beliefs.

1. Discuss times where you have either acted as or seen Christian hypocrites.
2. How did these experiences affect your faith?
3. What would you say to someone who called Christians hypocrites?

The alternative is being **Christ-like**.

The Apostle Paul exhorts believers in this way:

"I beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God...Growing in every way more and more like Christ..." (Ephesians 4:1, 15 NLT)

4. What are some areas that are especially difficult for people to "lead a life worthy of [their] calling?"
5. How might people overcome these difficulties?

2. Another reason people are turned off by the church is because they find it **divided**.

When folks see that kind of division, dissension, and contention in the church, they are disappointed, become disillusioned, and vow never to be a part of it.

1. Why is it so easy for churches to become divided?

Instead of being divided, the church should be **united**.

“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace...We all come to such unity in our faith...” (Eph. 4:3, 13 NLT)

There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. A healthy, in-shape church is a united Body of Christ. That becomes a powerful force that can transform the world.

2. Discuss a time when you saw the church act united for one cause. How did it change the community and/or the world? How did it grow your faith?

3. One of the worst experiences people have with the church is when it is found **negligent**.

Ken Callahan (UM pastor, church consultant) made this statement: almost everyone who drops out of the church does so because they got hurt.

1. Talk about some ways the church can be negligent towards people.
2. How might you help someone who has been hurt by the church?
3. What are some ways the church can prevent being negligent towards people?

In contrast, an in-shape Body of believers is **compassionate**.

As a congregation grows in size, it requires an increasingly intentional effort to act compassionately. It's what Paul is talking about when he says, “Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love...so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” (Ephesians 4:2, 16 NLT)

4. Discuss a time when you experienced the church's compassion.
5. What are ways you can become a more compassionate member of the body of Christ?

4. Finally, some people no longer want to participate in the church because, at some point, they have been made to feel like “**benchwarmers**” among “**superstars**.”

Everybody wants to feel significant and needed. So when they get left on the “sidelines,” they lose interest in what is going on. A church is terribly “out-of-shape,” when a few folks do everything while everyone else just sits and watches.

But an “in-shape” congregation knows the value of **teamwork**.

The human body is made up of many parts, but all have a function to perform. Some parts are greater, some are lesser, some are visible, some operate behind the scenes – but all are important.

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

“Christ] makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”(Ephesians 4:11-12, 16 NLT)

There is also something very attractive about being a part of team.

1. What is attractive about being a part of a team?
2. How might feeling a part of a team affect a person’s faith?

### **Closing**

1. How will you commit to putting this lesson from P.E. class into practice and do everything you can to keep this “Body” in the best shape possible?

While we have a role to play, we can’t do it ourselves. Everywhere Paul talks about the Body of Christ he also talks about the Holy Spirit.

- v. 3 “Make every effort to keep yourselves united *in the Spirit*”
- v. 4 “For there is one body and *one Spirit*”

Ultimately, health and vitality in the Body comes through the work of God’s Spirit. We must rely on Him to keep us “in shape.” Our part is to keep ourselves united *in* the Spirit and united *with* the Spirit.

### **Close In Prayer**