



## Body of Christ!

by Mark Brunner

### *Location–Location!* (I Corinthians 12:13)

"Location, location." I recently had a discussion with an old Realtor friend of mine about the appraisal of our property here at Beech Springs. We talked about the various things that an appraiser would be looking at, including how finished my remodeling work was, the number of bathrooms, even things as simple as whether or not I had painted the support beam posts in the basement. And then he added that old familiar disclaimer known to all who buy and sell realty: "Location, location!" What really mattered was location. How close was I to the nearest freeway and a myriad of other "location" issues. "Ultimately," he said, "if we wished to sell the property the mere value of the home in materials would not be the deciding factor. The geography of the home and the setting, rural, urban, wooded, etc. would affect the asking price and the willingness of the buyer to meet that price."

How about our value as believers? If we are a part of a small church are we any more or less valuable than someone who is a member of a large church with a whole lot more resources?

Here's a thought: The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Corinth that "the Body" resided there, in Corinth. He calls it "one body" and not part of the body. Christ is not divided up among the various parts of the body. Rather, He exists in total with each of the various locations of the Body. Each church,

regardless of size or resources, possessed Christ's full leadership and the fullness of His blessings through the Holy Spirit. The value of the location, unlike my property at Beech Springs, doesn't reside in how it is located geographically or somehow connected with the other churches. No, the value is in the "oneness" that exists in every location of the body, whether that is in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin or rural North Dakota. Location? We find the Body of Christ, in total, in every place where two or three gather to worship and glorify the Savior. In that respect it is often harmful to the unity of the Body to focus on the size of the church or, for that matter, the broader aspects of the institutional church, whether that be denominational headquarters or even district groups. It may also engender "holier" thinking. For example if a seminary or a church headquarters were to disappear, would the body be less holy? No, the body is whole, holy in and of itself wherever it is located. It does not depend upon "other" locations to be whole. Christ would then be divided. Location? It may be important when you're trying to sell your home. But location to God is not important. How His Word is located in your heart has far more value than where you choose to worship on a Sunday morning.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *More of Fred & Less of George!* (I Corinthians 12:14)

When I was in High School we had a pretty decent football team. Like so many High School teams, the success of the team seemed to be centered on the quarterback, George, the star of the team. George was 6' 2" tall, weighed over 170 and had a great arm. He had all the makings of being a pretty good quarterback at age 17. The thing about it was that George also believed the hype. When the local paper ran a story about how the team had done-in this or that opponent and then mentioned his name, George sort of let it go to his head. He made it known in practice and during the game that his arm and play calling ability were what made the team great. Now, if you're a 200-pound lineman, charged with protecting George from the opponent's 200-pound linemen, that didn't sit too well. It wasn't long before one of the opposing linemen got a free pass to rush the quarterback, courtesy of Fred the right guard, and George

landed on his glorious rump. After that George was always careful to mention how important the talents of each member of the team were to making the team a success.

You and I and millions of other Christians make up the church, the Body of Christ, here on earth. What kind of relationship does God want us to have with other believers; dependent or independent? Here's a thought:

Just as George had talents but he was not the team, so too you and I. Some are quarterbacks and others linemen. Alone they are at best ineffective. But, joined together as a team, we are dynamite. My High School football team won games when it played as one body of 11 young men on defense and 11 young men on offense. They often lost games when they didn't. God didn't design all believers to be George's. Instead, He designed us to play well with a George, and George with us. Position isn't important; it's the chemistry that binds the players together that was. That chemistry was a mixture of loyalty, sacrifice, and dedication. Similarly, the chemistry that binds believers isn't talent; it's love. The love of Christ takes the spiritual gifts God gives each of us and produces fruit. In that respect, the church on earth IS an organism: one part dependent on the other to give it function and life. All too often the body becomes a bunch of Georges and a whole lot of Fred's just going through the motions. Nothing really gets done and no one wins. You and I, everyone, has a role to play in God's plan for his church. No one's role is the same or more or less important. We need Georges and we need Fred's. The value of their roles isn't in what they do but how they do it together. God's way is teamwork. While individual effort is important, Christian teamwork is essential. Teamwork trumps individual effort every time.

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*A Peculiar Love!* (Romans 12:1-2)

I belong to CORSA, the Corvair Car Club of America. Membership in CORSA is a brotherhood, without a doubt. People outside of CORSA would not understand the passion and dedication that CORSA members have for their rear-engine, classic cars now out of production for over 40 years. Simply, you have to own one to appreciate the feelings. I attended a CORSA meet a few months back. There were over 75 cars at the meet along with hundreds of CORSA members from all over the Midwest. I had never met any of these car owners before, but that didn't make a difference. I donned my Corvair jacket, drove down to the meet in my Corvair and parked. There were no strangers at the meet. We all had one thing in common: Corvairs. That was all it took to break the ice. These brothers and sisters were like family.

When we come together with other Christians, do we treat them as family, love them as we would a family, or are we content to treat them just as "those" people?

Here's a thought from Rudyard Kipling: "All of us are we—and everyone else is they." A family shares things like dreams, hopes, possessions, memories, smiles, frowns, and gladness. A family is a clan held together with the glue of love and the cement of mutual respect. A family is shelter from the storm, a friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No person is ever alone who is a member of a family. So, does it not make sense that we should consider all those of like mind and heart as family? How cruel the world would be if the only protection we knew was within the small confines of our homes. Rather, to me it makes greater sense to envision a family as a broader, and less confining place. May it be that family is more of "they" and less of "we." That way, I might find comfort here, there and any place that I go."

Jesus preached a Gospel of Love, love for all mankind. Our neighbor is anyone who has need and we are aware of that need. But there is also another kind of love, no less or more important just different; that's love for the members of the Body of Christ. I believe that's the love described in Romans and Corinthians when Paul addresses the small little churches of his day. This love is peculiar to Christians, members of the Body of Christ. It's a love based in Christ that can't be understood or appreciated by the world. There are no strangers in the Body of Christ, only brothers and sisters with something very important in common: the love of Christ. In that respect we can't expect the world to understand or

embrace that love outside of the brotherhood of believers. Our family is, therefore, a much broader horizon than just our home and hearth; our family is bordered only by the breadth and depth of Jesus love; more friends and few strangers.

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## *Magnetic Reconciliation!* (Romans 13:8)

Holly and I love dogs. And, as any dog owner can tell you, several humans and a number of dogs equal a dog pack (at least in the eyes of a dog). Dogs treat their human masters as pack members. Owning dogs, if you lay down on the floor for a nap, the odds are that one or more will be there to groom you just as they groom each other when they lay in front of the fireplace or snuggle together in a comfy chair. That's just what dogs do when they get together. To a dog, their human master or mistress is not a human but a very large, very dominant, human member of their pack. If one of the doggie members of the pack gets to go for a ride in the truck and the other remains at home, they become anxious, pacing around the house anticipating the missing pack member's return. It's no different for the human members of the pack. When Holly and I go to work or leave to go to the store or out to eat, the canine members of the pack line up at the kitchen window and watch us drive away. They become anxious and begin to pace the floor as soon as they determine that it's time for their human members to return. The pack, in this respect, is a place of what I call "magnetic reconciliation." There's just a certain kind of magnetic attraction that keeps the pack together and draws it back together again.

You and I are members of a very large pack, in that respect; the Body of Christ, the church on earth. When we are together there is a force that ties us together; when we are apart, there is a force that reconciles us to be together again.

Here's a thought: The Body of Christ is similarly reconciled to one another. By the Holy Spirit, we are drawn together and, when drawn apart, we long for reconciliation with the Body. This is magnetic in that it doesn't rely on our own

intuition and habit to initiate the longing for fellowship. Rather, the longing is the actual sighing of the Spirit within us, calling us together. When our human-member, dog pack is broken, however temporarily, the mood and demeanor of the dogs is changed until the body is made whole again. Whatever conflicts or dominance were in place when the pack was whole is set aside until the missing members are returned to the pack. The fellowship of the pack is founded on who is dominant. When the pack is not whole, the fellowship is broken. So it is with the Body of Christ. Love determines the fellowship of the Body. When the Body is not whole, the love is not whole because each member of the body completes the wholeness of love within the Body. The Spirit calls us to fellowship and the fullness of the love of Christ. We feel that call and long to be reconciled to the Body. The magnetic attraction of love, the love of Christ, is irresistible. If it is absent, the Spirit is absent. But, if the Spirit is present, the love is inevitable.

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## *Same Hammer, Different Drill!* (Ephesians 3:14-15)

When my dad passed away a number of years ago I inherited a number of his workbench stalwarts, tools that he had used for years on-and-off in various remodeling projects around the house. Some of the tools are timeless. For example, the hammer with the solid hickory handle; even though the peen was worn down by countless contacts with nails and 2 x 4's, it was still a pretty good hammer. Although most hammers now sport synthetic handles and carbon steel peens in the years since dad purchased this one, the basic function and purpose is unchanged. And that would go for many of the other tools that came into my possession: the screwdrivers, open-end wrenches and pliers. The basic design of these essential tools hasn't changed much in centuries. But, there are a couple of exceptions; Dad owned a handheld drill. Although you can still purchase a manual drill, they are pretty much obsolete in this era of electric drills with auger bits. The old hand crank, manual drill is a curiosity and now hangs on the wall of my workshop, a relic that once had great utility but, with changing times, the need for a hand-held, manual drill is rare.

You and I are like that drill in a way. Each of us possesses a skill or talent that God uses to build His Church, but, over time, some of these skills or talents may have become obsolete, replaced by newer gifts and skills that God is using today to do work never even thought of 2,000 years ago.

Here's a thought: The Body of Christ, the Church, is unchanging in purpose; as Christ instituted His church over 2,000 years ago through a fresh and vibrant plan for reaching unbelievers with the message of salvation that will never change. He is the head and we are the body; together, body joined in submission to the directing head, the work would got done 2,000 years ago and is still getting done today. The family of God, the Body of Christ, His church on earth, derives its name from Christ, the Son of the Father. That has and will never change. But, the tools that Christ has used to build His body over the course of these many centuries has. Some tools, like those old screwdrivers and the hammer, never change. When you and I preach and teach the Word, we are using the same tools that the early Christians used. However, there is no reason to believe, like that old manual drill, that there may be some tools unknown to our Christian forefathers that Christ will use today in building His church; and, for that matter tools that He may have used in days gone by that He has relegated to display only relics today. The Body of Christ IS and the Body of Christ IS BECOMING. Thank God for the sameness; thank Him also for the newness.

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