

RESULTS IN LOOKING OUTWARD

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship
Grace Church, One Body Seminar #6
Various Texts
October 22nd, 2011

INTRODUCTION

One last time I'd like to remind you that a healthy body of Christ submits to Christ as its head, recognizes that it is one body with many members, functions with individual members using their individual gifts for the common good, experiences God's promised grace, enjoys true fellowship, and results in an outward focus.

We're going to wrap this seminar pretty quickly here. Before we do, however, I'd like to do two things. First, I'd like to point out one last thing regarding the body of Christ. And second, I'd like to spend some time talking about what we're going to do about all of this.

OUTWARD RESULTS

One last thing about the body of Christ: When the body is functioning properly there will be remarkable peace and joy experienced by everyone who is a part of it; but, it will never terminate there. Instead, it will always result in an outward focus. If there's no outward focus, the health of the body is an illusion. Just like a healthy corn plant will produce corn a healthy body of Christ will extend itself beyond the body.

I'm simply going to list five ways that a healthy body will look out. We can (and have) other seminars to flush these out. I simply want to mention them for you to weigh.

1. Loving neighbors. When we are healthy as a body we will love the lost around us. They will be the object of our compassion and service too.

Matthew 22:36-39 *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"* ³⁷ *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* ³⁸ *This is the great and first commandment.* ³⁹ *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

2. Evangelism. The primary expression of our love outside of the body of Christ will be to speak the gospel to those outside of the body of Christ in the hopes that God would be pleased to add them to the body of Christ.

Mark 16:15 *And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."*

3. Orphans and widows. Scripture repeatedly calls on the people of God to have special concern for the orphans and widows. The Church is meant to be a father/husband to the fatherless and widow.

James 1:27 - 2:1 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

4. Sick and downtrodden. In addition to the orphan and widow Scripture places heavy emphasis on the Church's responsibility to love the sick and downcast.

Matthew 25:35-40 *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,* ³⁶ *I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'* ³⁷ *Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?'* ³⁸ *And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?'* ³⁹ *And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'* ⁴⁰ *And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'*

5. Global body. Finally, but not really outward looking, is the global body of Christ. The body of Christ includes all Christians everywhere, but it seems to me that we can easily forget our brothers and sisters in

Christ around the world. Some of whom find themselves daily suffering and being persecuted for their faith; including missionaries sent out from us. When our local churches are functioning well we will be concerned for the rest of the Church elsewhere.

***2 Corinthians 8:1-5** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints- ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

APPLICATION

I have a series of questions here designed to get at one question, what are we going to do about all of this? Whether you were greatly challenged or greatly bored the fact remains that God expects us to act on his Word. We have all just seen a fairly significant picture of the body of Christ. We are responsible now for living accordingly. What are we to do?

1. Which part of the definition of a healthy church most stood out to you and why?
2. Which part of the definition of a healthy church do you most need to work on?
3. How does/should the headship of Jesus effect the way in which you interact with the body of Christ?
4. What are some ways that we ought to respond to the fact that in Christ we form one body with one purpose with equally valuable and necessary brothers and sisters in Christ?
5. What are your gifts and how are you using them for the glory of God and the good of the Church?
6. Which of God's means of grace in the church do you need to do a better job of taking part in? What has made it difficult for you to do so up to this point?
7. Have you ever experienced the kind of fellowship that we talked about today? If so, when? If not, why not? What can you do to move towards that kind of fellowship?
8. What do you think of the fact that a healthy body of Christ always ends up focusing outward? Have you experienced this? What was the result?