

Session Three: Gathered as a Gifted Body, Into a Loving Family

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[0 : 00] Hey guys, welcome back to Gospel Growth.

This is One Harbor's Life on Life discipleship course, and we have been talking together about how disciples are gathered around the gospel. I wanna just take a couple minutes and talk about this idea of the church gathered.

In case it's a new one to you, really where we get the word church from in the Bible is a Greek word called ekklesia, and it meant a congregation or an assembly but the word means a people called out of and called into, and the idea comes from we are people called out of the kingdom of the world and called into the kingdom of God, and so we get all through the New Testament this idea of gathering, but we get these different pictures of the church that it's described in different ways.

The gathering's described in different ways, and we wanna just take some time to show you some of those different ones because they're all really important, and if you just kinda latch onto one, you end up with a very sort of narrow view of what the church really is.

You miss out on so much stuff, and you also end up overemphasizing the one that you really grabbed a hold of, and so some of these might be familiar to you, some of these might be newer to you, but all of these are gonna be really important for us as we grow together as disciples in gathering around the gospel.

[1 : 16] So along with these, we're gonna give you the role that Jesus plays with each of these descriptions because if we lose sight of Jesus, we're gonna end up obviously becoming something that the church was never meant to be.

This session, what we wanna do is focus on a couple of different pictures that are really helpful and kinda work together, and that's the idea of the church being a body and the church being a family.

So firstly, let's talk about the church as a diversely gifted body with Jesus being the head, okay? Ephesians 4, great chapter to look at for this. 1 Corinthians 12 is a great chapter to look at for this. What we see is that the church is like a human body. It's made up of a bunch of different parts. All those parts have a significant role to play, and that's what the church is supposed to look and feel like.

You're not just a random group of people. Everybody who's been saved and brought into Jesus's family now has a role to play, like a member of a body, okay? And we're also cautioned to watch out for how this can get the best of us.

We must not say, 1 Corinthians tells us, to people who are different than us, a hand can't stay to the foot, we don't need you because you're not a hand. So we've gotta watch out for that kind of attitude that can come.

[2 : 23] We also are cautioned to not think of the opposite, which is, you know, because I'm not a hand, I'm not needed. So we can't look around the room and go, well, because I'm not a community group leader, because I'm not a pastor, because, you know, I don't lead music, or because I, whatever those things are, because I'm not married, or because we can't look at ourselves and go, okay, I'm not needed as part of this body.

Actually, all of us have a role to play, right? We all have a role to play, and I think another kind of just consideration for us is to make sure that we're not being apathetic about the ways that God has gifted us.

Romans 12 says it like this in verse six. It says, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. I love that. I mean, we're different, we've got different gifts, but it's all by grace.

I mean, none of us have earned any of this. It's all by grace. Let us use them. Put them to work. Don't just go, okay, I'm a hand, I'm a foot, great. No, no, we need all those body parts to work. Just like in your own human body, you want all the organs, all the members, all being able to work. That's the same picture that we have for the church. So we're a diversely gifted body, but man, the most important thing to remember is who's the head of the body. You know, Halloween and scary movies and all these things have just reinforced for us this obvious thing that something without a head is scary, right?

[3 : 39] Anything headless is terrifying, and it's the same way with the church. It just is. If you take the head off the church, if you take away Jesus, the church becomes a very terrifying, scary, dangerous place, right?

And sadly, you may have experienced something like that, where you were a part of a church that Jesus was never really thought of or considered. You were just meeting together and doing all these things, but actually it was a very unsafe environment, right?

Every part of the body matters, but no part matters like Jesus, because he's the head. A couple verses for you on this. Colossians 1, verse 18, and he is the head of the body, the church. Jesus is the head of the body, the church.

He's the beginning. He's the firstborn of the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. That word preeminent is one of the first big words I learned in studying the Bible. That just means above everything. And so he's the head of the body.

He's above everything. He's what makes the rest of the body hold together. In fact, listen to how Ephesians 4, verse 15 and 16 says it. Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, right?

[4 : 47] We're to grow up in every way into him who's the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so it builds itself up in love.

The whole body's meant to be looking to Jesus to see what it's supposed to do next, right? That's a really helpful thing for us to remember as the church. If we don't keep Jesus as the most important part of the body, we don't remember that he's the head.

He calls the shots. When he says turn, we turn, right? If we don't remember that, that Jesus is the guiding part of the body, the most important part of the body, we're gonna certainly end up hurting ourselves, isolating ourselves, isolating others, or becoming something that's really scary and dangerous, right?

So that's the first picture that we wanna talk about is a diversely gifted body. The second one is that the church is meant to be a loving family, and Jesus is the firstborn. We're meant to be a loving family, and you know how it is.

There's just a different set of rules when somebody's related to you. I can say certain things about my family, but you can't, Sam, right? And the same is true for your family, and that's just how life goes. The stakes are different when someone's related to us.

[5 : 53] We all jump in to help family. We go to crazy lengths to help our family. If someone's related to us, we'll do almost anything to help them, right? Much more than we would do for most other people. Well, that's scratching around.

It's something of what the church is meant to look like, right? What God had in mind for his church, it's a motley crew like your family and my family, right? But we have the same blood running through our veins, this blood of Jesus, right?

And so that makes us, it makes us family, right? And just like in your biological family, blood is enough. Blood is enough, right? Hearing someone is related to us, it means something, and that's how we're meant to think of other believers, is they're related to us.

Let me give you some Bible verses in case this is kind of a new one for you. Ephesians 2.19 says it like this. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens. Paul's speaking to a church and says, listen guys, none of you out here are strangers, not anymore, no, no.

You're fellow citizens with the saints and you're members of the household of God. You're not strangers, this group of people that you're part of in the church. You're part of the same family, God's family, right?

[6 : 56] Listen to how strong Jesus' language was and keep in mind his mother and his brothers were watching when this happened. He says in Matthew 12.50, whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

That is powerful language. Jesus, mom and brothers in the audience, Jesus says, you know who's my family? You guys who are doing the will of God, right? That language of brothers and sisters that some of us grew up in churches where that was all the time.

You know, more and brother and sister and brothers and sisters, that kind of language really is all throughout the New Testament. I mean, go back and read Romans chapter 16 and listen to the rich family language. I'll give you a few examples.

Paul calls one lady his sister. He calls one lady like a mom to him. He says, these bunch of people are like brothers. He says, this person is his beloved. He says, all of these people are his kinsmen. I mean, this is family language.

Mother, brother, sister, kinsmen. I mean, that's family, right? And that's what the local church is meant to be. We're meant to be a family as we gather together. But again, all of these pictures have their own limitations and their own challenges.

[7 : 55] And so kind of with this idea of being a loving family, we need to remember that it's, you know, firstly, it's not easy for brothers to get along. And so we can expect some butting of heads and stuff, but we should really fight for unity.

I mean, consider how Psalm 133 verse one puts it. How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. There's a sense in which, you know, we're reminded that's kind of rare. It's rare for brothers to get along and work together, but man, we're meant to do that.

And this Psalm goes on to say that that's where God commands a blessing. And man, we need that in our church, right? So it's natural for kind of brothers to butt heads. We should watch out for that stuff. We, you know, we don't want to see that on leadership teams or whatever.

Another thing we need to remember is that it's natural for families to kind of digress into pettiness. And family's never at its best when it's petty. That's good for daytime television, but that's not great for the church, right?

So we don't want to see that kind of stuff in the life of a church. We should be putting aside pettiness because of what Jesus has done for us. Let me give you a couple of verses on that. Ephesians 4, 31 and 32. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

[9 : 04] Be kind to one another. Be tenderhearted, forgiving one another. Why? Well, God in Christ forgave you, right? So that's that reminder. Man, you know what? You're in my family because Jesus bled for me and he bled for you.

And if he did it for me, I can forgive you, right? That's a beautiful thing. It's been said the small holes sink the ship. I think in a lot of churches, sadly, it's these little holes that get it right. Under the surface, there's, everything looks right on the top, but under the surface, there's slander and bitter and slander and gossip and pettiness of all kinds of ways.

And it's just sinking the ship, right? Okay, so the most important thing to remember with the family is Jesus, right? The same thing with this idea of the body and the head.

Jesus is the most important part of the family. I love how Romans 8, 29 says it. For those whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he, this Jesus, might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The idea of Jesus being the firstborn comes up again and again. It's a significant thing. And what we see is that in the gospel, Jesus has started a family that we're a part of, right? He started this family, he's the firstborn.

[10 : 10] He's preeminent in this family, right? What he says goes. When we forget that, we fight and we bicker. We've got to remember that it's not our blood, it's his blood that's running through our veins and it changes how we relate to one another.

Okay, so just for the last little bit here, let's take a second to look at how a diversely gifted body and a loving family kind of work together. And I want you to see that the church is both. It's both a gifted body and a loving family.

Like I said, it's dangerous when you pick one or the other and there's more of these we'll talk about. But let's just look at how this works together. If a church only thinks about itself as a body, let's just take that for example.

If it only thought about itself as a body, I think what we end up doing is spending a lot of time only thinking about the unique ways that we're gifted, right? And that's not bad, but if it's all that we're thinking about, we become so specialized.

You know, everyone's got this specific, this is what I feel led to do. That might be the language you've heard it before. Well, I don't feel led to do this. I feel led to do that. We can get to the point where no one's doing the seemingly unimportant things because no one feels led to do them, right? [11:15] And so that's the danger. If body is the only thing we think about, we get so specialized that we really can't do anything that's not attractive, right, or appealing. No one feels led to do, you know, to clean the toilets, for example.

No one ever seems to feel led to do that. That's why it's helpful to think about the body, you know, to think about the family as well, right? Because in a family, you just do what needs to be done, right? If a church only thinks about itself as a body, however, or as a family, however, it's in danger of becoming a clique.

If it's just about our family, well, man, we can kind of really become incestual in a way. We forget that, man, we have a mission to the world.

All we think about is ourselves. We design everything around ourselves, what we like, the styles of things we like. Like, if it's just about our family, we just design church however we want. We stop thinking that, no, no, no, we're left here on planet Earth for a reason.

There's a mission we have to this world. And so we need to remember we're a body because we're gifted uniquely, and we need to remember we're a family, right? And those two things work together for us. The goal is that we're operating, like, in our gifting, like a body, and we're doing whatever it takes, like a family, you know?

[12:25] There's lots of things I don't feel led to do, but I do them because I'm part of this family. And the same's true for you. But then there's other things that I feel like, man, I'm uniquely gifted at this, and I just feel God's pleasure when I do it.

I know he made me to do this, right? So we're loving each other like a family. We're expressing deep need for each other, and we're expressing confidence in our own role in the family.

I love this picture that we get in Philippians 1, 27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Man, what a challenge. So that whether I come to see you, Paul says, or I'm absent, I wanna hear, I wanna hear that this church in Philippi, Paul says, that you're standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, and you're striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

That is the beautiful picture of the family and the body working together, these pictures working together. We've got a purpose, but we're side by side. We're together, we're in unity, we're like brothers dwelling in unity, but man, we're on a mission to take the gospel to the world.

We'll see how this keeps happening again and again, but just now as you get together in your groups to discuss this stuff, think about this. Have you ever thought about how God's gifted you, or maybe you've thought about that too much, or maybe you've compared yourself to others, and really you've kind of felt like Eeyore, like man, I'm not needed here.

[13:38] I mean, just talk about that stuff. You're in a small group of people who love you, right? That's the kind of stuff you can talk about. Maybe you spent more time thinking about what your role was than Jesus's role. Talk about it and be honest.

Have you ever really thought about Jesus as the head of the body, and Jesus is the firstborn in the family, and he matters the most? What would that mean, you know? Have you considered that other believers are part of the same family as you, right?

That just puts to the end all kinds of things, like racism and all kinds of silly stuff that are really sinful and hurtful, right? And now it's Jesus's blood that runs through our veins. What would change about the way that you act or speak if you really let it sink in that the people in the church were your family?

How would you, you're not talking about your family, right? How would that change how you speak and you act? And maybe think about how your church experience, is it more emphasized family or is it more emphasized body?

Those are just a few things you can chat about, and I'm sure there's a lot more. But man, we're praying for you guys to have great discussions. We love you. We really hope this was helpful. We love you.