

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we continue our study of the book of Acts. Read and reread each passage to get a sense of the total dependence these early followers gave to the Holy Spirit.

Monday, May 18 – Read Acts 8:4-25. This section includes the story of the conversion of Simon the sorcerer. Simon was gaining quite a following in Samaria because of the magic he performed. Phillip comes to preach the gospel, and immediately everyone including Simon is converted. Peter and John then visited Samaria to lay hands on these new converts in order to stir the Holy Spirit among them. Simon then offers to pay Peter and John to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. They condemn him for trying to buy God’s favor and blessing. He confesses his error and asks for the apostles’ prayers. Is there something lacking in your spiritual life? Have you ever tried to bargain with God? What can you do this week to show God your devotion to the gospel of Christ?

Tuesday, May 19 – Read Acts 8:26-40. This section includes the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Phillip is led by the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with this Ethiopian court official. The power of the gospel leads this man to ask for baptism, and he is baptized on the road. The story ends with the miraculous disappearance and reappearance of Phillip as he continues to proclaim the gospel. When was the last time you shared the gospel of Christ? What was the response of the person who heard your testimony? Did it make a difference? Why or why not?

Wednesday, May 20 – Read Acts 9:1-9. Before Saul became Paul the great apostle, he was authorized by the high counsel in Jerusalem to go to Damascus to arrest and imprison Christians in the area. While traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul has a vision of the risen Christ. Everyone heard the words from Jesus, but only Saul is blinded by the bright light. For three days he was without sight. What kind of conversion did you experience? Did you grow up in the church, coming to know Christ as you matured? Or did you come to know Christ in a dramatic fashion? Can you share your story with someone this week?

Thursday, May 21 – Acts 9:10-19. The story of Saul’s conversion continues with the calling of Ananias to go and lay hands on Saul to regain his sight. Ananias is frightened by Saul’s reputation, but he goes to Damascus to find Saul because of the insistence and reassurance of the Lord that Saul is a chosen instrument of God to do great things for the gospel. When Ananias finds Saul, he lays hands on him for heal. Saul regains his sight, is converted and baptized. Have you ever been asked to take a risk for God? Did you avoid or embrace that risk?

Friday, May 22 – Read Acts 9:19-31. After Saul’s (he has not yet received the name Paul) conversion, he begins to preach that Jesus is the Son of God and the messiah. There was great power in his preaching, so the Jews plotted to kill him. He escaped the plot to kill him and approached the disciples in Jerusalem. The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul because of his reputation. Barnabas spoke up for Saul. He brought him to the apostles and testified on Saul’s behalf, so he would be accepted by the Jerusalem Christians. Have you ever given anyone reason to question your devotion to Christ? Who in your life and faith was Barnabas for you? How can you be a Barnabas for someone this week?



TRIETSCH

STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, May 17, 2009

Theology of Twitter (Week 1 of 3)

We Care About Each Other

1 Corinthians 12:7-30

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

The Word from the Bible (New International Version)

The Church

That the church as the **body of Christ** is more than simply a figure of speech. The church is an extension of Christ. Paul begins his writing about the church by comparing it to a body. **Just as the body is one and yet**

has many members, he says, *so also is Christ*.

Paul continues by pointing out that the church and Christ together make up *the body of Christ*. The head is the control center of the body. The torso is both the largest part and the part to which the members—arms, legs, and hands—are attached.

In the same way, we are all part of the body of Christ. Christ is the head — the control center. We constitute the means by which he functions in the world — the body. The church is *one* body with many members — it's not many bodies or many denominations. We are all connected.

Other Biblical Images

More than one hundred expressions are used in the Bible to describe the gatherings of God's people. Most of these can be grouped into ten categories: *the saints and sanctified, believers and faithful, slaves and servants, the people of God, kingdom and temple, household and family, the new exodus, a vineyard or flock, a body in Christ, and the new humanity*.

In each of these, the common denominator is the unity of those gathered in the name of our Lord. These gatherings are a place where we come with all our imperfections to get closer to God through Jesus Christ, to care about each other, and to extend that care to others.

Everyone has a Place

Everyone has a place. Everyone is to contribute. Everyone is to be included. No one is to be left out. Yet, in today's church, many do and many are. In some cases, it is the human nature of the church failing the individual member. In other cases, individuals feel inadequate and unqualified to be part of the church's work and community.

Paul addresses this when he says, *If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the ear should say, 'Because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body.*

In other words, if the foot should say, "I can't do all the things a hand does. It's so flexible, and it's used all the time. I really don't belong in this body," it is nevertheless an indispensable part of the body.

In the same way, if a believer thinks they are insignificant because they can't preach or lead worship, they are deceiving themselves. Everyone is still part of the body. Everyone has a place and a job in the church of Jesus Christ, for which they are uniquely qualified. There are no insignificant members of the body.

It is widely believed today that the reason the church exists is to gather for great services on Sunday mornings. In this model, those who lead services have the necessary gifts; the rest of the congregation looks on and follows. Many Christians have this "spectator" mentality about the church.

The work of the church is to heal the brokenhearted, to deliver the captives, to open the eyes of the blind, and to preach the good news to the poor and despairing (Luke 4). The work of the church is to encourage each other. The work of the church is to CARE. This work doesn't just take place inside the church building; it goes on outside. In many ways, what we do in the church building is to prepare us to be Christ outside the building 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There is a role for every single member, without exception. Paul says, *If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?* Each of us are to work together in harmony.

There are many jobs to be done in the work of the church. Some are to be done on Sunday morning, but the majority of the work is to be done together in the world.

What are Twitter and Facebook?

What is Facebook? Facebook is a free-access social networking website through which users can connect with their real-life friends, reconnect with old acquaintances, send them messages, update them about their lives. Users can also join networks organized by city, workplace, school and region to connect and interact with other people.

What is Twitter? Twitter is also a free social networking service, but the focus is solely on status updates (otherwise known as *tweets*). Twitter allows its users to post updates and "follow" other people (get their updates). Twitter is much simpler as it limits the post to less than 140 characters. Since it is text-based, the posts can easily be delivered to cell phones for real-time updates. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them. The sender can restrict delivery to those in his or her circle of friends (delivery to everyone being the default). In December 2008, Twitter had over 5 million users and it is growing exponentially.

What does this mean and why is it important to the Church?

Two major functions of these social networks are like the church and can be used by the church.

1) These on-line communities connect people. While at first, some of the posts seem narcissistic, the primary function is to bring people together into relationship. There are thousands of stories of how friends have found each other after years of being apart. In the 21st century complex culture in which we live, maintaining relationship is a challenge. Keeping community is even harder.

The church should also stay connected throughout the challenges of this culture. The difference is that the church offers a much deeper and meaningful relationship to its body. We can use these social networks to be what God has called us to be.

2) Because these social networks use real time technology, the exchange of information is easy and fast. The church is challenged by our once or twice a week contact. No longer do we live in rural agricultural communities where everyone tended to share everything. Our lives are literally spread out all over the world. We share little.

As the church of Jesus Christ we need to regain the sense of sharing our lives together (not just an hour or two a week). Social internet networking can help us stay in touch and connect. Make no mistake, these networks are not a replacement, but they can be a tool. They also show us that we can stay connected real time. The church can now move more at the speed of life.

Notes
