

**FRIDAY: One Jesus = One Body**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 <sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> The Bible is full of cultural issues we do not grasp. The racial difference between a Jew and a Greek was not a small one. If Corinthians were written to Americans in the 1950's (and sadly even today) it may have read "baptized into one body – white or black..." There is no racial distinction in the body of Christ.</p> <p>The Bible is also full of status issues we do not grasp as well. Even though slavery then was vastly different than the slavery of the Southern U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> century...it still existed. Yet Paul says it too is irrelevant for life in the body of Christ. Your social status doesn't matter either.</p> <p>Perhaps the most basic thing about the church is that it's God's true people. It doesn't matter what a person's background is. There's only one Spirit they will receive from God. It doesn't matter what nationality they are. There's only one Body of which they will be a member. It doesn't matter...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> You've likely noticed the ethnic diversity of Emporia. Can you truly see other Christians as a part of the body of Christ? What if they aren't "Americanized?"</p> <p>Whose body were you baptized into? (cf. Rom6:3)</p> <p>Have you had to overcome social, racial, status, age, or any other biases when it comes to the body of Christ?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for God to raise up Christian leaders among the different ethnic groups of Emporia. Thank God for the many people of NLCC who do 'behind the scenes work' and aren't given notice. Pray for the children of NLCC to grow up loving and serving God with their lives.

**SATURDAY: Another Week**

**Read:** James 1:1-15

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Another week has come and gone. Perhaps it was just another typical week. Perhaps it was one of the best weeks you can recall for quite some time; it was quite enjoyable. Perhaps it was one of your worst weeks in recent memory...</p> <p>In light of how you classified your last seven days, have you grown closer to God this past week? If it was a typical week, that possibility is doubtful. If it was one of your best for quite some time, it still isn't a sure thing that you grew closer to God. However, if it was one of your worst weeks in recent memory, then certainly the answer is "No I haven't." Right?</p> <p>That answer (partly) lies in why it was classified as such a bad week. Is it because you didn't grow closer to God? Is it because you simply had a trying week? The difference is huge.</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Do you ever reflect on your day (or week, or month) for the purpose of evaluating what was good/bad in order to intentionally grow closer to God?</p> <p>What are three distinct blessings for which you can thank God for about this past week?</p> <p>What are three distinct hardships for which you can...also thank God for about this past week? (Did I just type that?)</p>
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**Pray:** Thank God for another day of life. Pray for our activities at the building tomorrow; pray that God is honored, people are encountered by Him, and that lives will continue to be changed. Pray that our guests are welcomed and treated well.

**Ecclesiology – What is the church?**

**April 6 – 12**

“Church.” It’s a relatively innocent looking word, but there is so much that is misunderstood about it.

Is it a social club?

- A social club may refer to a group of people or the place where they meet, generally formed around a common interest, occupation or activity (e.g. hunting, fishing, politics or charity work).
  - While the people who comprise a specific church may have common interests, it is most certainly not a social club...

Is it an organization?

- An organization is a social arrangement which pursues collective goals, which controls its own performance, and which has a boundary separating it from its environment.
  - While the people who comprise a specific church may have common goals, it is most certainly not an organization...

The church is not a social club because being a member doesn't give you any rights, nor are there any dues to pay...

- But, if you simply want to be a part of a social club where you can have friends with common interests I'm quite certain there are many "good" social clubs in the surrounding area to which you can belong.

The church is also not an organization because “she” doesn't “control its own performance,” nor does “she” separate from “her” surrounding environment...

- But if you simply want to be a part of an organization, once again I'm quite certain there are many “good ones” in the area from which you can choose.

But if you want to be a part of a living organism, a Body that truly cares for and loves people – both those who are directly a “member” of the Body as well as those who are not... If you want to be a part of a living organism, a Body that is concerned about making a real, lasting, eternal impact on others... If you want to be a part of a living organism, a Body that will help you when life gets hard (and it will)...

All of these and more can be experienced by you, and those you know, when you commit yourself to and become a “member” of the Body of Christ. The Church is not a social club – we are concerned about the condition of people's souls. The Church is not an organization – we don't dictate what we do. Oh yeah, The Church is also not a building...God destroyed the last one where He chose for His presence to dwell...

**MONDAY: *Two sided***

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:2<sup>2</sup> To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

<p><b>Reflect:</b> This verse nicely blends the “already” and “not yet” aspect of Scripture. It’s a mixture of a heavenly fact alongside an earthly reality. Paul clearly states the church belongs to God; an “already” fact. Yet the physical location of the church, and therefore its people, was Corinth; the “not yet” aspect.</p> <p>Those who made up the church were “already” sanctified in Christ Jesus (set apart for service). The “not yet” part is they were still “called to be saints.” Evidently, sanctification is a multifaceted word. It (being made holy - sanctified) isn’t only a one time event, but also a lifelong process.</p> <p>We (New Life Christian Church) are a part of something so much bigger than ourselves. As Paul addressed the church in Corinth specifically, he also heightens their awareness that they are called to holiness (to be a saint) just like those in other places (e.g., Jerusalem, Philippi).</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Even though its natural, does it sound odd to you to say “my church” when talking about New Life? Whose church is it really?</p> <p>Are you willing to put forth a lifetime of effort towards God’s call for you to be holy (a saint)? Are you seeking help to do it?</p> <p>How many different manifestations (congregations) of Christ’s body (the church) have you been a part of in your life?</p>
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**Pray:** Thank God for our corporate worship yesterday. Pray for your willingness to commit yourself to live a holy life. Thank God for being a part of the universal church.

**TUESDAY: *Unity***

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:10<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Here we have an Imperative from Paul (a command). Where’s the underlying Indicative (statement of fact)? It’s found in basically everything leading up to verse 10 in this letter. The church is God’s (v2), God has enriched them with gifts (v5), they don’t lack any spiritual gift (v7), etc.</p> <p>Paul also appeals to them as “brothers” (vs10,11). It’s a familial term. There is a bond between brothers and sisters in Christ that is stronger than anything (except for marriage) in the world. Except, unfortunately, for our own will (desire) to break that bond...</p> <p>The specific questions addressed toward the Corinthians follow this verse (e.g., v13). The church in Corinth had their own set of problems, just as the church in Philippi had theirs, just like we have ours...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Is it too much to ask for such a gifted body as that in Corinth to be united? Is it too much for the body here at New Life to be united?</p> <p>“Blood is thicker than water...” Perhaps you’ve heard that before. It’s a saying that was originally used to mean biological ties were stronger (i.e., more important) than a person’s baptism (obviously in water). What do you think (e.g., Matt10:34-39)?</p> <p>Do you see any disunity in the body of New Life? Will you commit to praying, earnestly, each day, for our unity and purity?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for the unity of God’s “universal church” (e.g., in different towns, states, countries). Pray for a family you know that is divided over the issue of loyalty to Jesus. Pray for unity and a common purpose for NLCC.

**WEDNESDAY: *Do You Not Know...?***

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 3:16<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 6:19<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Ten times Paul asks “Do you not know...” in 1 Corinthians. The words imply that they should have in fact known what he states next. Once again we are back to the “thinking” part of Christianity (e.g., Rom6:11; 12:2).</p> <p>From Solomon forward the temple was “the place” in the Old Testament. Prior to that it was the tabernacle. Those places were where God made His dwelling place among mankind. Things have changed now. Jesus came and “tabernacled” among us (Jn1:14) and has given us the Holy Spirit, after returning to the Father’s side.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit lives in us and makes us (plural) God’s temple (3:16); it also makes you (singular) God’s temple (6:19). If only grasping that fact would lead us to live radically different lives. Apparently we need to <u>think</u> about it more...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> When was the last time you did something you know you shouldn’t have done? What happened?</p> <p>When was the last time you pondered how good we have it...that we don’t have to travel thousands of miles to a “place” to enjoy God’s presence?</p> <p>What would you like to change in your life in light of being God’s temple?</p>
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**Pray:** Confess to God the last time you knowingly acted in a way you shouldn’t have. Pray for unity and a common purpose for NLCC. Thank God for the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit.

**THURSDAY: *The Same Boat***

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-3<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> There’s nothing quite like being reminded of your past to bring you down a notch. Paul simply lumps everyone (i.e., the followers of Jesus) into the same category – that of formerly being “pagans.”</p> <p>Paul is literally talking about “spiritual things” here in these verses. Far too often we are unaware of the spiritual forces at work all around us. In other places Paul writes about how people are blinded from seeing the truth by evil spiritual forces (2Cor4:3-4) and how our real battle isn’t against flesh and blood (Eph6:11-17)...</p> <p>Here it seems Paul is making a dividing line between “us” and “them.” The phrase “Jesus is Lord” was likely used in a baptismal setting (e.g., Rom10:9-10). Paul is distinguishing his readers as God’s people; through whom God works...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Have you been a follower of Jesus so long that you forgot what it was like to be a “pagan?”</p> <p>If you believe Jesus is Lord, have you been obedient in Christian baptism (immersion)?</p> <p>Will you write down someone’s name who needs to know Jesus in the front of your Bible and commit to pray for them?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for the worship team as they will meet tonight to practice the songs for Sunday. Pray for the person whose name you wrote down in your Bible. Thank God for the transformation that happens through a person’s baptism.