



MERGE

the community we are meant to be

May 15th, 2016

The United Community

Embracing The Deeper & Truer Christ Story –

The Big “C” Church is more important than the little “c” church.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

– John 17:20-23 (ESV)

EMBRACING THE ONE BODY - PART 1

(A Study of 1 Corinthians 12:12-30)

...There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another. – Romans 12:5 (CEV)

Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:4

THREE OF SIX BODY BUILDERS

Body Builder # 1: UNITY over DIVISIVENESS

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. – 1 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)

Matthew 18:19; Philippians 2:2; Ephesians 4:4-6

A constantly squabbling family disintegrates.... – Mark 3:24 (MSG)

1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3; 11:18

How To Keep Big “C” In Focus

- Embrace The One Body of Christ - see *Colossians 3:11*; *Galatians 3:28*
- Establish The Early Church Creeds As A Foundation
- Accept The Augustinian Maxim For Unity

Body Builder # 2: VITALITY over FORMALITY

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. – 1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

John 15:5; Romans 8:2

[Selfish people] will hold to the outward form of our religion, but reject its real power. Keep away from such people. – 2 Timothy 3:5 (TEV)

Matthew 23:25-28

Body Builder # 3: DIVERSITY over ENVY

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If 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. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. – 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 (ESV)

Whenever you're trying to look better than others or envious, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats. – James 3:16 (MSG)

I Will Merge by...

- Memorizing *John 10:16*.
- Embracing the big “C” Church in prayer and unity.
- Becoming an engaged “member” with others in Christ’s Body.
- Giving my life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, for the first time.

WALK THE TALK

A Growth Group Guide

1. Have you ever felt a sense of rejection in a Church when your beliefs didn't fully agree with theirs? Why do you think the Church divides over so many issues?
2. What are some ways we can create better dialogue and fellowship between other churches who may not see everything the way we see things? How can we "keep big "C" in focus" (see outline above) in *your* mind?
3. Look over the first three of the six *Body Builders* we have covered so far. Which of the three spoke to you about the need to become a better "member" of the greater Body of Christ? How did it sharpen your resolve? How did it challenge your heart?
4. Discuss any positive experiences you have had worshipping with people from a different background. How does this affect your openness to future opportunities for such worship?
5. Read the statement from Richard Foster below. Explain how it stirs your heart for a more unified Church.

I see it happening, this great new gathering of the people of God. I see an obedient, disciplined, freely gathered people who know in our day the life and powers of the kingdom of God.

I see a people of cross and crown, of courageous action and sacrificial love.

I see a people who are combining evangelism with social action, the transcendent Lordship of Jesus with the suffering servant Messiah.

I see a people who are buoyed up by the vision of Christ's everlasting rule, not only imminent on the horizon, but already bursting forth in our midst.

I see a country pastor from Indiana embracing an urban priest from New Jersey and together praying for the peace of the world. I see a people.

I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise. I see a people.

I see social activists from the urban centers of Hong Kong joining with Pentecostal preachers from the barrios of Sao Paulo and together weeping over the spiritually lost and the plight of the poor. I see a people.

I see Hutu and Tutsi, Serb and Croat, Mongol and Han Chinese, African-American and Anglo, Latino and Native American all sharing and caring and loving one another. I see a people.

I see the sophisticated standing with the simple, the elite standing with the dispossessed, the wealthy standing with the poor. I see a people.

*I see a people, I tell you, a people from every race and nation and tongue and stratum of society, joining hearts and hands and minds and voices declaring, **Amazing grace! How sweet the sound — That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.** - Foster, Richard J. (2010). **Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christ**, Harper Collins, Inc.*

SOUL TRAINING – TREASURING OUR TREASURES

A Personal Transformation Exercise

The Principle:

Disciples of Jesus are made by people who learn to put the needs of others in front of their own. This is peculiar behavior in our world. How do we live this out? Where do we live this out? It begins by changing the way we see other people. If we see others, whether in our family or on the highway, as merely human, it becomes easy to see them as either obstacles or opportunities to further our own happiness.

The key is to put on the mind of Christ and to see others as he sees them: treasures. Then we will naturally move to treasuring them, which makes putting their needs ahead of our own not only possible but likely. We live and move in different circles, and have different relationships with the people in our lives: family and friends, coworkers, fellow Christians, and strangers and acquaintances. It is easier, for example, to treasure our family, but that does not mean we do it well. It is harder to treasure the person who is being rude in the hardware store, but that does not mean it is impossible.

The Plan:

This week, the plan is for you to engage in several ways of treasuring the treasures all around us.

LIVING UNSELFISHLY AT HOME

When deciding where or what to eat, ask the others in your family where they would like to go. If you are married or have a roommate, ask how the other person is doing, and then really listen to their answer. If you have children in your home, give them the honor of choosing how to spend one evening this week-any way they want.

LIVING UNSELFISHLY AT WORK

Take time to visit a coworker and ask, "What are you working on that I might be able to help with or carry some of your burden?" Make coffee or tea for others, or bring some treats to work.

LIVING UNSELFISHLY IN DAILY LIFE

When driving, be on the lookout for opportunities to let people in to your lane. When shopping, be mindful of others as you navigate through the store, and allow others to cut ahead of you in line.