

Lesson Title: “Maintaining The Body: The Church”

Scripture Basis: Ephesians Chapter 4, Key Verses 3-6, 7 and 16

Learning Goals:

- Describe scriptural-historical references related to building a physical structure and collection of people as the Church.
- Compare similarities of human anatomy with Ephesians 4:16 description of Christians as ligaments who hold Christ’s Church together.
- Identify at least three human behaviors that can strengthen The Church.
- Speak or write one personal learning goal to be started or continued after class, with others or during own Bible studies.

READ- Read Ephesians 4: 1-16

Unity of the body of Christ

4 Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. ² Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, ³ and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. ⁴ You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

⁷ God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ. ⁸ That’s why scripture says, *When he climbed up to the heights, he captured prisoners, and he gave gifts to people.* ^[a]⁹ What does the phrase “he climbed up” mean if it doesn’t mean that he had first gone down into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ The one who went down is the same one who climbed up above all the heavens so that he might fill everything.

¹¹ He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. ¹² His purpose was to equip God’s people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ ¹³ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God’s Son. God’s goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we aren’t supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. ¹⁵ Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let’s grow in every way into Christ, ¹⁶ who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

READ, CONSIDER, COMPARE- Examples of Building The Church , Analogy of the Human Body

Examples of Building God's Church: Physical Spaces and People

God gave instructions about building His congregation and the structure that would be the church. For example, God gave to Moses instructions on building up the body of His people (the Israelites) as well as the tabernacle (learn more in Exodus, and the rules to guide and govern the people in Leviticus and Deuteronomy).

David wanted to build a "house" for God, and even had clear instructions to pass on to his son Solomon to build "The Temple" (learn more in 1 Chronicles 28). The Temple built by Solomon is regarded as one of the most impactful pieces of architecture in known human history. Yet David didn't get to see it, as God informed he wouldn't build it as he thought; however, David still built welcome place for God in his own heart, and kept hope for the promise of a kingdom (a body of God's people) through his lineage (learn more in 2 Samuel 7).

Then we see Simon Peter and other apostles are instructed to continue the work He began in His ministry in the flesh to build The Kingdom of God- The Church: Jesus' followers across the earth regardless of gentile or Jew (learn more Matthew 16:18, and 28: 18-19). The Acts of The Church is our jumpstart into the building of what we call the Christian church, followed by lessons, guidance, history, revelation of prophesy, interpretations, exhortations, testimonies and joy that we see in the rest of the New Testament.

This gets us to the time and places of Paul's letter to the Ephesians here about God's body: The Church. But before that, can we consider how in none of our examples did God require us to start from scratch, but He gave instructions, and provided the materials (whether of the earth or in other humans). (Think to yourself: *What is God's expectation of us really?*)

Analogy Part 1 of The Human Body & God's "Church"

The human body and the earth (the ground, water, atmosphere) has everything already needed to be "built" from Genesis chapter 1. Earth doesn't require humans to 'be', as we were created well after all else God created. But God instructs us to tend to and care for the Earth; and after the fall, depend on it for life. (Learn more: Genesis chapters 1 and 2)

Humans require each other, specifically a man and a woman, to 'build' a life, a body. However, all of the pieces or DNA (23 pieces of DNA from each parent) are already within us when we're being formed and built within our mother's womb. This was set in place when God created Adam and Eve; but we're to be fruitful and my role and carefully raise, instruct, guide, and love our children.

Similarly, The Church as "The Body" wasn't and isn't 'built' just by our human work; it was ordained, designed and built by God. We get instructions, supplemental pieces, and ourselves as components of the body/The Church. *What is God's expectation of us then: follow the instructions He's given us and maintain His provision- with His provisions!*

DISSECT- Key Verses 3-5, 7, and 16, and Analogy of the Human Body Part 2

Key Verses

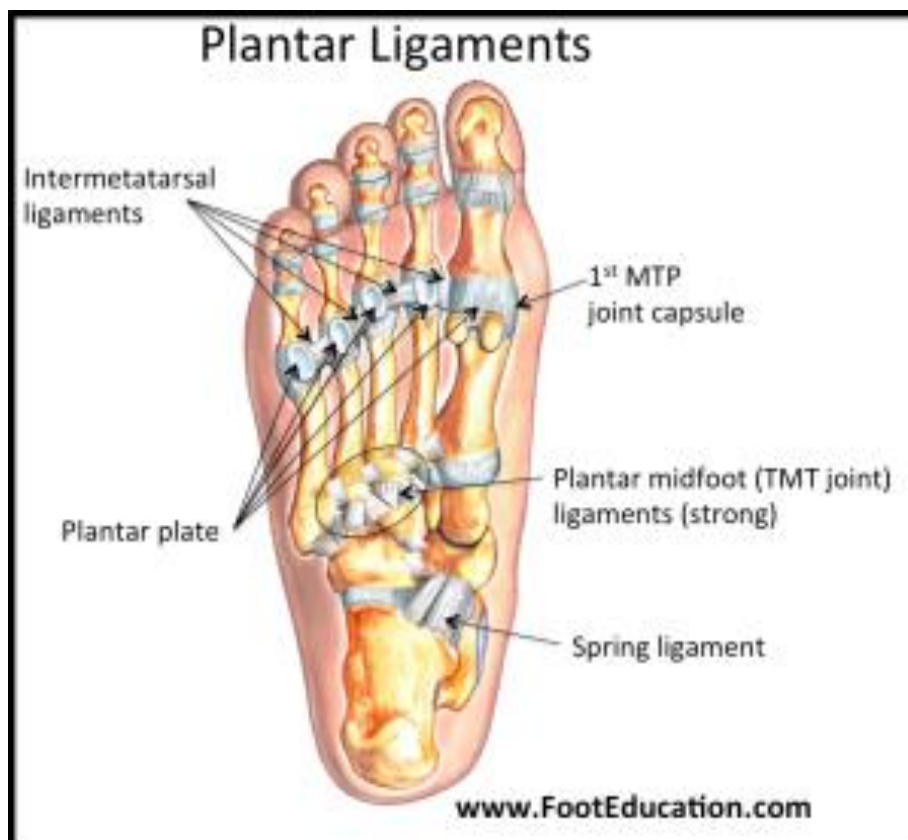
Ephesians 4: 1-16 (NIV) is used as our lesson's full background, but the rest of our discussion and activity will focus on a few verses. Let's re-read verses 3-5, 7 and 16 to answer these discussion questions:

- Why is unity (a sense of "oneness") so important?
- How does God honor the diversity He created when He made us humans and the earth?
- How does God's identity represent unity for us?
- Why is there a place in The Body for everyone?
- How does God's grace serve as a "fail-safe" for the expectation to build His Church?
- Why should we each have the same confidence and hope as members of The Body?

Analogy Part 2- A Closer Look at Ligaments

God is majestic in all His ways, especially how His creations always present analogies, or examples for us to understand Him and His instructions. Consider the use of **ligaments** in verse 16 as a demonstration of: how we are to be as individual members of the church, how we are to gather other members, and how we are to maintain The Body :: The Church.

(Image: drawing of the bottom of the right foot showing several joints and ligaments)



<i>What are Ligaments?</i>	Connective tissue that creates joints , connection parts of bone and muscle Every joint (connection of bones) has at least 1 ligament
<i>What makes up ligaments?</i>	Collagen (strength) & Elastin (flexibility)
<i>What do ligaments do?</i>	Connection and reinforcement for muscle contraction that cause skeletal movement
<i>How are ligaments supported or maintained?</i>	Fuel and food for ligaments: Protein- Building blocks to create collagen and elastin Vitamin C- collagen creation Vitamin E- manages inflammation Vitamin A- elasticity of ligaments Calcium & Vitamin D- both needed to absorb each; strengthens bones and flows benefits to ligaments Manganese- helps enzymes that keep bones and immune system well; strong mineral, eg used in steel for items like RR tracks, safes; and helps immune, endocrine and reproductive systems; and wound repair through blood cell functions like clotting Copper- helps formation of collagen, and makes up bone and muscle; and as an anti-oxidant manages free radicals (molecules with high associations to cancers)

APPLY- Practical Steps for Physical and Spiritual Ligament Maintenance

There are seven (7) areas of fuel and food listed for ligaments. Let's list out some physical and spiritual sources and behaviors to obtain each. For example, good sources of calcium and vitamin D are dark leafy greens like spinach and collard greens, as well as many dairy products. Since calcium and vitamin D are dependent upon each other to actually work in the human body, they make me think of **fasting and praying**. We need both fasting and praying to maintain our individual pieces (praying and fasting for ourselves) as well as praying and fasting for others in our body (fellow disciples)- especially members of the Church who aren't active just yet (new disciples).

What are some good sources of the rest of the list that supports ligaments –and- what are some spiritual behaviors (or disciplines) that could be an example or metaphor needed to build and maintain our/The Body?

CONNECT- Unity and Peace as Essentials, Maintaining the Body: The Church- You, Me & Us

We close our lesson with the declaration that unity and peace are **essentials** (important, required, necessary) for both our individual physical bodies, as well as the individual and whole parts of The Body of Christ.

Our understanding of human functioning is usually increased when there is a lack, deficiency or even injury to a part of the body. Sometimes in business, we look at the risk of something not happening. And in many areas of medicine our goal of gaining information is so that we can prevent as much as possible.

When our human body is not unified- when our systems are out of whack, we have dysfunction in our body, increased disease and illness- as well as implications for our behavior. The same is true of the Body of God's Church. Can you imagine the ligaments in just your big toe alone not being unified? It gives extra understanding of how important each ligament is to each other ligament- and the muscles and bones, and the movement/activity connected.

Health or good functioning can be looked at as **peace**. If we understand that each ligament depends on the other, we must be **unified**- and we must seek to get to a point of peace at all times. This doesn't mean always sunshine and roses, but it means leveraging the grace of God, following His instructions, and seeing our brother and sister as an "us and we"...the words of the song "I need you, You need me/ We're all a part of God's Body/ Stand with me/ Agree with me...I need you to survive".

God doesn't need us humans, and He certainly doesn't need the human body (LOL- remember Jesus!?!?!)) and He actually doesn't need The Church. WE as humans need it. We are the ones that need God, and in His sovereignty and ultimate omniscience, He created our physical bodies to need each other and other parts of His creation (where do we get the food and fuel we discussed earlier from- all the other parts of His creation on Earth and space, too (i.e. the moon, sun)). And- He created The Church as a physical place we can go to meet Him (Old Testament Tabernacle/Ark). And- The Church as a place we can become unified in the pursuit of making more disciples until He returns to call us Home.

CONTINUE- What will you do, read, listen to, etc. to continue learning on this topic?
