THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND GOD'S DISPENSING FOR GOD'S ECONOMY

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

Ministering Life for the Body

JL *Hymns*: 481, 631

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:14-17; John 15:4-5, 7; Rom. 12:4-5

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.
John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

I. In 1 John 5:14-17 there is the indication not only that we have eternal life and enjoy it but also that we can minister this life to other members of the Body:

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.

A. Verses 14 through 17 show us that the eternal life within us can overcome death both in ourselves and in other members of the church.

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.

B. Verse 16 is the only reference in the Bible to ministering life to someone:

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

1. To minister life is to impart life.
2. When we have the surplus of life, we can minister from this supply to others—v. 16.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

C. Verse 14 speaks of prayer in the fellowship of eternal life:

1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

1. We should ask according to God's will, not according to our way, desire, or preference.
2. The prayer that is according to God's will indicates that the praying one is abiding in the fellowship of the divine life and is also abiding in the Lord Himself, and thus he is truly one with the Lord—John 15:4-5.

John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

3. The knowing in 1 John 5:15 is based on the fact that after receiving the divine life, we abide in the Lord and are one with Him in our praying to God in His name—John 15:7, 16; 16:23-24.

1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

John 16:23 And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give to you.

John 16:24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full.

4. In 1 John 5:16 *he shall ask* and *he will give life* refer to the same person, that is, to the one who sees his brother sinning and asks concerning him:

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

a. Such an asker, who is abiding in the Lord, who is one with the Lord, and who is asking in one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), becomes the means, the channel, by which God's life-giving Spirit can give life to the ones for whom he is asking.

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

b. This is a matter of ministering life in the fellowship of the divine life.

5. The vital point is that if we would pray for a brother according to what is described in 1 John 5:16, we need to be one with the Lord—John 15:7.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

John 15:7 If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

D. The ministry of life is to minister as life the Christ whom we have experienced—2 Cor. 1:3-4:

2 Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions and God of all comfort,

2 Cor 1:4 Who comforts us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort those who are in every affliction through the comforting with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

1. The ministry comes out by the working of the cross; it is by the way of the cross that we have the riches of Christ as life to minister to others—4:12.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

2. How much life and how much reality of the riches of Christ we can minister depends upon how much revelation we have received and how much we have suffered for what has been revealed to us—Eph. 3:8.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

II. If we would minister life, we need to know, experience, and gain God as the God of resurrection—Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 1:9; John 11:25:

Rom 4:17 (As it is written, "I have appointed you a father of many nations") in the sight of God whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls the things not being as being.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

A. God is working through the cross to terminate us, to bring us to an end, so that we will no longer trust in ourselves but in the God of resurrection—2 Cor. 1:9.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

B. When the God of resurrection works in us, His life and nature are wrought into us—4:16.

2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

C. The killing of the cross results in the manifestation of resurrection life—vv. 10-12:

2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

1. The putting to death of Jesus destroys the natural man, the outer man, and the flesh, with the result that the inner man is given the opportunity to develop and be renewed to live out the resurrection life—v. 16.

2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2. All the work that the Lord is doing on us is to destroy our outer, natural man so that we can live out the life of Christ from within us; this is the deepest thought in the New Testament concerning the life of a Christian—John 12:24-26; Phil. 1:21a.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ …

3. Remaining in the death of Christ and being conformed to His death is a profound principle of the Christian life—Rom. 6:4-5; Phil. 3:10:

Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

Rom 6:5 For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

a. When we remain in the death of Christ, we experience the power of Christ's resurrection—vv. 10-11; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:14.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.
2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
2 Cor 1:10 Who has delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver us; in whom we have hoped that He will also yet deliver us,
2 Cor 4:14 Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will make us stand before Him with you.

b. The more we die with Christ in this way, the more His resurrection power will be manifested in us and the more we will be able to minister life to the Body of Christ—John 11:25.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

4. Our natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross so that they may become useful in resurrection for the ministry of life—Phil. 3:3.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,

D. The budding, blossoming, fruit-yielding rod signifies the resurrection life of Christ for us to minister life to the Body—Num. 17:8.

Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.

III. We need to know the Body in life—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 2:19; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

A. The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in us; this life mingles with us to become the Body of Christ—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19:

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

1. The life in us is not a *member* life—it is a *Body* life.
2. We are all one in this life; this oneness in life is the mystical Body of Christ—Eph. 5:30.

Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.

B. Knowing the Body in life is the result of our experience of life and spiritual growth—1 John 2:12-14:

1 John 2:12 I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you because of His name.

1 John 2:13 I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, young children, because you know the Father.

1 John 2:14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

1. In order to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body, we must progress in the experience of life and the growth of life—1 Cor. 3:1-2; 14:20.

1 Cor 3:1 And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.

1 Cor 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able,

1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your understanding, but in malice be babes and in your understanding be full-grown.

2. Only after we have reached the fourth stage in the spiritual life can we know the mystery of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-13, 15-16.

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

3. In order to know the Body and live in the Body, we need to deal with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Matt. 16:24:

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

a. If we still live according to the flesh and in ourselves and serve in our natural ability, the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself in us, cannot be manifested, and we cannot know the Body.

b. Only when the flesh has been dealt with, the self has been abandoned, and the natural constitution has been broken can we touch the reality of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4-6.

1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

C. Knowing the Body is a dealing with individualism; all those who do not know the Body are individualists—1 Cor. 12:14-22.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

D. The proofs that we know the Body are that we are unable to be individualistic, we can discern those who are not in the Body, and we recognize the authority of Christ as the Head revealed in the order of the Body—v. 18.

1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

IV. We need to know the Body in practice—vv. 20, 27; 15:58:

1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

A. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a particular locality—1:2; 10:32b; 12:12-13, 20, 27:

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
1 Cor 10:32b … both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God;
1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

1. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many churches—the local expression of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

2. The unique Body of Christ is expressed as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11.

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,
Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

3. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression

of the Body—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

4. If we know the Body, in our consideration the Body will be first, and the local churches will be second—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

B. In the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the Body; what we are doing today is not our personal work but the work of the economy of God—the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:4, 12, 16.

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

V. According to the teaching of the Bible and our spiritual experience, there is something called the consciousness of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.

2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

A. The consciousness of the Body of Christ comes from the enjoyment of Christ—Col. 2:16-19:

Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,

Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.

Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh,

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

1. The dear, precious One we enjoy as our food, drink, and breath is the Head of the Body—1 Cor. 10:3-4; John 20:22; Col. 1:18; 2:19.

1 Cor 10:3 And all ate the same spiritual food,

1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.
Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2. What we enjoy is actually something of Christ as the Head; thus, when we enjoy Christ, that causes Him to be our Head subjectively and experientially—Eph. 3:8, 17; 4:15.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

3. When we enjoy Christ, He, the Head, causes us to become conscious of the Body—Col. 2:19.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

B. The consciousness of the Body of Christ is the sense of Christ's life within us—3:4, 15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:

Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1. The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us—Col. 3:4; 2:19.

Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

2. Concerning the consciousness of the Body of Christ, we need to begin with the sense of the divine life within us—Rom. 8:6.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

C. The Body of Christ is universal, the life within us is universal, and the sense of the Body is universal—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.

2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

1. Once the divine life and the Spirit enter into us, we should have a universal sense—the consciousness of the Body—Rom. 8:2, 10-11; 12:4-5, 15.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

2. The sense of the Body is a universal matter, but this sense has been restricted in us because of our own feelings and views—Prov. 14:10; 2 Cor. 6:11-13.

Prov 14:10 The heart knows its own bitterness, / And a stranger does not share in its joy.
2 Cor 6:11 Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.
2 Cor 6:12 You are not constricted in us, but you are constricted in your inward parts.
2 Cor 6:13 But for a recompense in kind, I speak as to children, you also be enlarged.

3. The more we experience the Lord's breaking and are delivered from ourselves, the more we will discover that the sense of the Body is universal—11:28-29.

2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

4. If we have the sense of the Body, when others suffer or are blessed, we will identify with them and feel the same hardship or blessing.

D. As members of the Body of Christ, we need to have the consciousness of the Body and a feeling of the Body—Rom. 12:15; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

1. To live the Body life, we need to be conscious of the Body—1 Cor. 12:26-27.

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

2. If we have the consciousness of the Body of Christ and care for the Body, we will take the Body as the rule in our thoughts and actions—Eph. 4:15-16.

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PROOFS THAT WE KNOW THE BODY

Since knowing the Body is such a practical thing, how may we ascertain whether or not one knows the Body as yet? We can prove it in at least three ways.

Being Unable to Be Individualistic

The first proof of knowing the Body is that we cannot be individualistic. In all the seven points

we have mentioned—in God's plan, in God's creation, in God's redemption, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in life, and in fellowship—everything is one, inseparable, and nonindividualistic. If we really know the Body and realize the oneness contained in these seven matters, there can be no individualism. Before one knows the Body, he is an individualist and can be individualistic. His life, his actions, his work, and his service are all individualistic. Outwardly, he appears to be one with the brothers, but there is no real coordination or knitting together. Not until he grows deeper in life and knows the Body to a certain extent does he see that being a Christian is a corporate matter and that he cannot go on without fellowship in the Body, nor can he depart from the coordination of the members. The Body of Christ becomes a practical matter to him. In the church life he can no longer serve alone. In the innermost part of his being, he feels that he needs to be a Christian together with others. Not only in great and important actions and work does he need the brothers and sisters, but even in Bible reading and prayer as well, he cannot do without other members. He cannot work without the coordination of the brothers and sisters, and he cannot live without the support of the church. It is at this stage that he is being knit together spontaneously with all the saints to become one Body, no more to be separated. All those, therefore, who can still be individualistic do not know the Body, and all those with a true knowledge of the Body definitely cannot be individualistic.

Discerning Those Not in the Body

The second proof of our knowing the Body is the ability to discern whether others are in the Body or not. One who has come to know the Body not only lives in the Body in a very practical way but also can clearly discern whether or not others are living in the Body.

This discerning ability after one knows the Body is absolutely due to the extent of the deep degree of fellowship he has in the Lord. Our fellowship with the Lord grows in depth in proportion to our experience of life, beginning with the initial stage of our spiritual life and continuing through the fourth stage. The degree of depth of fellowship differs greatly as we progress in the experience of life. When two people in different degrees of fellowship in the Lord come together, the one having the deeper experience can go on with the one who has the shallower experience and have fellowship with him, but that fellowship is limited in proportion to the experience of the latter. Should this fellowship go beyond the limit, it will become rather incongruous and incomprehensible to the latter. The one having deeper experience, therefore, can go on with the one who has the shallower experience, but the shallower one cannot go along with the deeper one. This is a great principle in spiritual fellowship.

It is because of this principle that those who are deep in the Lord recognize those who are shallow, but those who are shallow in the Lord do not discern those who are deep. If we have been brought by the Lord to the fourth stage and are having a deep fellowship in this stage, we can by fellowship know whether others also have been brought to this stage and as yet know the Body. But if we have not reached the fourth stage and do not know the Body, we then have no way of discerning others.

Let us use a most shallow illustration. When others spoke regarding regeneration before we were born again, it sounded incongruous to us. In addition, we were unable to know whether others were born again. If we are already born again, we not only can talk with others about regeneration, but we can easily discern whether others have been born again. This proves that we have indeed been born again.

Another illustration: If we have already consecrated ourselves and have had the experience of dealing with sin, we can very readily recognize those who have not had this experience. Since their fellowship with the Lord has not reached this stage, they will have no idea what we are saying, nor will they be able to respond. Conversely, if we have not had this experience, we will also not be able to recognize whether they have been consecrated or have dealt with sin.

Not only can we through fellowship ascertain whether others know the Body, but the experience of knowing the Body is also in itself a matter of fellowship. If one is in the Body, he is in fellowship; if one is not in the Body, he is not in fellowship. Most Christians have lost the position of fellowship, the

reality of fellowship. This implies that they do not see the Body and do not live in the Body. Living in fellowship, therefore, proves that we know the Body. If we really know the Body, we can ascertain whether others are in it or not. When others have not come to live in the reality of the Body, they are not in the fellowship of the Body. There is no possibility of fellowship between them and us regarding this point. We need only to contact them, and we know it. Conversely, if we never sense that others are not in the Body, we demonstrate that we are not in the Body. We have not come to know the Body. Our inner feelings when contacting others, therefore, reveal to us whether we know the Body or not.

Recognizing Authority

The third proof of our knowing the Body is the recognition of authority. Whether or not one knows the Body depends upon whether or not he recognizes authority. Those who do not recognize authority do not know the Body. Knowing the Body and recognizing authority are inseparable. Recognition of authority is related to what we have mentioned regarding individualism in the first proof. If one recognizes authority, he cannot be an individualist. If one wants to determine whether or not he recognizes authority, he simply needs to determine whether or not he is still able to be an individualist. If he is still able to live as an individualist and feels that he can serve God alone without being coordinated with others, he demonstrates that he does not recognize authority, nor has he come to know the Body. Authority can only be manifested in the Body and in the coordination. If one member is individualistic and isolated, he has no relationship with others as far as authority is concerned. But if we have seen that God wants a Body, and that we, being members of this Body, can never go on alone (for once we are alone we are disjointed), we will learn to recognize authority, keep our position in the Body, and coordinate with all the brothers and sisters.

What is authority? Authority is simply the authority of Christ the Head, which is revealed in the order of the Body. Take our physical body as an example. The head is uppermost and is the authority of the whole body; from it, order is expressed throughout the whole body. Below the head are the arms, the trunk, and the legs. All the members follow a definite order; therefore, any member, unless it is detached, falls into such an order. Any member that is attached to the Body surely comes under this order. On one hand, it is under the authority of some of the members, and on the other hand, some other members are under its authority. For example, above the palm of the hand is the elbow, and below are the fingers; the elbow has authority over the palm, and the palm has authority over the fingers. This authority is in accord with their respective order in the body and is also the authority of the head as shown forth in the order of the members. When we speak of authority, we mean the authority of Christ manifested through the order of His Body. Since we are all members of the Body of Christ, we naturally have our right position and order. If we have been taught in our spirit and have been indeed led by God to recognize the flesh, if we have had the self dealt with and the natural constitution broken, we will immediately recognize our own order when placed among brothers and sisters. We will know who is in front of us and who is behind us, who is in authority over us and over whom we are in authority. The authority of the Head in me and the authority of the Head in others makes it clear who is over me and who is under me. This is just like a family, where brothers and sisters know their own order—who should submit to whom and who is the authority of whom. This kind of authority is not assumed, nor is it by election, but it is the natural order in life, which Christ the Head has manifested in all the members of His Body. Only those living in the flesh, walking according to self-opinion and the natural constitution, are able to engage in ugly conflicts with one another in rivalry for authority. All those who have learned their lessons can recognize the authority of the Head over the Body and can rest in their own order in a very natural and satisfactory manner. This has nothing to do with either humility or pride. Coming under authority is a natural procedure, far removed from forcing oneself to submit. This kind of people recognize authority and know the Body because recognizing authority is equal to knowing the Body. Therefore, this matter of knowing the Body can also be called knowing authority.

If we do not know our order in the Body, we demonstrate that in our experience of life we have

not reached the fourth stage. If in the first three stages we have passed through various kinds of dealings, being earnest and thorough, especially in dealing with the flesh, the self-opinion, and the natural constitution, then the Holy Spirit within will lead us in a very natural manner to know our respective order in the Body of Christ, causing our life and service to be full of the flavor of the coordination of the Body. Thus, the Body of Christ will gradually become manifest among us.

In conclusion, when we have come to know the Body, we can be aware of it, even though we may not know when we attained to this knowing; but if we have it, we will know it. This is similar to recovery from an illness. The exact time of recovery is difficult to discern, but we know that we have recovered, for in appearance as well as in feeling we are different. Likewise, in all true spiritual knowing, it is not easy to tell precisely at what day, hour, or minute we gained entrance, but the aftereffect is clearly discernible. Therefore, if one has a real knowing of the Body, sooner or later he will demonstrate the three proofs that we have mentioned. First, he can no longer be an individualist. Second, he can tell when others are not in the Body. Third, among brothers and sisters he knows clearly, without any special effort, his own order in the Body—who has authority over him, and over whom he has authority, that is, in whom rests the authority of the Head. These three points are proofs of our knowing the Body. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1953,* vol. 3, "The Experience of Life," pp. 489-493)