

How a Healthy Body Works

Ephesians 4:16 in Context

The Body of Christ grows through unified service.

Health Requirements:

1. The whole body functions in interdependence.

*...the **whole** body...being fitted and held together...*

- None can say: *I have no need of you.* 1 Corinthians 12:21f
- We all need *one another*. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*Two are better than one because they have a good **return** for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to **lift him up**. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep **warm**, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can **resist him**. A cord of three strands is **not quickly torn apart**.*

- There is multiplied profit (synergy) in cooperative labor.
- There is compounded danger in isolation.
- There is mutual benefit in intimacy.
- There is combined strength in shared lives.

Commitment: I will build community and partnership.
I'll avoid *dismemberment*.

2. Every member participates in servicing.

...every joint...proper working of each individual part...

- Body life is active service - not a spectator sport.
*...through love, serve **one another**...* Galatians 5:13
- Faith is active trust - not passive assent.
Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. James 2:17
James 1:22ff.; Luke 6:46ff.; Ephesians 2:7-10; Hebrews 11

Commitment: I will do something – though I can't do everything.
Aggressively treat the passive spectator syndrome.

3. Each member and ministry strives for building up the body.

...*the building up of the body*...

- Serving is people-work.
- Serving is building – not...
...dividing, critiquing, destroying, discouraging...
cf. 1 Corinthians 3:17 in context

*If any man **destroys the temple** of God - God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy – and **that is what you are.***

Commitment: I will do my part to build up – so I need grace to stop...

Provide radical treatment for those who subvert body function.

4. The body thrives in the context of loving relationships.

“...in love...”

Ephesians 4 cf. 1 Corinthians 13

Commitment: I will build a ministry of relationships.

- a. Consider friendship a ministry.
- b. Reach out to build loving relationships.
- c. Make relationships an integral part of discipleship.

Beware of the illusion of virtual relationships.

Challenge: Am I committed to Christ’s body – or just myself?

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Discussion Guide

1. Recall the characteristics or requirements of a healthy spiritual body and then add others you feel are essential.

The four from this morning: interdependence, service, edification or “building up,” and loving relationships.

List the characteristic and give a quick example or word picture that describes it. For example, *interdependence* – word picture: The feet move the body to the stream and the hands wield the fly rod as the eyes scan the current to catch the fish which the mouth eats, the stomach assimilates and the whole body gains strength (and the mind stores the memories).

A living example?

Interdependence:

Active Service:

Edification (building up):

Loving Relationships:

2. Read Romans 12:9-21. Note this as you start: Verse nine identifies the objective of love without hypocrisy and 10 reinforces it with the command to “be devoted to *one another* in brotherly love.”
 - Look at the passage from the perspective of “devoted love” (involvement in each other’s lives that is motivated by love and shows itself in service).
 - What would those look like in the contemporary church?
 - What challenges do we face in living this out in the South Suburbs?
 - You might do the same for 1 Corinthians 12:20-30 from the perspective of “involvement” in the body of Christ.
3. How “interdependent” are you with the body of Christ & SSEFC?
 - What are the barriers that keep us, or others, from the ideal level of involvement?
 - What are some specific steps we can take to overcome those barriers?
4. Which of these commitments can you make today and what “little step” can you take to keep that, this week?

Which do you think are unbiblical or invalid?

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Commitment: I will build a ministry of relationships.

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I knelt to pray when day was done
And prayed, "Dear Lord, bless everyone;
Lift from each saddened heart the pain,
And let the sick be well again."
And then I woke another day,
And carelessly went on my way.
The whole day long I did not try,
To wipe a tear from any eye -
I did not try to share the load,
Of any brother on my road.
I did not even go to see,
The sick man just next door to me
Yet once again when day was done, I prayed,
"Dear Lord, bless everyone."
But as I prayed, into my ear,
There came a voice that whispered clear,
"Pause, hypocrite, before you pray,
Whom have you tried to bless today?
God's sweetest blessings always go,
By hands that serve Him here below."
And then I hid my face and cried,
"Forgive me, God-, for I have lied.
Let me but live another day,
And I will **live the way I pray.**"