

We began the “Body Life” series with principles for harmony – acknowledging 1. we all need each other, 2. that if problems emerge go in private and in person, and 3. do it ASAP. Example The command to be united in thought and purpose was explored. “A kingdom divided against itself will fall.” Mt 12:25

Then the tough matter of love – love that challenges as well as affirms, corrects as well as forgiving and seeking forgiveness. We, like our Master need to love with sacrificial love – with a readiness to take up our cross and forgive 70 times 7 times. Knowing whose we are as children of God along with all the great diverse family of brothers and sisters in Christ who are also His, secures us in the present and in eternity. The burden of leadership & their need to be courageous in faith, to delegate power & leadership, reassuring the distressed & affirming appointed leaders inspires us to pray for and appoint leaders with great care.

So, are we being built into God’s “Holy temple”? Are you? Have you become part of the body of Christ by receiving Jesus as your forgiver and your master - your whole life open to be led by His Spirit? As a church Wyoming has strong links with Churches of Christ and the Church locally links which can be strengthened further so that like the temple of old, God’s Holy Temple may powerfully proclaim the presence, the promise and the provision of God to the nations today!

I believe God is calling His Church, including the Wyoming Church of Christ to be a Holy Temple, with the dividing walls of hostility broken down, both as a local community of witnesses, and as a building block in his one Holy Temple, Christ’s Church on earth, until He comes.

Wyoming Church of Christ Sunday 16th Nov, 2008

Eph 2:11-18 Body Life 6 “Holy Temple” Allan Blyth

Introduction: Completing the survey developed over recent months by the transition team we have been choosing words and phrases that best describe how we would like our church, the Body of Christ at Wyoming, to be. Words including *nurturing, loving, intentional and welcoming inclusion, Jesus and the cross centred, etc.*

Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus gives much explanation to the nature of the Church, his body.

Eph 2:11-18

Paul mentions citizenship. We are either Australians, or citizens of some other country. I spoke to someone this week preparing for the test, hoping to become a citizen of Australia. In the everlasting spiritual Kingdom of Christ either you are, or you are not, a citizen. Paul is reminding the Christians at Ephesus that before they received Christ they were not citizens of the spiritual Kingdom, and neither was he or any other Jew whose religious life had become a matter of ritual and sacrifices making little difference to neighbour. In V. 17 we read: “He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near”. The Gentiles were far away because they knew little or nothing of God; the Jews were near because they had their God given scriptures and religious ceremonies, yet they were only “near”.

Paul had been near, but still so far away. As a devout scholar and observer of the Law and its rituals, Paul was “near”, but on the Damascus road he discovered how “far away” he was from where God wanted him to be. (What about us?) In V.14 Paul rejoices, “For he himself is our peace who has made the two one.” NIV Citizens of

Australia may live in different states or territories but we all share the one Queen, the one flag, the one Constitution, the one history, the one land. Similarly, all who receive one Saviour Christ as King become children of the one heavenly Father, guided and empowered by the one Holy Spirit, for the glory of the one and only God and the extension of His kingdom.

In this last address in the Body Life series I'm inviting us to reflect on the question "Where am I in terms of His body – i.e. the Church (not the flesh and bones)?"

In creating the Church, "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility".

The vision for the church includes peace - hostility put to death. Example of hostility....

Continuing on the theme of being one body in V 18 Paul continues: "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit."

Those who were far away and those who were near both have access to the one Father through the one Spirit, because 13 "now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ." It is not surprising that some Bible editors have inserted the subtitle "One in Christ" for this part of Paul's letter. As Gordon Moyes reminded us a few weeks ago, the Church of Jesus Christ is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally, one.

Paul describes this one body where enmity and hostility have been replaced by peace, as a "Holy Temple" proclaiming the presence, the promises & the provision

of God to the nations even as did Solomon's temple.

Eph 2:19-22

The body of Christ is described as a Holy Temple. The temple metaphor appears several times in NT scriptures. Many are familiar with 1 Cor 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. Quite often it is quoted as a rationale for looking after our personal bodies – 1 Cor 6:19 could be interpreted that way, but not these verses. "Don't you know that all of you together are God's temple ..."

In 1 Peter 2:5 Christians are described as "stones" being built into a spiritual house - acceptable because of their dependence on what Christ has done, alone.

The writer of Hebrews refers to the body life of the church this way: Heb 3:6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

Paul concludes Eph 2:22 And in him, you too are being built together *to become* a holy temple in the Lord.

It's not finished. The body of the Church is a work in progress – "You (pl.) too *are being* built together..." Are you? Have you accepted God's gift of Jesus for yourself. Have you accepted his free gift of forgiveness made possible by his sacrificial death on the cross? and become a building block in the Holy Temple – the Body of Christ – a temple that will pronounce the presence and power of God to all, the promise of forgiveness and the provision of the Holy Spirit's guiding healing power to equip us for life? e.g. Owls hosting Legacy...