



"I am the *vine*. You are the *branches*. If anyone remains *joined to me*, and I to him, he will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me."

## Adult Bible Study

### Part 3: Connected in Church



In the past two studies we have explored the Christ Connection in our creation and in the Incarnation. We have learned all things are created through Jesus Christ, and all believers are created in Christ, regardless of their abilities. We have also discovered that because Jesus, the only Son of God, came to earth in human form, He was able to fulfill God's law and offer Himself as a physical sacrifice for our sins. Additionally, we will one day participate in a bodily resurrection just like His.

However, our Christ Connection does not belong to the past only! Jesus remains active today in His church, through the Word (Bible) and Sacraments. This study will explore how Jesus maintains His connection to us, and how He enables us to connect to others.

#### THE BODY OF CHRIST

##### Read Colossians 1:15-19.

- What does this passage say about Christ and the Church?(notice v.18)
- Why is Christ supreme?

The apostle Paul begins by establishing Jesus Christ as, the first born of all creation. This affirms Jesus' dominion over the physical realm. Paul concludes this portion of Scripture by declaring Jesus Christ head of the Church. In so doing, Paul moves from the physical to the spiritual.

##### Read Romans 12:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-20.

- What common Church difficulty is Paul addressing in these passages?
- These passages use the body to show how the Church should function. How is that supposed to be?
- Does your place of worship function as the Body of Christ?
- Why or why not?

## **GIFTS OF THE BODY**

Each of us becomes a part of the Body of Christ in our baptism. At the same time, each receives spiritual gifts intended to strengthen this body, the Church.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.**

- Which spiritual gifts are represented in your group?
- Do you see gifts in others in this group they may not recognize in themselves?
- Have any of these gifts been utilized in your congregation?

### **Read John 15:1-6.**

- How does Jesus' description of the vine compare with Paul's analogy of the human body?
- What is God's role in each of these examples?
- Discuss Jesus' use of fruit with Paul's use of gifts. What similarities or differences do you notice with these descriptions?

Both Jesus and Paul emphasize the equality of believers. Each branch of the Vine is important as long as it remains connected to Christ; every body part's contribution is essential to the well-being of the whole. Paul calls us out for our tendency to attach more importance to certain gifts, while diminishing others. We should not judge other believers based on their contributions, gifts, talents or abilities.

- What cautions against this type of behavior are found in the above passages?
- In what other ways are we tempted to judge others in the Body of Christ?

## **A NEW "NORMAL"**

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.**

- Who does God include in His Church?
- Do you see evidence of this in your congregation? If so, how and where?
- How could you be more accommodating to those who are generally disregarded?

God does not choose, or gift, people based on their individual abilities. Instead, He uses each person He has called for the good of the entire Body of Christ. Despite our differences, we are to respect God's gifts to others, and encourage all to share and utilize their abilities.