

What Is the Church Meant to Be?

by Mark Emery

Part 1: A Body, Not a Building

Do you ever think about the word church? When we say the word *church*, what do we mean?

The word *church* is used in many good and familiar ways in everyday life—sometimes referring to a place, a gathering, or a weekly service—but in this series I want to look more closely at the fuller picture Scripture gives us.

In **1 Corinthians 12:12–13**, Paul writes:

“For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.”

The Church is not first a place we go—it is a *people we are*. A living body, joined together in Christ.

And in that body, **every** part matters. Everyone brings something special to the body.

Paul continues in **1 Corinthians 12:15 and 21**:

“If the foot should say, ‘Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,’ it is not for that reason any less a part of the body....(21) The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ Or again, the head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’”

This is both humbling and freeing.

It means no one is insignificant.

It also means no one stands alone.

There are no true spectators in the Church body—each of us has a place and a purpose. I find that exciting!

Each believer carries a role, a gifting, a purpose—given not for themselves alone, but for the building up of the whole. Consider what Paul writes in **Romans 12:5**:

“Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.”

Notice that phrase: *members of one another*.

Not just gathered together, but connected. Dependent. Interwoven.

This is the design.

In **Ephesians 4:16**, we're told:

“From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

In many churches, as in ours, there is often a deep desire for growth—nostalgia for chapters of the past, hopes for the future, and a longing to see more people come.

Scripture gives us a clear foundation: the growth of the Church does not come from one part functioning well, but from every part doing what it was created to do.

This is a vision of a Church that is alive.

Indeed, in this vision of the Church:

- people are not just present, but participating
- not just listening, but living
- not just attending, but belonging

And this kind of Church cannot be reduced to a building or a single moment in the week because *the body doesn't cease to be the body when it leaves a room.*

Praise the Lord, we carry it with us—into our homes, our work, our friendships, and our community. Wherever we go, the life of Christ goes with us. “Time for God” is what we carry into every moment we live in the Gifts of the Spirit and in Truth, bearing the joy and reality of our circumcised hearts to all whom we meet and interact with. We stand out—we’re different because of our death to self and vibrant life in Jesus Christ.

Listen to Peter in **1 Peter 2:5**:

“You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

So when we ask, “*What is the Church meant to be?*”, Scripture answers clearly:

It is a body.

A people.

A living, connected, growing expression of Christ in the world.

And every one of us has a place in it.

Takeaway:

The Church is not something we attend—it is something we *are*. And when each of us steps into our role, the whole body comes alive.

Question to ponder: Are you called to offer something to Harmony Baptist Church? If so, let's talk about it. I have time and energy to pray with you and to work hard to maximize your wonderful, unique part of this body.

Coming next...

- ◆ **PART 2 — The Church Is Called to Action, Not Observation**