

Body-Building Exercises

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Paul frequently speaks of the church as “the body” in his epistles. His constant concern is that it be healthy, growing, vital. In his Ephesian letter (4:11–16), Paul describes the “exercises” required for spiritual body building.

1. **Appropriate Organization and Work Distribution** (vv. 11–12). Paul lists the roles of service common to the church in the first century, some of which (apostles, prophets) were not perpetuated beyond that time. In this list can be seen the diverse functions brethren accomplished and the division of labor involved in that accomplishment. The more members a church puts to work, the more it is going to grow. We must all find our place and fill it.
2. **Unity of the Faith** (v. 13). God’s Word constantly urges unity and condemns division, but never is “peace-at-any-price” compromise allowed. The best organization and division of labor are useless if brethren are not one in the faith (which comes only from the Word [Rom. 10:17]). There is room for differences in matters of opinion (Acts 15:37ff), but not in matters of doctrine, “the faith” (Rom. 16:17; Jude 3). We must stand as one on the BOOK!
3. **Unity of the Knowledge** (v. 13–14). The body can’t grow without nourishment. The diet must be consistent, unified. Our teachers must teach the same things on a given subject or a great confusion will result (1 Cor. 1:10). We are dupes for “every wind of doctrine” and the “wiles of error” if we disdain opportunities to learn the WORD.
4. **Speak the Truth in Love** (v. 15). We are to deal honestly with each other. Our words must be rooted in “the truth.” They must all be tempered by love. One loveless, albeit truthful, tongue can cause a soul to be lost or a church to suffer constant turmoil, preventing growth. Let us love in word and deed!
5. **Recognition of Interdependence (v.16)**. “Framed and knit together” “every joint supplieth,” working ...of each several part” tell the story. We need others and others need us! We can’t ignore these “exercises” and grow.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the February 26, 1976, edition of *the Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.

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