

Assembled Together

We have all heard the much semi-quoted Scripture that we “are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together”. This is usually used to chastise us because somebody thinks that we have not been “in Church” enough. Is that what the Scripture means? First, let's look at the actual verse in Hebrews, which we use to mean that we should be meeting together regularly.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB

- (24) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
(25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Let's look at the Greek word for “assembling”—episunagōgē (Strong's # G1997). This is the only occasion that it is used in connection with the translation “assemble” (there are other Greek words that are normally used for “meeting”). The only other place that this particular Greek word is used in in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, which refers to our gathering together with the Lord at His return.

The original Greek word comes from episunagō (Strong's #G1996) and means “a complete collection”. Its root is in two other Greek words—Strong's numbers G1909 and G4863, which mean “to collect upon the same place; gather”. Putting all of this together, we get “to collect upon the same place to complete collection (assemble).” Based on this, it appears evident that the way we have been using “assemble” falls far short of its true meaning. To assemble together is more than meeting together. The parts of the Body are collected together upon the same place to complete the assembly.

Probably all of us have experienced the practical meaning of this word that is used for “assembling” if we have ever purchased anything that said “some assembly required”, especially when we have purchased various kit types of furniture or Christmas presents for the kids. “Assembling” the item usually leads to a time of frustration as we try to interpret arcane instructions written by some foreigner. Time and work is required to make sure that all of the parts go together correctly and are fastened securely.

If we only look at the individual parts, it is hard to visualize the finished product. We have to look at the assembly diagram for an idea of how everything is supposed to fit together. Of course, if you are like me, you might glance at the picture but you feel like you know how the thing is supposed to go together and immediately get to work. It is only when we are half finished that we realize that for some strange reason the designers have followed a logic pattern that is different than expected and now we must take off a piece or two in order to get the other pieces to fit properly and then re-assemble them in a different order. We would have saved this

time and effort if we had simply followed the step-by-step assembly instructions.

The Body of Christ is the same way—some assembly required. And we are doing it the same way—ignoring the instructions and proceeding on our own until we get into trouble. We need to see and understand the diagram for the finished product—in this case a living temple built from living stones for the dwelling of the Spirit.

So, what does it mean to be “assembled”? We use the word to mean, “gathered together”, but is that correct? A bag or box of parts are “gathered together” but they certainly are not “assembled”.

Again, with anything that is being assembled, there is already an executed design, which was developed by the designer. There is a collection of parts that were also designed to be fitted together in a pre-determined place and a pre-determined order. The same is true of the Body of Christ. God has designed His Temple according to His own desires. He has pre-determined (chosen) the parts (living stones) and has a pre-determined placement and function for each one.

We have been told many times that the Sunday morning meeting is the assembling together and that if we don't attend then we are “forsaking the assembling together”. This is simply not true. First, I have attended many Sunday mornings and that gathering is far short of the meaning of “assembly”. Second, no “assembling” is going on—it is just a bag full of parts that are being jiggled together. I am not at all sure that any institutional church has the capability to “assemble” the way that the Scriptures intend. At least, they can't and continue to function according to their denominational by-laws.

The biggest problem with the Sunday morning meeting is that each denomination thinks it's meeting is the whole body when, in actuality, it is not. If “assembly” were to occur, there would either be parts missing or parts left over because they are in another meeting somewhere else.

We have not properly discerned the meaning of Hebrews 10: 25. It says that we are not to forsake the assembly. The assembly has already occurred in God's plan (in Eternity). We are not to forsake it. We must realize that we are being built together as a whole Body and that every part is necessary and has a place and a function.

1 Peter 2:5 NASB

(5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

While in Eternity the Body is complete, in time, being built together or “assembled” is an ongoing process that is being worked out. This process is definitive and necessary as we are assembled. We need to develop a perspective that looks at “church” from the viewpoint of God's intention. Instead, we have developed our own rules and established them as our denominational traditions.

Ephesians 4:15-16 NASB

- (15) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,
- (16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Each part is necessary and supplies something to the whole body for growth and building up.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NASB

- (12) For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.
- (13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- (14) For the body is not one member, but many.

The Scriptures use several pictures or types to help us understand what the Lord is doing with His people. There is the building terminology, which describes us a Holy Temple being built out of Living Stones for a habitation of the Spirit. [*For further discussion of this see the teaching "House of the Lord" available on the website.*] Another picture is the Body terminology. This is organic. A Body is grown rather than built. Both of these pictures of the people of God tell us something and are both true of His people. (Notice, too, that the Scriptures never say that we are "like" a temple, or "like" a body; but, rather, that we ARE a temple, we ARE a body. That is spiritual reality.)

Basic Principles of the Body

We need to understand the basic principles under which the Body functions if we are to properly grasp our place and function in His Body and our ministry in the Kingdom of God.

1. **First principle of the Body:** There is only one Body.

1 Corinthians 12:12 NASB

- (12) For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

We are not many bodies but one body. Sunday morning meetings should not and cannot separate us into many bodies. We assemble by the Spirit as one body with many members in many locations.

2. **Second principle of the Body:** There is only one Head.

Ephesians 5:23 NASB

(23) For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

The head directs the body and gives identity to the body.

3. Third principle of the Body: Placement and function are according to the desires of the Lord and not according to our preferences.

We don't decide how we are placed in the Body nor do we decide how we are to function. That is the sole prerogative of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:15 NASB

(15) If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body.

God designed each part according to His purpose and has placed each part according to the proper fit and expects each part to function according to its placement. It doesn't matter how much you would prefer to be the hand, if you are the foot then you are the foot and will only find fulfillment when functioning as the foot. Of course, some who are feet have to put up with others who are hands. The hands think that everybody should be a hand, so they tell the feet that if they would just make a few adjustments then they too could be hands and have a "real" ministry!

4. Fourth principle of the Body: There is a relationship of mutual need.

1 Corinthians 12:21 NASB

(21) And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Each member needs every other member. There are no extraneous parts. We cannot let any quirks in other people separate us from them. We cannot be complete without them.

It is also important to recognize that the head needs the members. Jesus, as the Head of His Body, has need for the "feet" and all other members in order to manifest Himself through His Body to the heavens and the earth.

5. Fifth principle of the Body: The one who plants and the one who waters are one.

1 Corinthians 3:7-8 NASB

(7) So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

(8) Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Each member must function according to God's call and also must make room for the function of others. The one who plants must make room for the one who waters. To act differently is not to be one. We must recognize that all ministry is done by the Body under the direction of the Head. It does not matter which of the members actually is involved with performing the service.

6. Sixth principle of the Body: Each member provides the same care for one another.

1 Corinthians 12:25 NASB

(25) so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.

Our care for one another is from the love of the Lord and has no room for any prejudice or favoritism of any kind.

James 2:1 NASB

(1) My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism.

James 2:9 NASB

(9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors

7. Seventh principle of the Body: A healthy body grows.

A body grows up. It matures. To be healthy the Body of Christ must be fitted and held together by the supply of the joints; there must be the proper working of each individual part. When that happens, then growth occurs.

Ephesians 4:15-16 NASB

(15) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

(16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

While we could speak of several other principles of the Body, if we will simply appropriate and apply these seven, we will begin to experience being truly "assembled" together.

Help us Lord to be your Body in reality and not just in theory!