

Xenos Christian Fellowship  
Christian Growth  
Week 9 – The Means of Growth: Body Life, Part 2 and the Word

**Introduction**

**Structures that facilitate healthy body life.**

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**Can a lifestyle of self-giving love be fulfilling?**

**Phil. 2:3-5)** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

The paradox of self-giving love:

The teaching and examples of Christ:

**(Jn. 4:34)** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

**(Jn. 6:5-13)** Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" (6) And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. (7) Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." (8) One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, (9) "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" (10) Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. (11) Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. (12) And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost." (13) And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

**(Jn. 13:1-17)** Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end . . . (3) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, (4) rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. (5) Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded . . . (12) And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? (13) "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. (14) "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. (16) "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. (17) "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

**(Acts 20:35)** “. . . remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Qualification:

### **Common Barriers To Healthy Body-life**

1. Culturally glorified autonomy ("Needing other people is a sign of personal weakness.")

**(1 Thess. 3:1)** Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone . . .

2. Codependence (Unhealthy dependence on people rather than God. "You must meet my needs" vs. "God meets my needs, sometimes through you or others.")

**(Phil. 4:10-19)** But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. (11) Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (14) Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction . . . (19) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

3. Super-spirituality ("Involvement with other Christians hinders my intimacy with Christ.")

**(1 John 4:19,20)** We love, because He first loved us. (20) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

**(Col. 2:2,19)** . . . that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself . . . (19) (The false teachers are) not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

4. Materialism ("I'm too busy with my career/schooling to be this involved with other Christians.")

**(1 Jn. 2:10,15)** The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him . . . Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

**(1 Jn. 3:14-17)** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (16) We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

5. Tribalism ("I am so busy with my children's [sports, music, etc.] that we don't have for fellowship," "God first, my family second, church third . . ." or "My family is my ministry.")

**(Col. 3:12-21)** And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup> And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. <sup>18</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. <sup>20</sup> Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.

Eph. 5:1-33

Qualifications:

NOTE: there is a handout entitled “Balancing Home and Church Ministry” for more reading on this. It is also on the web at [http://www.xenos.org/essays/balancing\\_min.htm](http://www.xenos.org/essays/balancing_min.htm)

6. Moral impurity (Often manifested by withdrawal from fellowship &/or complaints about the church.)

**(1 Jn. 1:7)** . . . but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another . . .

7. Rebellious attitude ("Who are you to tell me what to do/how I should act?")

**(Heb. 13:17)** Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

**(Heb. 12:6,9,10)** Those whom the lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives . . . (9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us . . . (10) they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.

8. Shy or introverted ("I'm just shy and introverted." "I'm just not a people person.")

**(2 Tim 1:7)** For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

### **Spiritual Gifts**

As you are involved in Body-life and practicing Christian love, God will eventually reveal certain ministry strengths that he has provided. These are called spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4:7,11-13; 1 Pet. 4:8-11).

### **Discipleship**

As you learn about God and begin to follow him, he will give you the opportunity to help younger, hungry Christians learn how to walk with him. We call this ministry discipleship.

**2Tim 2:2** And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

**Col 1:28,29** And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

### Body Life as it relates to the other Means of Growth

<b>The Interaction of Body-Life with the Other Means of Growth</b> <b><i>RECEIVING</i> Christ's Love</b>	
<b>Prayer</b>	The church is to be a praying community. By precept and example, prayer plays a central role in the life of the church. Others can stimulate us to love and good works (Heb. 10: 24,25), including by prayer. By establishing regular times to pray with others, we can strengthen our prayer habits, while gaining the discernment of the other members. Prayer is the spearhead of the church's ministry; opening doors, producing conviction in the hearts of those who hear, protecting those reached from Satan and granting spiritual empowerment to Christian workers.
<b>Scripture</b>	The church should teach the word of God. The church is ordered to equip its members to do the work of service (Eph 4:11,12). Instruction in the bible is central to this mission. The church should also use the bible to ground new Christians and even for evangelism at its public meetings.
<b>Discipline of the Holy Spirit</b>	When we are undergoing difficult times of spiritual discipline from the Lord, Christian fellowship is sometimes the only thing that keeps us from falling apart. We were never meant to undergo significant breaking without the support of a loving community. At the same time I receive support, I have the opportunity to give support and to coach young Christians on how to understand God's hand in their lives during trials.
<b>The Interaction of Body-Life with the Other Means of Growth - <i>GIVING</i> Christ's Love</b>	
<b>Prayer</b>	Those who are strong in ministry know how many times their ministries have spurred them on to intense periods of prayer. It is hard for such people to imagine what it would be like to feel the obligation to pray, but without the natural and healthy motivation created by ministry. As ministers, no longer are we merely praying because it's the right thing to do, or because we hope we can feel better as a result. Instead, there are real tasks to accomplish through prayer in the lives of others. Those who are established in defined and personal ministry consistently demonstrate more appreciation for prayer than those who are lacking this vital means of growth.
<b>Scripture</b>	When others are looking to us for guidance and help in their Christian walks there will be a new urgency in our study of Scripture. This is because as discussed

	earlier, Scripture holds the key to successful ministry. Feeding young believers the Word of God is basic to most kinds of ministry. Even service oriented ministry should be carried out in light of the Bible and should include the use of Scripture.
<b>Discipline of the Holy Spirit</b>	Spiritual discipline is largely intended to make us more effective in ministry. At the same time being in ministry will cause us to experience maximum benefit from discipline. We regularly find that those who are tied into extensive ministry are prepared and able to endure the necessary suffering to be conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of those people who depend on their ministry. Those who are not active in ministry find it too easy to run in the face of painful discipline.

Charts from, Dennis McCallum, "Walking in Victory," pp. 140, 157.

## The Word as a Means of Growth

### Introduction

### Importance of the Word as a means of growth

#### 1. Essential for spiritual health

**(1 Pet. 2:2\*)** like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation

What does this verse teach us about how we should approach the word?

#### **Aim**

See also Psalm 1; Matt. 7:24-27; Jn. 8:31,32; 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; 1 Tim. 4:6.

#### **Attitude**

#### **Appetite**

## **How often do we need to take in the Word?**

**(Acts 2:42)** And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

MANNA (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4)

Ps. 1:2; 119:97 - The psalmist meditated on the Word "day and night."

## **2. Essential for Spiritual Maturity**

**(Heb. 5:11-14\*\*)** 11 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

### **Four areas of competence every Christian should have in the Word:**

- We should be familiar with the content of scripture
- We should understand the more difficult biblical concepts
- We should be able to teach others

- We should be able to discern good and evil

### **How quickly should we be able to attain this level of competence?**

1 Cor. 2:13-3:2 ...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. 16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able

### **What would be some signs that we may be going soft in this area?**

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## **3. Essential for Effective Ministry**

**(2 Tim. 3:16-17)** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Four ways the Word can be used in ministry:

- "Teaching": instructing people in biblical doctrine
- "Reproof/rebuke": confronting people about personal disobedience
- "Correction": illuminating areas of ignorance and replacing them with correct attitudes and actions
- "Training in righteousness": showing people what godliness looks like and how to attain it

Added benefits from using the word in ministry:

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**(Heb. 4:12)** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

## **Relationship with the other Means of Growth**

### Prayer

In our prayer life, the Bible provides the proper basis for knowing God by telling us what he is like. According to Jesus, effective prayer is based on the Word (John 15:7). John promises that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14). This is a powerful promise, but it is conditional. We have to ask "according to His will." But how do we know what God's will is apart from Scripture?

### Ministry

Serving love is a means of growth, but effective service involves "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). No ministry will have the power God wants it to have unless the one ministering is powerful in the Word of God. Even task-oriented ministers who may not teach or preach need the wisdom available in God's Word. We will not be effective at ministry or in our personal growth if we cannot fend off the attacks of Satan, and this is not possible unless we are able to cite our authority from Scripture.

### Body Life

The basis for Christian fellowship is not only love but truth. The Body of Christ is a community of truth, and these two can never be separated. In Philippians 1:9-10 Paul prays, "that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." Truth is the framework that makes real love

possible. This is why we are called on to "speak the truth in love" to one another (Ephesians 4:15).

### Discipline/Suffering

The discipline of the Holy Spirit is a means of growth, but it won't be effective unless we respond appropriately. We need Scripture, like that in Hebrews 12, to teach us how to respond to discipline in a way that promotes growth, as we shall see.

### How should we study the Bible?

**If you haven't taken *Intro to the Bible* yet, consider taking it as soon as you can. If you have taken *Intro to the Bible*, we encourage you to sign up for *Christian Ministry*. The *Christian Ministry* series provides a great foundation for a lifetime of ministry.**

### Memory Verses

**1 Pet. 2:2\*** - We will always be dependent on God's Word for spiritual growth.

**Heb. 5:11-14\*\*** - Knowing the word is essential for Christian maturity. The passage also teaches four areas of biblical competency for the mature Christian.

### Assignment

Study for the exam.

In order to take Christian Ministry 1-3, you must read the articles in the *Discipleship Packet* and turn in the questions at the end to the class registrar at the Xenos office. In addition, college students must have a recommendation from their home group leader.

### Week 9 Exam Review Guide

1. Know the common barriers to body life.
2. According to Hebrews 5:11-14, what are the four competencies in the Word that a mature Christian should be able to demonstrate?