

Body-building Enthusiast

People today are more self-conscious about their health, fitness, and appearance than any other time in history.

Special diets, equipment, facilities, clothing, and programs have been developed with the aim of reshaping flabby bodies into sleek-looking, stealth-functioning machines.

Body-building enthusiasts are glad to sacrifice convenience, comfort, time, energy, money and much sweat in the hope that their investment will reward them with increasing health and a radically transformed body-beautiful.

It may surprise you to know that God has always had a keen interest in body-building. In fact, He is a Body-building Specialist! However, His interest is not limited to the *physical*, but majors on the *spiritual*, *intellectual*, and *emotional* dimensions of our lives.

When it comes to building a healthy body, God is “the” Sovereign personal-trainer. He is the founder, inspiration and, enabler.

This message has nothing to do with building-up *physical* bodies, but everything to do with building the *spiritual* Body of Christ... His Church (both local and universal).

- Together, believers are member-parts of the Body of Christ!
- The Church is built-up through YOU and ME “*being*” built-up!
- Building up the church has nothing to do with increasing church membership but everything to do with the character of every church member increasing in the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

The blueprint for building a healthy church is detailed for us in the Book of Ephesians... Paul says,

v. 7 - *God has given every true believer a special gift through the generosity of Christ.*

v. 11 - *He gave to the church: pastors, teachers, and other specialists.*

v. 12 - *Their responsibility is to equip each of you, the ministers of [your church], for the work of building-up the body of Christ (your church).*

v. 13 - *This work is to continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

v. 14 - *We must no longer be ignorant and lazy, easily influenced by the opinions of worldly and deceitful people.*

v. 15 - *But through speaking the truth in love, we must grow-up in every way into the likeness of Christ, who is the head of the church.*

v. 16 - *Now, as each of you “does” his or her own special work, others will grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Eph. 4:7, 11-16 (My paraphrase))*

Friends, from this passage of Scripture, two aspects of body-building stand out for me; they are... the OUTCOME and the METHOD... the **WHY** and the **HOW**.

WHY

1. Helps us to have a right, mature **belief** (v. 14)
2. Unites us in faith and knowledge of Christ (v. 13)
3. Grows us more into the likeness of Christ (v. 15; Rom. 8:29)
4. Others will grow – the church will be **healthy** and **growing** and **full of love** (v. 16).

HOW

1. Acknowledge that you have been given a special gift (v. 7)
2. Get equipped - seek coaching advice (vv. 11-12)
3. Practice your gift - do your special work (v. 16)

In addition to celebrating positive *present* outcomes, there's an incentive of *future* benefit. On Judgement Day, spiritual fire will test the quality of our earthly labor. Those who have labored well for God will be *rewarded* in Heaven! Those who haven't, won't!

Paul says in **First Corinthians**, *"...on judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames"* (3:13-15).

Friends, unlike body-building enthusiasts whose interests and efforts are focused on building-up their own "physical" bodies, my commitment, energy, and enthusiasm is directed towards building-up "spiritual" bodies... other Christian believers... the Body of Christ!

I therefore testify to you today that my life's profession is body-building... so that the Church of Jesus Christ is healthy and growing and full of love. There is nothing in this world I consider worth building more than our believing brothers and sisters... YOU!

I liken the Church with its *ministries* and *programs* to a "Love Gymnasium" ... where all believers faithfully and passionately come to *exercise* their special gifts ...

- Expressing their love for God, 24/7 in their every-day lives, and
- Expressing their love for one another.

Are you a committed body-building enthusiast?

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