



In Christ

LifeConnect Group Material

In Christ

*⁹ For **in Christ** all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and **in Christ** you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.*

Colossians 2:9-10

In Christ (including phrasings such as in Me, in Him, with Him, by Him, though Him, through Christ) is mentioned around 130 times in the Bible, particularly in the epistles. To be in Christ affirms our total dependence and union with Him. He becomes our source, our core, our centre, our first, our last, our reason, our purpose, our goal, our everything. For in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Apart from Him we can do nothing.

As you work through this theme, you will cover the following topics:

1. Salvation in Christ
2. Alive in Christ
3. Rooted in Christ
4. Abide in Christ
5. Grace in Christ
6. One in Christ

We pray that as you go through this material with your LifeConnect groups that you and your group will come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be in Christ and how Jesus takes supremacy over everything that truly reflects deeply transformed lives and deeply connected relationships – in Christ.

As we begin and continue to anchor our soul in him may we experience joy, peace, hope, freedom, fulfilment, rest, and trust in his sovereign will in our lives. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

A few reminders for running LifeConnect groups:

1. Pray as you prepare and study the material.
2. Silence is your friend. Gaps are important for people to process the information. When difficult questions and stories are shared and you don't have answer or responses, have a moment of silence and just privately ask the Spirit of God to guide you through.
3. LifeConnect groups are not intended as a formal bible study. Leaders are facilitators, not lecturers. Equally important in your preparation is crafting good questions. Remember your ALE superpowers: Ask questions, Listen and Empathise.
4. People talking and sharing their thoughts is a good indicator that they are engaging.
5. Questions in the material are suggestive. You can come up with your own ice breaker and questions.

Thank you for all that you do.

Salvation in Christ

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

Ice Breaker

Ask the group if anyone has been rescued, or has rescued someone from a life and death situation (e.g. drowning, choking, hanging on the edge of a cliff, etc.). Ask them to share their story. If no one has a story you may refer to a movie where a person was rescued or a person rescued someone from a dire situation.

Ask the group: What did the person do to save someone from harm? What was the motivation of the helper? What were the thoughts and feelings of the person whose life was in peril? What does it feel like to be saved or see someone being saved from harm?

Introduction

"Soteria" is the word for salvation, *"sozo"* is the act of being saved and *"soter"* is the word for savior in Greek. Salvation happens when a person in great danger has been saved by a savior. Therefore, salvation is the act of preserving someone from harm.

Theologically, salvation is God's way of preserving man from sin and death. Death is not just a cessation of being but eternal separation from God. He is life (John 14:6); thus, to be separated from Him is death. Our sin separates us from God. All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

As we cannot save ourselves, death awaits us all. It is for this reason that God gave His only Son as a substitute and propitiation for our sins. His death for our death, that we may have peace with God through Jesus Christ. His death on the cross met the required justice, showed God's mercy and grace. His resurrection affirms that He is God, and He is alive forevermore.

If we believe the Son of Man is the Son of God and receive His offer of salvation, then we are truly saved. Here are some of the benefits of salvation we receive in Christ:

1. We have been redeemed by Christ

"... and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Romans 3:24

He has ransomed us from the slavery of sin to his adoption as a child of God.

Question to the group: How has God redeemed you or is redeeming you in your context?

2. We were reconciled through Christ

"For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!"

Romans 5:10

Through Christ's death our relationship with God is restored.

Question for the group: Relate this to a personal experience (if you have one) where your relationship with a friend or loved one has been restored from a deep division or resentment. How did this restoration feel?

3. We have been justified in Christ

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 5:1

Justified means just as if you had not sinned. You have a clean slate and God remembers your sin no more.

Question to the group: Have you committed an offence that deserved and expected to be punished for but instead received a reprieve (e.g., police gave you a pass on a driving infringement). If so, what are some of the thoughts and emotions you experienced as a result?

4. There is no more condemnation in Christ

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:1

Sin brings guilt and shame, but his salvation removes that condemnation from us. John 8:36 says, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Question to the group: Do you have any guilt or shame from your past that you still carry in your life. Without sharing details, how could you apply this passage of scripture to remove that guilt and shame?

"I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts."

Ps. 119:45

5. We were made holy in Christ

"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be His holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours."

1 Corinthians 1:2

To be holy means to be separated ("set apart") for God and be sanctified by His word. Holiness is not a life of reclusion but a life of enjoying God, just as God rested on the seventh day to enjoy his creation and declared that day as holy (Gen. 2:2-3).

Summary

God's salvation is complete and encompassing. However, salvation is not found in a destination, but in the person of Jesus Christ; thus, we must remain in Him.

"And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

1 Peter 5:10

Alive in Christ

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

1 Corinthians 15:22

"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Romans 6:11

Ice Breaker

What does it mean to be alive? How does it feel to live?

Introduction

There are a significant number of movies about zombies. To date, the most recent one to hit the screen is a Korean movie on Netflix, #Alive. It's a story of two people that in their desire to live, make a daring escape from the swarming zombies.

The word alive in Romans 6:11 is from the Greek word *zaō* (pronounce as *dzah'-o*) which means to live, and the word used in 1 Corinthians 15:22 is from the Greek word *zōopoieō* (pronounced as *dzo-op-oy-eh*), which means to (re) vitalize. To be alive is not simply to exist, but to live.

Zombies are alive but are not living. To be alive is more than breathing. Breathing is not an achievement, everyone does that (even zombies). To be alive is to live with identity, belonging and purpose. This is what brings meaning and value. If you are just going through the motions, then you are merely existing, not living. If you see yourself in this situation, don't be disheartened, there is hope in Christ.

1. Life in Christ

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

John 1:4

...that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

John 3:15

True life is living with identity, belonging and purpose. This causes us to wake up in the morning and live with hope. It is not a destination, but in a person, Jesus Christ. When we find our identity in Christ, that we belong to Him and live with a purpose of knowing Him, then we have truly found life.

2. A new creation in Christ

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

2 Corinthians 5:17

Question to the group: Have you ever replaced old furniture or appliances (like a bed or tv) with something new. What did you do to replace the old?

The way God brings newness is by first taking out the old, then bringing in the new. He takes out our old self (by justification) and brings in the new us (by sanctification). Just like it is easy to take out the old and takes time to bring in the new, our transformation in Christ is an ongoing process. One thing is for sure, He is committed to complete it until the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

3. Hope and peace in Christ

...so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."
Ephesians 1:12

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7

Question to the group: What is hope and peace for you?

An old story was told of a king who commissioned painters to come out with a painting that best described hope and peace. Each painter came out with their own rendition but the one painting that struck the king most was that of a bird clawing on to a lone tree branch as it braved a tough storm.

Hope and peace are not the absence of disruption but come from a deep insight that your life is in His hands, and an internal resolve that all will be well. God did not promise you a storm-free life, but he will be with you when the storm of life hits you.

4. Triumph in Christ

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere."

2 Corinthians 2:14

One of the paradoxes in life is that defeat is equally as important as victory. You may see the devil or your environment or own circumstances as your opponent, but really your ultimate nemesis is you. It's you vs you. This perspective will make you realise that your failure, loss, grief, pain and suffering are the things that give value, joy, meaning and beauty in triumph.

5. Mature in Christ

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

Colossians 1:28

Question to the group: How do you measure maturity?

Maturity is not measured by age or experience but by how you assimilate God's truth into your decisions and relationships. Proverbs calls it wisdom. There are signposts of maturity such as perseverance, readiness to forgive and seek forgiveness, speaking the truth in love, prudence, resilience, and few others. Maturity is gained in Christ as you submit to His word. It is profound that the Apostle John equates eternal life to knowing

Him: "...this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3).

Summary

To be alive in Christ takes us beyond existing. It is living and growing with identity, belonging and purpose. This is only found and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Rooted in Christ

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

Introduction

Roots are important for two reasons: It makes the tree grow strong and healthy. The deeper the roots the stronger and healthier the tree becomes. Roots draw nutrients from the soil and the soil holds the tree firmly standing. Overtime, as the roots become established in this natural rhythm, the tree forges a symbiotic relationship as it becomes intertwined with the soil.

Changes of seasons and harsh weather does not tear them apart but instead forms a greater bond, and with other deep-rooted trees around they become a forest – a mighty fortress. Like a natural dam withstanding any ravaging onslaught of storm and flood.

1. Be built up in him

⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to Me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.

Luke 6:47-49

People who are built up in Jesus have a counterintuitive mindset and see things through a different lens. They see obstacles as opportunities, embrace problems as possibilities, view interruptions as introductions to new things, see post pandemic realities not as breaks but breakthroughs, and welcome change and leverage. Nothing is wasted in loss and grief as we see things with an eternal perspective.

2. Focus on Jesus

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

Question to the group: Why do you think a horse needs blinkers?

Horses have monocular vision. With their eyes on the sides of their head they have a wider field of view, but it limits their depth of perception. Blinkers address this constraint by giving the horse somewhat binocular vision. This helps them to focus on their direction of movement or on things in front of them.

Humans have 120 degree binocular vision and 40 degree monocular vision (compared to horse that has 350 degree monocular vision), which means humans can utilise both types of vision to a certain limit.

Spiritually speaking, God's word is our set of blinkers that allows us to focus on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Life is full of disruptions and interruptions that can take our eyes off of Him. When we take time to read and apply His words, He redirects us toward the things that are important and eternal.

3. Jesus is the anchor of your soul

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 6:19-20

Question to the group: What does an anchor do to a boat?

An anchor prevents the boat from drifting due to wind and current. To anchor means to fix or secure in a particular place. With Jesus as your anchor, you are fixed and secure from being influenced by changing worldviews, crises, or global disruptions. As you trust Him, He gives you peace that passes all understanding and a stillness that all will be well.

Summary

To be rooted in Christ gives you wisdom and timely discernment, makes you emotionally healthy and spiritual perception that helps you navigate cultural shifts, regressing worldviews, world disruption or personal crisis.

Abide in Christ

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15: 4-5

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

John 15: 8

Ice Breaker

Question for the group: Have you ever been so committed to or passionate about something (perhaps a job, a hobby, a hope or dream) that it felt like it was a part of you, no matter where you went?

Introduction

Of the 21 chapters in the gospel of John, nearly one quarter are dedicated to the teaching Jesus shared with his disciples the night before his death on the cross (chapters 13 - 17). It was on this night, as Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples, that He imparted to them many of the things that both they and us, as his followers, would need to know to endure in His absence and as the challenges of life come.

At the very heart of John's account of that evening (John 15:1-11) comes Jesus' command to all who would choose to follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you." To "abide" means to "remain" or "stay around". Through the metaphor of the vine and its branches, Jesus communicated this essential core of the Christian life in vivid detail.

This call to abide in Christ comes with a glorious promise; those who abide in Him will bear much fruit, in turn bringing glory to God and proving to be His true disciples. It is to these true disciples that the sure hope of eternal life belongs.

What does it look like for us to abide in Christ?

1. We earnestly desire to keep His commandments

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

John 15:10

Question for the group: For those that are comfortable sharing, how does Jesus' definition of what it means "to abide" in Him make you feel?

Abiding in Jesus Christ is not the mystical or unclear concept that it may appear to be if we were to read only a few of the verses of chapter 15 out of context. Rather, Jesus tells his disciples specifically how they can know for sure that they are abiding in Him after He is no longer with them.

To be clear, even the saintliest among us are still sinners. Obedience is not what saves us (Ephesians 2:8-9), and none of us will achieve perfect obedience to God in this life. But a

sincere desire and intentional effort to keep His commands is a blessed proof to us that we are truly abiding in Him.

2. We wait and hope in the Lord

"My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him."

Psalm 62:5

"And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You."

Psalm 39:7

*"Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God."*

Psalm 42:11

Questions for the group: Is patience a challenge for you? Do you have any examples of things in your life that you wish you had waited for more patiently, or examples of things that, in hindsight, you are glad you did wait for? Why do you think waiting is an important part of our relationship with God?

In the metaphor Jesus gives, He is the vine and we are the branches. The branch of a vine is totally dependent on the vine for all the nourishment it requires. It "waits" on the vine for the water and nutrients extracted from the soil to grow and bear fruit. In the same manner we, as we abide in Christ, will wait on Him to provide the nourishment for our souls, trusting Him to provide both physically and spiritually at both the perfect time and in the right amount that we may grow in the way He desires us to grow.

3. He will lead us

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want."

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.*

*He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*

Psalm 23

Question for the group: Which part of Psalm 23 stands out to you the most? Why?

When we wait and hope in the Lord, and earnestly desire to follow Him and walk in obedience, we can be sure that He will lead us as He has promised in His word. Among other things, Psalm 23 promises that the Lord will lead us "in paths of righteousness", that He will always be with us even as those paths involve intense trials and dark times, and that His goodness and lovingkindness will follow us no matter where He leads us. These same promises are represented by Jesus in His analogy of the vine;

"You will bear much fruit" (walk in righteousness),

"He who abides in Me, and I in him..." (He is with us),

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (His goodness and loving kindness will follow us).

Summary

Abiding in Christ is an essential component of the Christian life. When we recognise that He is the root of life and godliness, as the vine is life to the branches, we will wait on Him as our hope and our help. We know that we abide in Him when we seek to be obedient to His commandments, and we can trust wholeheartedly in His promise that He will lead us in righteous living so that we may bear much fruit, bringing glory to His name and proving to be His disciples.

Grace in Christ

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Ephesians 2: 4-9

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 1:12-14

"...according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity..."

2 Timothy 1:8-9

Ice Breaker

Question for the group: Generally speaking, do you feel more comfortable working to earn the things you need in life, or relying on receiving them as gifts? Explain your reasoning if you feel comfortable sharing.

Introduction

While teaching His disciples using the analogy of the vine and the branches, Jesus notes how obedience is a defining part of abiding in Him.

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

John 15:10

Unfortunately, we as fallen human beings have a natural tendency to take this often repeated biblical truth out of context, elevating the role of works above the importance of grace in our salvation and our Christian walk.

It is part of our fallen human nature to desire control over our own lives, which includes the feeling of "self-sufficiency" we get from providing for our own needs. We naturally find comfort in being able to "make a living" by our own effort, trying to free ourselves from the need to trust in and depend upon others, especially on God.

There is nothing wrong with working hard to provide for ourselves and our families, (in fact the bible commends it), but we would be foolish to convince ourselves that we "deserve" the things we believe we have earned. Rather, scripture teaches that every good thing we have is a gift from God.

"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights..."

James 1:17

To receive something by grace is to receive something that we have not earned and do not deserve. We are saved by grace, not by our own effort. No man can earn his salvation, for the price is far beyond what he could ever pay. Instead, we receive it by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. In doing so we acknowledge we do not have the control of our own lives we thought we had, and instead choose to trust God to provide what we cannot earn.

The grace of God is "more than abundant" (1 Tim. 1:14) and the gift of eternal life is only the beginning of His gracious gifts to us. Here are three more ways the bible teaches that God shows us His grace:

1. By grace, we are blessed in Christ

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..."

Ephesians 1:3

All those who abide in Christ have become children of God - fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17) - such that all Christ has He has also graciously given to us, including His righteousness, position, privilege, and resources. As God's children, He assures us that all things that happen in this life are ultimately for our good (Romans 8:28).

Question for the group: For those in the group who are followers of Christ, is there any particular way in which He has blessed you that stands out above all the other blessings?

2. By grace, we can endure all things through Christ who strengthens us

"Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 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. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:11-13

The Apostle Paul, who wrote this text, was no stranger to hardship. Throughout his ministry he suffered many severe beatings, harsh imprisonments under the cruelty of the Roman Empire, and ultimately died for his faith. Yet God, by His grace, gave Paul the strength and endurance he needed to be content in every situation.

Question for the group: Do you have a testimony of a situation or circumstance that God supplied you with the strength to endure? Are you currently facing a situation that you're trusting God for the grace to be content in?

3. By grace, God will always provide what we need as we abide in Christ

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:19

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, What will we eat? or What will we drink? or What will we wear for clothing? For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Matthew 6:25-33

God is not unaware or insensitive to our material needs. In fact, He knows what we need better than we do. We sometimes confuse our needs with wants, or often believe we need something urgently without realising that our circumstances will change completely tomorrow. He knows exactly what we need now, what we will need tomorrow, and every need we will have for the rest of our days on earth, and He is in control of every circumstance.

We can trust His promise that when we seek Him above all else, He will never fail to graciously provide us with what we need out of His unlimited supply.

Question for the group: Are there any ways in which God has provided for your needs that have challenged your expectations or grown your understanding of Him?

Summary

As we abide in Christ, God deals with us graciously as His sons and daughters. In addition to the free gift of salvation which we receive by faith in Jesus Christ, our Father blesses us with every spiritual blessing, including the strength to endure and be content in times of hardship, and provision for every need we have. We can trust God that when we let go of our fruitless dependance on ourselves, His grace will be more than enough to sustain us.

One in Christ

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Romans 12:3-5

Icebreaker

Question for the group: Why is unity an important part of a healthy team? Have you had any experience with a group that failed to achieve its purpose because of disunity?

Introduction

Throughout His Word, God continually reminds us of the nature and the importance of the unity that we share with all true believers. He has established His church on the earth for a purpose, and each one of us has a part to play in achieving it. The different talents, abilities and resources he has blessed us with are given to us that we may bless each other and advance the Kingdom of God by working together as one body - the Church.

1. We are all one in Christ

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

Galatians 3:28

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

Galatians 5:6

Unlike some of our earthly parents may do, God does not favour any of His children over others. If you are a believer - one of God's children - then you receive His grace and lovingkindness in the same overflowing measure as all His children born of faith in Christ. In His eyes, He sees all believers as His children in the same way He views His son Jesus. The Bible puts it simply; "...you are all one in Christ Jesus."

2. God is reconciling all things to Himself in Christ

"He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth."

Ephesians 1:9-10

"...Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..."

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

It is God's will to unite all things in heaven and on earth in Jesus Christ, for His glory. All believers have been reconciled to God through Christ. A day is coming when all believers will be gathered together to Him, along with a renewed creation, united in Him for eternity. In His commission to all believers to share the good news of the Gospel, he has given us the ministry of reconciliation that we might invite others to be united with us in Him.

3. Together, we are many parts of one body

"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. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. 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. And if the ear says, Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. 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."

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

A body is made up of many different parts, all dependent on one another for life and proper function. Some parts of our bodies have obvious importance, eyes, ears, hands, and feet for example. Others we may consider less important or not even be aware are hidden inside of us but are ultimately just as important (or in some circumstances more important) to our health and physical capabilities.

In the same way, followers of Christ are all parts of one "body" (the Church), with Christ as our head. The proper and healthy functioning of the church is equally dependent upon the service of those who may outwardly seem "less important" as it is on those with obvious abilities and talents. We are all dependent on and benefit from the service of one another, just the way God designed us to be.

Question to the group: Do you feel like you know where you fit in the body of Christ? What abilities/talents has God gifted you with? Can you identify any ways that you can put those gifts to use within the Church?

Summary

All who abide in Christ are one in Him, united as brothers and sisters with a common purpose and eternal destiny. God shows no favouritism among His children whether based on race, gender, status in society or otherwise. Like many parts of the same body, God has created each one of us to serve together; each in different ways but with equal importance and all towards the same ultimate purpose.