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## One Body?

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## ***One Body?***

*By Christopher Genzler*

“**O**ne Body, In Christ”. This is a great theme. Biblical. Staunch. Solid. But when I read this, I had a small twinge in my heart. I remembered the youth groups. I remembered the summer camps. I really couldn’t help myself in connecting the two because they have become so very similar. The parents drop the child off for some good, Christian education, but then go elsewhere. Parents everywhere have an option to be as unengaged with their child’s walk with Christ as they see fit. I know I don’t know all of the situations they may be going through. And I wonder, perhaps selfishly, if the church has tried to meet the needs the parents have.

The youth group, though certainly well-intentioned, has become something unintended. The youth group was meant to teach the children about their Savior in a way they can comprehend. I cannot help but wonder if they are still doing this. Moreover, it doesn’t seem like unity when the youth are pulled out of the service for youth groups. The very first time they actually sit through a full service? During confirmation, when they have to take notes because the instructor will ask them questions. Not the pastor. He only sees the youth on Sundays. I’m only giving you an example. If this sounds familiar, don’t worry. You’re not alone; many churches look like this now.

“Well, we tried keeping the children in service, but they were too noisy.” That’s about the nicest way I’ve heard this complaint listed. I could list alternate phrasings here, but they wouldn’t be printed (rightly so). I understand when children get rambunctious in the service (I have two kids myself). Surely, there might be another option beyond removing the child. How long has it been since the children were allowed to be in the entire service? I’m not asking to be rude; I’m trying to make a point. If the system was changed ten years ago, that’s ten grades of children who haven’t been in church until confirmation. If each class is 10 kids, that’s 100 children who have grown up never hearing a sermon until they have to analyze one in

confirmation. That's bigger than several of the congregations in the LCMS today. Again, I'm not assigning blame; I'm noticing a pattern (concerning one) emerge.

While a healthy church should have many facets, they are one body in Christ. If we are the one body in Christ, we would meet together to study God's Word. We would meet together to praise Him. We would meet together around the font. Around the altar. We are gathered by our Lord. The one body would gather together, as crazy as it sounds. The one body would confess the same words regarding Christ. They would sing similar songs. They would receive the same Christ on their lips. They would pray the same prayers. The one body of Christ would not let their differences overshadow what it means to be a child of God. The confirmation process would involve the parent directly. Might even require them to attend also. Confirmation wouldn't be another hoop. It'd be a child of God calling out, "Abba Father!" It'd be the child being able not only to answer questions on a test but give a reason they have hope. It'd be a child showing and reminding all of us old people the joy and wonder that is this faith God gives us so graciously.

Sound impossible? There was once a man, born of a virgin, who approached a prophet by the river and was baptized for the forgiveness of sins. One thing: he had no sins to forgive. He was the holy, innocent Lamb of God, the one ordained to take away the sins of the entire world. Why would He receive Baptism? Why would He, in His perfection, subject Himself to earthliness and be baptized like a common sinner? To pave the way of adoption. Baptism is a place where we receive the marks of the cross upon our foreheads and hearts, to mark us as a redeemed child of God. Christ's death and resurrection is the turning around of death, and He commissioned the disciples to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching. Children are included in all nations. They are just as much the children of God as you.

God has declared us His adopted, beloved child through Christ. Christ has declared us, declared YOU, my beloved reader, as a child of God. You are a member of his body, and yes, this body of Christ can look chaotic. And that can be good, as long as there is unity. Let's start there. We are one body in Christ. This is whom He established on this earth. His body, one, in Him. Sustained by Him. He died for it. He rose to life for it. Meant for all human beings. All ages. Everyone. Let's take that as the starting point, and work from there. After all, this is the one body of Christ. All of His redeemed, renewed, regenerate children, being gathered to Him again to receive His gifts.

I pray that, as we are sent out into the harvest fields, we might have the boldness to set aside all that which divides us and instead focus on being

the one body of Christ. In Him, all things are made new. All things have been made new. Look to your neighbor. Love your neighbor. Help your neighbor. Look at this one body in Christ with fresh eyes. Engage it with new ideas. Inspire those who have grown cold. Call to faith the little ones, the ones of whom God said, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." The Lord has prepared the harvest field, and while we are going out to work, we have the incredible privilege of keeping the resurrection in our minds, our eyes fixed on Christ and showing this great cloud of witnesses the incredible blessings Christ has given to you.