



*Series Title—Spiritual Growth*

*Part Four—Love the Church*

**Romans 12:4-5 NLT**

*Pastor Dan Turpin      WestCoastChurch.com*

*Objective Sentence: Everyone can grow spiritually by making nine commitments outlined in God's Word for every devoted follower of Jesus v [ 1. Where it all begins 2. Give Your Full Attention 3. Make a Calendar Clock Commitment 4. Love the Church].*

**Introduction:** I love the church because the church first loved me. I believe in the church because the church first believed in me. It was church people who loved me into the kingdom of God. It was Beth Lake, Ralph's sister, who when I was fourteen began talking to me about Jesus and inviting us to church. She was the first minister to ever visit me in the juvenile jail. It was the Baptist minister with the little pop belly on which he rested his when talking to us at the jail, that taught me to love God's Word. It was people like Mr. Elderly **Mr. White** who came to the gated community with **Mike Mears** and shared the Word of God with Me. It was **David Strickland** who picked me up from the gated community on June 22, 1972, took me to Southeastern University and to First Assembly of God church in Lakeland. It was **Mrs. McGee**, Spanish teacher at SEU, missionary to Nicaragua who allowed me to date her daughter and took me to Youth With A Vision to Live. It was **Ben and Ann Stone** who loved me as if I was their own child. It was **Jim Campbell** and **Pastor Karl Strader** who were my pastors and mentors in the early years. It was Pastor Wayne who gave me my first opportunity to preach. It was **Nancy** who made a lifetime commitment to walk with me through life. She never gave up on me even when I gave up on myself. **Romans 12:4-5 NLT** Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function,<sup>5</sup> so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

*In order to grow spiritually you must ...*

- #1.    *Love the Church and Recognize it as Christ's Body (1 Corinthians 12:12 NLT The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles.... But we have all been***

baptized into **one body by one Spirit**, and we all share the same Spirit. *Colossians 1:18 AMP* Jesus is also the head [the life-source and leader] of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will occupy the first place [He will stand supreme and be preeminent] in everything.

- A. *Watchman Nee: If we are to contribute to the life of the Body of Christ [the church] we must humbly take our place of submission within it, “receiving from,” as well as “contributing to,” its ... ministry of life. Do we find it easier to humble ourselves towards God than towards our fellow believers? Remember, without a continual exercise of humility, it is quite impossible to serve one another. For better or worse we are members of Christ’s body from which we cannot resign. Offend people and we offend God. Serve, and we ourselves are ministered to, help others and we find help for ourselves, give and we receive, encourage and we will be encouraged, help others grow and we will grow. We are God’s fellow workers .... (1 Peter 5:5-8 You younger submit ...)*

*If we [love the church & recognize it as Christ’s body] then...*

1. **We Belong to Each other** (*Romans 12:4-5 NLT* Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, <sup>5</sup> so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and **we all belong to each other.**
  - a. *Pastor Dan—Spirit is Thicker Than Blood:* For fifteen years I conducted services at Hardee Correctional Institution and often reminded the guys of the importance of sticking together and encouraging one another in the Lord. Frequently, I would say to the men, “You have heard the statement that blood is thicker than water but if you are a follower of Jesus and His Spirit abides in you—you will come to understand that Spirit is thicker than blood and you the members of Christ’s body are one—so look out for each other.
  - b. *1 Corinthians 6:19-20* Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own?** <sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body<sup>[c]</sup> and in your spirit, which are God’s
  - c. *Irenaeus:* If you do not join in what the church is doing, you have no share in this Spirit. For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and every kind of grace.
  - d. *Pastor Dan:* You and I are a part of the body of Christ and it is imperative that we stay connected to the body. The body will live without us but we will not live without the body. If I cut off my hand and lay it down without reattaching it to my body that hand will die. The body will continue to live, although it will be handicapped. When anyone separates him or herself from the body they handicap that which Christ desires to do through it and they themselves will eventually die. The body can live without a part but a part cannot live without the body. [*Romans 8:5, 11-14*]
  - e. *Charles Hodge:* If the Church is a living body united to the same head, governed by the same laws, and pervaded by the same Spirit, it is impossible that one part should be independent of all the rest.

2. **We Need Each Other** (*1 Corinthians 12:18, 21-22 NLT* *Our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ...* <sup>21</sup> *The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."* <sup>22</sup> *In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.*
- a. **James 5:16** *The Answer to Your Problem:* Confess your faults to one another [your false steps, your offenses] and pray for one another that you may be healed [and restored]. *Pastor Dan:* The answer to your problem is in my hand, the answer to my problem is in your hand and the answer to our problems are in the hand of Jesus who desires to give us the desires of our heart as we reach out to Him in prayer for one another.
  - b. **John 15:4-7**
  - c. **C.S. Lewis:** The Church exists for nothing else but to draw people into Christ, to make them little Christs [Romans 8:29]. If it is not doing that, all the cathedrals, ministers, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became a man for no other purpose.
  - d. **Colossians 3:14-18 NLT** Above everything else put on love which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts for as members of one body you are called to live in peace. Let the Word ....
  - e. **1 Corinthians 1:10** Now I plead with you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing [be in full agreement in what you say], and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment [about matters of the faith].
3. **We Must Care for One Another** (*1 Corinthians 12:12, 18, 25* The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. <sup>18</sup> But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. <sup>25</sup> This makes for harmony among the members, *so that all the members care for each other.*
- a. *Pastor Dan:* Your calling is to take away the hurt of others. A little **care**, a little **love**, a little **kindness** and a little **taking an interest** in people is as powerful as a great sermon; it is a move of God that will never fade, it is one thing that will make an eternal difference in the lives of others.
  - b. **2 Timothy 2:15 AMP** The things [the doctrine, the precepts, the admonitions, the sum of my ministry] which you have heard me teach in the presence of many witnesses, entrust [as a treasure] to reliable *and* faithful people who will also be capable *and* qualified to teach others.
  - c. **Stanley Grenz:** According to the New Testament, God wills that the church be a people who shows others what God is like.
  - d. **John 13:34-35 AMP** I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love *and* unselfish concern for one another. (Jesus washed Judas' feet and asked God to forgive those crucified Him.)
  - e. **Hebrews 10:23-25 AMP** Let us seize *and* hold tightly the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is reliable *and* trustworthy *and* faithful [to His word]; <sup>24</sup> and let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to

love and to do good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our meeting together [as believers for worship and instruction], as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more [faithfully] as you see the day [of Christ's return] approaching

***Closing thought and Invitation:*** *E. Stanley Jones: Ephesians 4:25 declares*, “We are members of one another.” When one becomes a follower of Jesus Christ he or she also becomes part of a living fellowship, the church. Will it work, if one tries to walk with Jesus without the fellowship of the church? Across the years I have found that where the fellowship and commitment to the church fades out, conversion and its fruits fade out. You cannot break fellowship with the church any more than you can break a bone a not get hurt.