

BODY LIFE

by Ray C. Stedman

The most exciting event of our exciting times is not the exploration of the moon, remarkable and exciting as that is and really magnificent in its scientific achievement. But the most exciting event today is the healing of the body of Christ. I see it occurring in many places.

You have been reading in Christian magazines, and even in the newspapers, of movements of the Holy Spirit on college campuses across the country, notably the one that began at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky a few weeks ago. These are all instances of the way the Spirit of God is moving to heal a sluggish and diseased church.

It was my great privilege to have a part in something along this same line last week at Taylor University, and also to see body life begin at a meeting in Colorado Springs where I was earlier in the week. These were two quite different groups. The one in Colorado Springs was a gathering of strangers, for the most part, who had never known each other before. They were Christians gathered from various parts of the country for a week. The other was a body of college young people who had known each other for some time. But in each case there was little evidence of what we like to call *Body Life*, i.e., the fellowship of the true church. But it was wonderful to see God begin to restore that body life during the time we were there.

No one can really understand the death, the darkness, and the weakness that prevails in the church in many places today unless they contrast it with the vitality, life, and excitement of normal Christian life. That is exactly what we shall do in the passage from the book of Acts before us.

In the fourth chapter of Acts is a beautiful glimpse of what life was like in the early church. After the dramatic events of the day of Pentecost, the healing of the lame man, and the great response of multitudes in Jerusalem, the church faced life in the world of that day -- a world of darkness, despair, and death on every side -- and met it with a flowing out of the life of Jesus Christ. That is described for us in Verse 32.

**Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.
{Acts 4:32 RSV}**

That is ideal Christianity, true, genuine Christianity. Unfortunately there is also a counterfeit Christianity. It came in shortly after this in the early church, and evidences of it will be seen on throughout the book of Acts. Wherever the true church has gone throughout the world, counterfeit Christianity has gone right along with it.

Counterfeit Christianity can be recognized externally as a kind of religious club where people, largely of the same social status or class, and bound together by a mutual interest in some religious project or program, meet together to advance that particular cause. But that is a far cry from true Christianity which consists of individuals who share the same divine life, who are made up of all ages, backgrounds, classes, and status-levels of society, and who, when meeting together, regard themselves as what they really are -- brothers and sisters in one family. But of that mutual background of love and fellowship they manifest the life of Jesus Christ.

That is what we have here. "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common." The last word is the key. Community, commonness, everything in common. They were of one heart. Here the word "heart" is used for the human spirit. It denotes the deepest part of our life. It is the unconscious level of existence, the spirit, the most essential part of our nature. Here were people who, by the Holy Spirit, had been united into one life. They were of one heart. At the very deepest level of their lives they belonged to each other, and that is only possible by means of the Holy Spirit. They did not need to have met someone before to recognize that if

he or she is a Christian they belong to each other, they are of the same family and they always have a vast area in common. This was true of these people.

But they not only were of one heart, made so by the Holy Spirit to share the life of Jesus together, they also were of one soul. What do you think that means? Most of us read this -- "they were of one heart and soul" -- as though it were a double way of saying the same thing. But it is not. The soul is different from the spirit. The soul is the conscious part of life, it is where we consciously live. It consists of the mind and emotions and will, whatever is going on in your thoughts right now. You look like you are listening to me, but it may not be true. Whatever is going on in your thoughts right now is an activity of your soul. Your mind is engaged, your emotions are feeling certain things, you will is making choices; that is the soul. That is the realm of experience.

When it says that these early Christians were gathered together in one -- both in spirit and in soul -- it means they not only shared the life of Jesus as a fact of their existence, but they also experienced it. That is what made the difference. Christians everywhere in the world are already united. Unity is one thing; union is quite something else, and we should never confuse the two. I see no tie whatsoever between church unity and church union. They are not the same thing at all:

- Unity exists as a fact, always has, and always will. It is the uniting of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.
- But union is quite something else. It is an attempt to achieve an outward appearance of unity without it being real.

But here these early Christians were united together not only in heart (spirit) but also in soul, i.e., they felt it, they experienced it, they emotionally enjoyed their unity. It was part of their daily life.

Here is where the problem lies with many churches today. There is unity, there is a oneness of spirit, but there is no experience of it in the soul. It is quite possible to come to church and sit together in the pews, united in a physical presence with other Christians, to sing the same hymns and listen to the same message, and relate to God individually, but to have no sense of body life, no sense of belonging to one another. It is possible to come week after week, year after year, and never know the people with whom you worship. When that happens there is no unity in the soul. This is what our younger generation today, in desperation, is trying to tell us. "There is no soul in your services," they say to the church at large, "there is no sense of oneness. You don't belong to each other. You may belong to God, but you don't belong to each other." That is what is lacking today, and what the early church so wonderfully possessed.

Not only did they have it, but it manifested itself in the fact that everyone had a new attitude toward things, the material life. "No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own," i.e., his own, exclusively. That is not communism. That is not a forced distribution of goods. It is not an attempt to make everyone give up their material things and redistribute them to others. No, it is a change of attitude, saying, "Nothing that I possess is mine, for my exclusive use, but everything that I possess is God's, and therefore it is available to anyone who needs it." That is the whole thing. It touched the realm of the body, the physical, the material. So here were these early Christians, one in heart and soul and body, united together. That is the church as it ought to be. Wherever that kind of vital life occurs there will always be results.

It is not accidental then that Dr. Luke begins to trace what these results are. He summarizes them for us.

What is the first thing? It is power.

And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, {Acts 4:33a RSV}

Power in witness occurs whenever body life is present. God has designed that his church should operate as a body. We all have bodies that we might understand. Without the proper functioning of the bodies in which we live, our life, the life of our spirit, our personality if you like, can never be made manifest to anyone else. It takes the body to make the life visible. That is also true of the church. If the church of Jesus Christ is not

functioning as a body, then the life that is in it (which is the life of Jesus) can never be seen. It takes the body to make the life visible. Where the body is functioning then there is always power in witnessing.

That life is the resurrected life of a risen Lord. "And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Notice that the power was focused in a few men, but it took the whole body of Christians (over five thousand by now), to make that power possible. The twelve apostles gave the witness, but the church was with them participating in their ministry and made the power possible.

That is still true today. In taking teams of men to various college campuses invariably we have a great sense of weakness when we begin. Here we are on a new campus. We have never been there before. There is a student body of fifteen hundred to two thousand active young people around with whom we are not acquainted. There is a faculty which is an unknown factor as to whether it will be accepting, hostile, indifferent, or whatever. We look at the impressive buildings and realize that here is an institution of some stature and standing in the world. And here we are, five or six men, who say to ourselves, "What can we do to impress this place in just a few days? What can we do?" But we have learned one thing. We can never do anything apart, separately.

1. Our first activity is to get together as a team to pray. We have prepared our hearts so there is a sense of oneness before we ever come.
2. Then we start gathering up the members of the body in that place, as many Christians as we can find, faculty or students, and get them together and help them begin to relate to each other. It is not just a matter of gathering all the bodies in one room and having them pray. That is but a very weak form of body life. They must begin to love each other, to understand each other; that begins to make the life flow. Whenever that takes place we soon see some dramatic release of power.

That is what we saw at Taylor University this last week. At first we faced a largely indifferent student body because they had been given the evangelical treatment so many times that they knew every possible form or phase it could take. They had been preached at in chapel, and had been asked to stand up, sit down, raise their hands, and roll over, so many times that there was nothing one could do to challenge them along this line. But they were quite unaware that their lives were empty, lonely, and despairing, that the outward respectability of which they were so proud was in God's sight a mask. As Jesus described it, they were outwardly respectable and religious, but inwardly full of dead men's bones. Surely the evangelical church across the country hardly realizes what God's view of religious flesh is. He is nauseated by it. It offends him. He says in Revelation, "I'll vomit you out because you are lukewarm," {cf, Rev 3:16}. There is no life in the flesh. That is what we found at this school, as we find it at almost every Christian college to which we go, a terrible willingness to settle for an outward conformity to a religious standard, but no real sharing of life, no real body life going on at all. Because of this, by and large, the students are nothing but religious frauds.

The early Christians discovered that, when the life of the body began to flow, there was great power in witnessing. Furthermore, Luke says,

great grace was upon them all. {Acts 4:33b RSV}

What is grace?

That is one of those terms we Christians use freely because we find it in the Scriptures. We say it, but we do not know what it means. There are many words like that. We use them, but we do not know what they mean. We use them as a convenient handle for some vague idea we have which we cannot define. But grace means something. What does it mean?

It is a word that describes the enrichment of life that results from the love and power of God. It is enrichment -- that is the theme of grace. Somebody has put that in the form of an acrostic:

G -- God's
R -- Riches
A -- At

C -- Christ's
E -- Expense

That is grace, a beautiful definition of it. Great grace was upon these people as the life of the body began to be manifest. They were one in heart and soul and possessions, and then power and grace was released among them.

That grace took two particular forms, Dr. Luke tells us. He goes on to describe what this grace actually was. It appeared in two ways:

First, in the sharing of wealth to meet needs; the bearing of one another's burdens. The text we used again and again at Taylor University this last week to pound away at the tremendous monolith of apathy we found in the student body and the faculty there, was: "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ," {Gal 6:2 KJV}. The law of Christ is the basic expression of Christian living. It is the law of love. "A new commandment," Jesus said, "I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you," {cf, John 13:34}. To love means to know someone. You cannot love someone you do not know. Until you know them, you cannot love them. Otherwise what you love is your image of them.

This is what causes so much frustration and problem in Christian homes today between parents and children. Parents have an image of what they want their children to be, and they love that. Unless their children measure up to that particular image, they do not love them. If a child goes wrong, or does not do anything quite right, does not measure up to the standard, then the love ceases, because it is not directed toward the child as he is but to the image of what he ought to be. It is so important to understand this. Our Lord said that love is fundamental to Christian expression. It is the means by which men will know that we are believers, that God is true, and that Jesus is a Savior. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another," {cf, John 13:35}. The mark, therefore, of Christian success is not activity. It is not how many programs you belong to, or how many clubs you participate in, or how many personal activities you may be a part of. Nor is it even morality. Activity and morality are all a part of Christian expression, but the primary and fundamental expression of Christian living is not that you stop doing things that are wrong. It is that you love one another; that you bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. That is where they began in the early church. Grace began to do this. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus," says Paul in another place, "who though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," {cf, 2 Cor 8:9}. Grace began to enrich the life of the early church.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. {Acts 4:34-35 RSV}

Again, I remind you, that is not communism. That is not a forced abandonment of goods, making them all common property. This sharing arises out of the changed attitude that was mentioned earlier, the situation in which a man owns things but says, "They are not mine exclusively. I don't want to hold onto them for my own purposes. I'm glad to give them up if any has a need, and share them." That is the first mark of the life of Jesus at work.

In Colorado Springs, Dr. Richard Halverson, pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C. was there, and gave a marvelous closing address to the conference. He used as his text that passage in Philippians 2 concerning the Lord Jesus, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped," [i.e., thought it not a thing to be held onto, thought it not something to be clutched, to be clung to], "but emptied himself," [gave it up, renounced his rights, stopped clinging to his prerogatives] "and made himself of no reputation," {cf, Phil 2:6-7}. That was the first step in relieving the need of a desperate world. He did not think his equality with God was something to be held onto. And the first step we must make in reaching the desperate condition of society around us is to stop clinging to things.

Are you clinging to anything? To a material standard of living that you insist on having, no matter what someone else is needing? Are you clinging to status, to personal ambition, or to something else? You will never be able to enter into, and enjoy, the life that flows in richness and fullness through the body of Christ till

you end your clinging. Here is the posture of the man who clings: He is hanging on with clenched fists, and his fists are in everybody else's face, a threat to them. But the Christian posture, the Christian stance, is one of openhanded giving, acceptance, readiness to give. This is the way our Lord is pictured in almost every portrait of him, with hands open, ready to give abundantly to those in need.

There are needs here in this church that we are continually putting before you. They could be so easily and abundantly met if all of us would stop clinging to things, and be open with one another. I rejoice in all that has happened in this church through the years in this respect. I am not scolding you this morning, I am only encouraging you. There has been a great deal of the attitude of readiness to give here. It is delightful, through the years, to see how many times it has only been necessary to mention needs and they have been promptly and gladly met. That is always a sign that there is life flowing through the body. The first mark of the life of Jesus is to give up, to pour out to those who are in need.

The second form of grace is recorded in Verses 36-37. It is the exercise of gifts. That is part of body life, too. It is a part of the great grace that was upon them all.

Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet. {Acts 4:36-37 RSV}

In the body of Christ in Jerusalem there was a distribution of gifts by the Holy Spirit. You will find these gifts described in First Corinthians 12 and in Romans 12. They are various gifts (called "graces" in Ephesians 4) that had been given by the Spirit in order to fulfill the ministry of the body in that place. Among the early Christians was a man named Joseph. If I had used his name alone you would not have recognized him because, though his name was Joseph, he was never called that in the early church, and the church has never called him that since.

But if I mention his nickname, you will know him immediately, Barnabas. "Oh, yes, Barnabas!" Barnabas of the open heart and the warm accepting spirit. Barnabas who took young John Mark when he was humiliated and crushed by his failure in that first missionary visit of Paul's, who returned from the work and would have probably dropped out of Christian activity altogether if Barnabas had not found him and encouraged him, and taken him on another trip to set him on his feet. Barnabas, who met the Apostle Paul after his conversion when he had come up to Jerusalem from Damascus, where he had been humiliated by having to be lowered over the wall in a basket and flee the city. He came up to the temple in Jerusalem and sought the fellowship of the apostles. But they were afraid of him for this was the man who had been persecuting and killing the church {members}. They would have nothing to do with him till Barnabas went out to him, and brought him in by the hand, and introduced him, and vouched for him. Seven or eight years later it was Barnabas who went down to Tarsus where Paul had been living -- a spiritual drop out -- since his experience in Damascus. An awakening had broken out in Antioch, and it was Barnabas who went to Paul's home town and found him and brought him back.

Barnabas, the Son of encouragement. He had the gift of exhortation, of comfort, of encouragement -- a wonderful gift. He used it so diligently, and employed it so widely that everyone began to call him by his gift. I think that is great! We have gifts of helps, gifts of wisdom, gifts of knowledge, gifts of teaching and gifts of prophecy here. It would be great to call someone the Son of Teaching, the Son of Prophecy, the Son of Helps, whatever it might be, instead of the son-of-something-else that we sometimes hear. That is great grace -- the exercising of gifts, the awareness of needs and the supplying of those needs.

Now, eliminate the chapter division here. There should be no chapter division at all. Chapter 5 begins with the word, "But," which means that it deals with the same subject as Chapter 4 but is the reverse side of the coin. We have turned a corner. We are looking now, not at the character and nature of body life, but at the peril and danger to it.

But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to

the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. {Acts 5:1-6 RSV}

In the King James Version there is a very interesting sentence. It says "The young men came in and wound him up and carried him out and buried him," {cf, Acts 5:6 KJV}. But it was too late to wind him up; he was dead.

Now what is this account telling us? Here is a man and his wife earnestly wanting to have a part in what was going on; they wanted to have a piece of the action. They sold some property just as Barnabas did, but held back part of it, and brought only a part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. Is there anything wrong with that? Not a thing. When Ananias came Peter said to him, in effect, "Ananias, while this land was yours it was your own. You didn't have to sell it. We are not communists, you have the right to the disposal of your property as you see fit. After it was sold you had every right to say what it was to be used for. That was perfectly proper, there was nothing wrong with that." Well then, what was wrong? Peter, exercising his gift of discernment, said to Ananias, "You have lied. It wasn't wrong for you to keep the property back, but to act as though you had given it all when you had only given part, that is what is wrong. You lied, you pretended. You're a sham, a phony. You pretend to something that you're really not." When those analyzing words hit the ears of Ananias he dropped dead at Peter's feet.

His wife had also been part of this process, we are told. "By his wife's knowledge" this had been done. So the rest of the story follows:

After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. {Acts 5:7-11 RSV}

There were three "greats" in the early church: great power, great grace, and great fear.

Why did this occur? Why was the Holy Spirit so severe? Is this what he always does with his church?

Someone says, "Thank God this doesn't happen any more; if it did, we'd have to put a morgue into every church."

No, it does not happen now, but this is one of those sharp and penetrating lessons in which God teaches his church by means of pictures. Just as the lame man lying at the gate of the temple was a picture of the need of a desperate world, and the healing of that man to wholeness is a picture of what the Lord Jesus does in the inner life of an individual who knows him and follows him, so this is a picture of what happens in a life when pretense is indulged in. The moment you or I pretend to be something that we really are not, the second I assume before you a stance of spiritual impeccability which I do not possess, that moment death enters in -- just like that. I am immediately cut off from the flow of the life of Christ. It does not mean I am no longer a Christian, but it means that the life of the body is no longer flowing through me. Instead of being part of a living, vital movement, I become a dead and unresponsive cell in that body. Paralysis sets in -- in the area over which I have influence.

That is what is wrong with the church today. It is the tragic sickness of the church in any age -- pretense, sham, hypocrisy -- to pretend to be something we are not. The most astonishing thing about this is that it is unconscious hypocrisy, for the most part. I seldom meet deliberate hypocrites. A few of you are, but not many. I am guilty of it frequently, and so are you -- this being an unconscious hypocrite. We think it is

somehow "religious," or "Christian," not to show what we really are.

This is what we found wrong with Taylor University, a school which otherwise had much to admire about it. Two of the men who had joined our team from Texas said to us after two days at the school, shaking their heads, "What are you fellows here for? This is a wonderful school! These kids are all fine kids. There are no drugs here, there is no wild sex life going on here, there is no disobedience or rebellion. This is a wonderful school. What's wrong with it?" We said, "Read your Bibles. There is no bearing of one another's burdens, little love. There is no reaching out, no flowing out of compassion. There is no excitement here, but dullness, deadness and moribundity. There is little life." As they listened and watched they began to see what we meant. Our function there at Taylor was not sharply or harshly to fling this in their faces but simply to share, as best we could, that this was not acceptable living in God's sight. This kind of Christian respectability was not true Christian living, much as it has been so labeled. Openness and sharing of one another's lives is the fundamental mark of Christian living -- bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, [that you really have Christian life] because you love one another," {cf, John 13:35}. That is fundamental. Until that occurs, nothing else can be Christian about it.

That is what this story of Ananias and Sapphira underscores for us. The minute they pretended to be something they were not -- death! When we come to church we put on a mask of adequacy, but inside we are inadequate, and we know it. We are struggling with problems in our homes, but we don't want to tell anyone about them. We can't get along with our children, but we'll never admit it to anyone. The pride that doesn't want anyone else to know what is going on between husbands and wives, and between parents and children, keeps us from sharing. We come to service, and put on a mask that says everything's fine! Everything's wonderful! Somebody asks us how are things going. "Great, great! Fine!" "How's everything at home?" "Oh, wonderful! We're having a wonderful time!" The minute we say that and it's not true, we die. Death sets in. Soon that death pervades the whole church. That is why dishonesty is the primary characteristic of the church today.

At Taylor University this last Wednesday night, we got a group of about thirty students together in a lounge and we gave them that verse, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ," {Gal 6:2 KJV}. We urged them to start telling where they hurt. When they would mention something, we would stop and pray for it together, specifically, by name. Very painfully, very slowly, with great difficulty, these students began to tell each other what was wrong in their lives. Not sordid sins -- there was none of that. Just the ache, the loneliness, the pressure and the problems; what they were concerned about, what they were worried over. They had never done this with each other before. They had been joining in prayer meetings, and going out on gospel teams, but they had never talked to each other about themselves. As the meeting went on it was like a Bunsen burner put under a patty of butter; everybody began to melt. Soon there was a sense of oneness pervading the whole group. The meeting began to pick up momentum and a few tears appeared as they shared. Then a wonderful sense of joy came, that they were part of one another, they were brothers and sisters in the Lord. When we dismissed the meeting a few of them threw their arms around each other and began to pray together. They were so excited they could not contain themselves. They went back to the dorms and had meetings that went on till one and two o'clock in the morning.

The next evening we announced another similar meeting, and we thought there would perhaps be a hundred students, because they were very shy about this type of thing, very uncertain. I was a little late in coming to the meeting and when I came to the lounge which easily would hold about a hundred students, there were between three and four hundred jammed into it. We had to break them up into three divisions, and spent two and a half hours letting them talk to each other and get acquainted. Then the Lord opened up the way for us to have time with the faculty in the same way. Just as honestly as we could, and yet in love (and they received it in that spirit) we told them, "You are here to be an example to these students. Your teaching begins with your activity. You are just as fragmented, or more so, than they are. You do not know each other. You don't love each other, you don't share with each other. You don't know your problems. You need to pray together, talk together, and understand one another and love each other." And they admitted it. At the end of the week we had the wonderful sense of a real beginning of body life.

That is the key. How do you start this, you say. How do you start it in your home, with your family, with your children? How do you start it with your roommate in college? With your friends? Or wherever you may

be? Well, in Scripture the way to cure a spiritual disease is always the same: Repent and believe.

- *Repent* means to acknowledge that you have been doing it wrong, that is all. It means to face the fact that it has not been right.
- Then *believe* means to understand that God has already given you, in Jesus Christ, all that it takes to do what you should.

Then start doing it! Start opening up and sharing your burdens. You will start in a rather small way, perhaps, and it will be difficult at first. But it is the sharing of lives that makes power and grace to flow through the body.

We are concerned about a world around us, with its desperate sickness, and the life of this church is not to be merely a religious hobby to which we give some time and attention when it suits us. The body life of this church is the very focus of the work of God to heal this area, and to help change the structure and pattern of life all around us, to release salt into society and light into the darkness of the world. It must begin, and increase, by the understanding and experience of body life.

Thank God for what has been happening. I rejoice over our Sunday night meetings. They are a strong venture in this direction. But they are suffering. They have not been as warm and open as we want them to be by any means. There is still a tightness, a holding back, a lack of desire to let others know some of the things that hurt. We do not desire to go back and dig up a sordid past. That is not what God wants. He wants you to share what you are now -- not what you were -- but what you are. Bear one another's burdens, because we all have the same problem. We are all inadequate. Every one of us comes to church feeling inadequate, and we look around and see these adequate masks, and say, "I'm the only one here that's inadequate. Look at all these adequate people around me! If I could only be like them! I'm certainly not going to let them see what I'm like." But the truth is, we are all inadequate. None of us has any ability. None of us has any confidence in ourselves, and we should not have. God made us to be inadequate in order that our adequacy may be in the One who indwells us. That is where life and grace and truth must rest.

Let us close this meeting by standing together this morning and joining hands, wherever you are, and singing, *Blest Be The Tie That Binds*.

Prayer:

Father, how thankful we are for this renewed life being imparted to your body everywhere today. How true it is that it flows through the interchange of those who belong to one another, made so by the life of Jesus Christ which we share, brothers and sisters together in Christ. Thank you for that. Help us to experience it more and more in these days to come, that all in this whole area, the people looking at us here and at other churches in this area, will shake their heads and say, "My, how these Christians love one another." We ask you in Jesus' name, Amen.

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