

EIGHTH LAY TALK

TALK #13

BODY OF CHRIST

Overview of All Talks

The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience delivers one message that is communicated through the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You will deliver one of the fifteen talks. In reality, you will deliver one-fifteenth of the Emmaus talk—one message with fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. As a good general rule, two-thirds of the talk will come from the outline and one-third would be the speaker's original insights and illustrations.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of twenty to twenty-five minutes.

Overview for Speaker

Remember that The Walk to Emmaus movement intends to develop church leadership and strengthen the witness of the Christian community in word and deed. In the CHRISTIAN ACTION talk, pilgrims heard about sharing Christ with others in word and deed. In the DISCIPLESHIP talk, they heard about being a Christian leader. The CHANGING OUR WORLD talk challenged pilgrims to make a plan for being a Christian influence in the everyday arenas of their lives. And now, in the BODY OF CHRIST talk, pilgrims come to understand what it means to be the church in the world.

This talk aims to help pilgrims understand the nature of the church, some of its significant characteristics, and the threefold mission. Illustrate each point with personal and positive examples of the church in mission. Your aim is to inspire pilgrims to participate fully in their congregations and cooperate with other members. Through your witness, leave pilgrims with

an enhanced appreciation of the value of the church for every Christian who wants to grow spiritually and be a fruit-bearing disciple.

Videos and recorded songs should not be part of the talk. Any projection during the talk should be kept simple.

The talk is scheduled for Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

BODY OF CHRIST

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet, and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a brief, personal story or experience that relates to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Lay Director or Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is BODY OF CHRIST.

I. The body of Christ

- A. When we become Christians, we become new persons. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:14-16.) We become part of a group of people with a common calling: We belong to Jesus Christ. No matter where or who we are or what we do, we are joined together like parts of a new body. We reflect to the world the God in whose image we are created. We call this new body made up of all Christians the body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12-20.) You and I and Christians everywhere make up the working parts of that body, the church universal.
- B. The body of Christ is, however, more than the community of Christians everywhere. This term also describes the church's fulfilling its mission in the world.
 1. The body of Christ is the entire community of the redeemed, incorporated into Christ. In their desire to grow in holiness, these persons radiate the gospel and Christian love all around them.
 2. The body of Christ is the community of disciples united by faith in Christ who respond to Jesus' call to "Follow me," to be the church wherever they are. The body of Christ continues Christ's ministry in the world today.

3. The body of Christ finds expression in various forms of church:
 - a. a local congregation,
 - b. an ecumenical mission formed of different faith backgrounds,
 - c. a family seeking to live in faith,
 - d. wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name.

In short, the body of Christ is the Christian community in mission to the world.

- C. The great challenge of today's church comes in empowering and equipping more members of the body to engage in Christian action in their everyday lives. This has been the goal of The Walk to Emmaus from the beginning—to raise up Christian leaders and renew the church as the body of Christ in action. Nothing takes the place of the local church.

II. Makeup of the body of Christ

The church is more than its building, organizational structure and institutions, or appointed leaders. Sometimes people mistake these significant aspects and features for the church itself. Rather, the church refers to all people of God who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seek to continue Christ's life and ministry wherever they are.

- A. *Lay and clergy*—In the PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS talk, you heard that each of us is a minister. Lay and clergy alike are called to serve God through service to humankind and participation in the church.
 1. Laypeople serve by bearing witness to the living Christ and carrying the gospel into their homes, workplaces, communities, and institutions that shape the lives of people.
 2. Clergy serve by fostering Christian community, interpreting God's word, administering the sacraments, and equipping the saints for doing ministry in the world.
 3. Lay and clergy support one another and work as a team. Laypeople cannot expect pastors to carry the entire load of taking the gospel to the world!
- B. *Individuals and groups*—Each individual Christian—man, woman, and child—is a significant member of the body of Christ. And church groups can join resources to foster faith and act together to impact society.
- C. *Families*—The Christian family is an expression of the body of Christ. Strong churches need family involvement. People have referred to families as the “domestic church”—the place that shapes people's lives most profoundly. Christian tradition has always viewed the family of faith as the primary setting for Christian education and faith formation. Once-a-week Sunday church activities cannot compete with society's influences. Christian nurture and training is part of home life. Martin Luther, the 16th century German Protestant reformer, saw parents as priests.

- D. *People of all kinds*—The church consists of people of every race, class, and background. This diversity represents the church's witness at its best. In Christ, all differences that normally separate people in the world are overcome. (See Galatians 3:27-28.)

When people unite in Christian love and work for the common good, then the church is truly an expression of the body of Christ—a sign of Christ's life with us now and a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven.

III. Characteristics of the body of Christ

- A. *Alive*—The body of Christ is alive and life-giving. Vital churches reflect the triumph of Easter, not the gloom of Good Friday. Christians become change agents where they live. The church is a factory that produces saints not a warehouse to keep them in!
- B. *Covenantal*—The heart of the church is covenant: God's commitment to us in Christ and our commitment to God and one another in Christ. We commit to help one another live in grace by vowing to support the church's common life and ministry with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Without covenant and commitment, no church exists.
1. When trouble arises in your congregation, how do you handle the difficulty? How do you handle tendencies to criticize? How do you find a way to serve where you are—to reconcile and bring healing, to affirm your bond in Christ?
 2. Though he knew his friends would abandon him after their last supper, Jesus stayed at the table with them. We are called to stay at the table with one another despite differences and dislikes. The bonds of covenant love demand that we stay.
- C. *Gifted*—Every Christian is a vital member of the living body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12.) Together we can accomplish more than we can alone. (See Romans 12:3-8.) We take responsibility to help one another discover our gifts. Christianity is not practiced solitarily.
1. No single person receives all the gifts for ministry; no single person can carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world. Rather, the Holy Spirit distributes the various qualities and gifts of Christ's life and ministry among those who respond to the call. Christ needs us not off by ourselves but together. Each Christian plays a vital and unique role, and God equips us all for the task.
 2. Jesus promises that those who follow him will do even greater works than he did. (See John 14:12.) The body of Christ, the church, is not a repository of God's grace but an empowering agency for God's ministries.
 3. Sometimes we confuse gifts with natural talents (for example, a musical ability, a talent with money or sales, artistic talent). We can use our talents to build up ourselves. But a talent becomes a spiritual gift when we offer it in love to glorify God and build up the body of Christ.

D. *Renewing*—The church needs constant renewal and reform.

1. Members need new challenges to live the Christian life. Since the time of the apostles, every generation has had to respond anew to Christ's call, open itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and commit to be the church in its time and place. The same is true of our generation. We and the world require deliberate witness.
2. Old methods don't always work; God calls for new ministries for new situations. The church constantly develops new leaders. Tradition, while important, may allow the church to operate according to the slogan, "We've always done it that way."

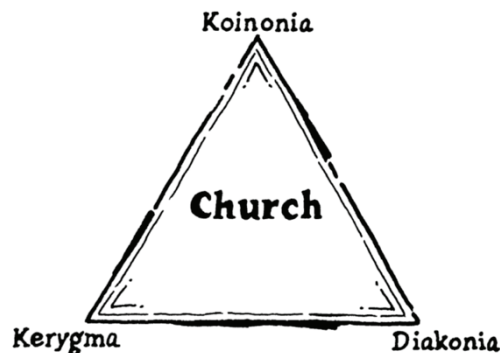
E. *Mission-minded*—The body of Christ does not exist for its own maintenance but for mission. Breathing in and breathing out characterizes our action. It breathes in piety and study so that it can breathe out faith in action. The church gathers for worship and nurture and then scatters for witness and humble service. It receives grace from God to share grace with the world.

F. *Confident*—The body of Christ lives in the confidence of Christ's final victory.

IV. The body of Christ in action

The risen Lord commanded his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Three New Testament words describe the action required to fulfill this mission.

[Show a visual of the following.]



A. *Kerygma* (proclamation)—*Kerygma* (pronounced cur-IG-ma) is the Greek word in the New Testament for the proclamation of the good news. The church's mission involves preaching and teaching the good news—the story of God's love in Jesus Christ.

1. Proclamation is the job description for the entire church. All Christians bear witness to Christ's resurrection. (See Acts 1:22.)

Christians proclaim the message of Christ from the church pulpit, family table, workplace, and in community affairs. Christians proclaim the gospel when they share God's love with others, talk about their faith in Christ with others, inspire others to seek the higher road, or mediate God's forgiveness.

2. We not only model Christian living; we identify the Source of our life in grace.

Many Christians find it difficult to talk about their faith, especially with friends and colleagues. The church can help people learn to share the story of Jesus and the story of their own faith in simple ways. “How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him [Christ]?” (Rom. 10:14).

- B. *Koinonia* (Christian community)—*Koinonia* (pronounced coy-noh-NEE-ah) is the Greek word in the New Testament for the caring, grace-filled fellowship of the Holy Spirit that characterized the early church. (See Acts 2:43-47.)

1. The church not only *tells* the good news; it *is* the good news. *Koinonia* is the family of God being realized among us, life together in grace. It is where people discover grace as a way of life.
2. If the church does not live in grace, then what witness do we offer the world? If the church does not learn to live in peace, then where will the world find hope?
3. The church serves as a home for people seeking wholeness, a place where people feel accepted in their weaknesses and strengths and feel inspired and supported in newness of life.
4. *Koinonia* is the spiritual family in which persons relate to God, find renewal in spirit, and discover themselves re-formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ by grace and discipline. (See Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.) The church is in the business of Christian formation—helping people know God and mature spiritually.

- C. *Diakonia* (service)—*Diakonia* (pronounced dee-ack-oh-NEE-ah) is the Greek word in the New Testament for service. The church not only tells about God’s grace (*kerygma*) and lives together in God’s grace (*koinonia*) but also shares God’s grace in deeds of love and service (*diakonia*). The church is to serve the world by sharing God’s love.

1. The church offers hospitality to the lonely and the stranger. The church is not a club with closed membership but a house where the door stands open and hungry souls find a place at the table. (See Matthew 25:31-46). The church offers God’s healing to the sick in body, mind, spirit, and relationship; extending Christ’s outreach to those who live “having no hope and without God” (Eph. 2:12), erasing the lines that divide, bearing witness to the truth, and being the conscience of society.
2. “Find a need and meet it” is a good motto for the church. We cannot wait for the world to come to the church. The people of God must convince the world of the gospel’s reality, or it will remain unconvinced. The church reaches out to people where they live and exhibits willingness to meet needs and to love people as they are.
3. Church work and the work of the church differ. Too often the church involves many people in church work (committees, bazaars, programs) neglecting the task

of equipping and sending people to do the work of the church in the world—being Christ in the workplace, family, and community, ministering even to the “least of these” (Matt. 25:40).

[Share ways your church or the Christian community engages in diakonia.]

In summary, through *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*, the church’s mission is to produce fruit-bearing disciples committed to making the world a more Christ-centered, loving, and just community. (See Matthew 28:18-20.)

V. Your participation

We have talked about what the body of Christ is and what it does. Now what about your participation in it? Here are a few simple guidelines—a personal plan for action as part of the body of Christ.

- A. *Focus on a need*—What need in the church, community, or world is the Spirit nudging you to do something about? What concern or burden of love seems to gain your attention persistently, as though to make itself your business?
- B. *Identify your gifts and resources*—You may see a direct connection between the need and what you can offer. Or your gift may be the commitment to see that action is taken, the willingness to call together the resources and people, or the concern to do what you can.
- C. *Seek the support of others*—Share your plan with others in the church. Work through proper channels. Be open to others’ counsel.
- D. *Work as a team*—Seek your pastor’s counsel and cooperation from the outset. Integrate your plans with the total ministry and priorities of the church. Don’t overexaggerate your importance or underestimate the importance of other workers and their gifts.

[Tell how the church has empowered you to be Christ’s representative to the world.]

VI. Conclusion

In the early centuries, the church expanded through concerted missionary efforts and its power of attraction. The church offered an alternative as a society of mutual love, support, and moral integrity—a fine model for the church today.

In a document from the days of the early church, Aristides described Christians to the Roman emperor Hadrian like this:

They love one another, and from widows they do not turn away their esteem; and they deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother; for they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the spirit and in God [“The Apology of Aristides the

Philosopher,” in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, ed. Allan Menzies (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 277].

May Christ be so manifested in the life of our churches today.

De Colores!

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE

BODY OF CHRIST

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Please turn to page 48 in your Worship Booklet, and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is BODY OF CHRIST.

I. The body of Christ

- A. When we become Christians, we become part of a group of people with a common calling: We belong to Jesus Christ.
- B. The body of Christ is the community of disciples that carries on Christ’s ministry—the Christian community in action.
- C. The challenge of the church comes in developing Christian leaders and renewing the body of Christ in action. This is also the purpose of The Walk to Emmaus.

II. Makeup of the body of Christ

The church is more than its building, institutions, and appointed leaders although are significant aspects of the body of Christ. The church refers to all the people of God.

- A. *Lay and clergy*
- B. *Individuals and groups*
- C. *Families*
- D. *People of all kinds who are united in Christ*

III. Characteristics of the body of Christ

- A. *Alive*—The church reflects, lives, and shares the life-giving triumph and joy of Easter, not the gloom of Good Friday.
- B. *Covenantal*—The heart of the church is a covenant between God and the people, united in Christ. In response to God’s commitment to us, we commit ourselves to God and to one another for Christ’s sake.

- C. *Gifted*—God gives gifts to each member of the body to use for the common life and ministry of the church. (See Romans 12:3-8.) Members of the body seek to equip one another. To express the fullness of Christ’s ministry, we recognize and acknowledge our need of one another.
- D. *Renewing*—The church needs constant renewal and reform.
- E. *Mission-minded*—The body breathes in piety and study so it can breathe out faith in action, displaying humility in service.
- F. *Confident*—The body of Christ displays and lives in the confidence of Christ’s final victory.

IV. The body of Christ in action

- A. *Kerygma* (proclamation)—The church’s mission involves preaching and teaching the message of God’s grace, to tell the story of God’s love in Jesus, to share our faith.
- B. *Koinonia* (Christian community)—The church’s mission is to live together in God’s grace—to be God’s family, a place that receives, renews, and re-forms persons in the likeness of Christ.
- C. *Diakonia* (service)—The church’s mission is to share God’s grace in deeds of love and service, reaching out to people where they live, even to “the least of these” (Matt. 25:40).

V. Your participation

We have talked about what the body of Christ is and what it does. Now what about your participation in it? Here are a few simple guidelines—a personal plan for action as part of the body of Christ.

- A. *Focus on a need.*
- B. *Identify your gifts and resources.*
- C. *Seek the support of others.*
- D. *Work as a team.*

[Tell how the church has empowered you to be Christ’s representative to the world.]

VI. Conclusion

The early church offered an alternative to the culture of that day, providing a society of mutual love, support, and moral integrity—a fine model for the church today.

De Colores!