

# The Church is a Body of Love

Hey, how many of you guys remember that lady named Stella who sued McDonald's and won 2.9 million dollars because their coffee was too hot that spilled in her own lap? Remember that lady? And ever since then, they've come out with what's called the Stella Award for outrageous behavior like hers. How many of you have heard of those? Well, for those of you who may have forgotten, I'm here to help you out. I'm going to share with you some of the most recent winners of the Stella Awards and you tell me if their behavior is just **a little bit outrageous**.

- In January 2000, Kathleen Robertson of Austin, Texas was awarded by a jury \$780,000 after breaking her ankle inside of a furniture store after tripping over a toddler who was running around in the store. And the owners of the store were understandably surprised at the verdict, considering the fact that the misbehaving toddler was Mrs. Robertson's own son.
- In June 1998, 19 year-old Carl Truman of Los Angeles won \$74,000 and medical expenses when his neighbor ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. And apparently the problem was that Carl didn't notice his neighbor was behind the wheel of the car when he was trying to steal the hubcaps off his neighbor's car.
- In October 1998, Terrence Dickson of Bristol, Pennsylvania was leaving a house he had just robbed by way of the garage. However, he was unable to get the garage door open since the automatic door opener was malfunctioning. And neither could he re-enter the house because the door connecting the house to the garage locked when he pulled it shut. And since the family of the house he robbed was on vacation, Mr. Dickson found himself locked in the garage for eight

days where he was able to stay alive on a case of Pepsi he found and a bag of dog food. So that's right, he sued the homeowner's insurance, claiming the situation caused him undue mental anguish. And believe it or not, the jury agreed to the tune of half a million dollars.

- But the all time winner is Mr. Merv Grazinski of Oklahoma City. In November 2000, Mr. Grazinski purchased a brand new 32-foot Winnebago motor home. And on his first trip home, having just entered the freeway, he set the cruise control at 70 mph and calmly left the drivers seat to go into the back and make himself a cup of coffee. Not surprisingly, the motor home left the freeway, crashed and overturned. And that's right, Mr. Grazinski sued Winnebago for not advising him in the handbook that he shouldn't do this and he was awarded \$1,750,000 plus a new Winnebago. And believe it or not, Winnebago actually changed their handbooks after this court case just in case other Grazinski's are still at large out there!

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say that's some pretty **outrageous behavior**, how about you? Uh huh, slightly! But folks, believe it or not, did you know there's some even more **outrageous behavior** than that? And get this. It's not being done by a handful of people once a year, but it's being done by millions of people everyday of the year! And can anybody guess who this is? Hey, that's right! It's the American Church when we act like we've got **practical amnesia**! Talk about outrageous behavior!

Oh, we say we know who we are as the Church, but half the time, with our lips and with our lives, we act like we've forgotten who we are. And it's not only detrimental in our walk with Christ. It keeps others from believing in Christ. Therefore, to avoid this **atrocious** of Christian's living

like they got practical amnesia by not knowing who they are, we're going to continue our study from the Word of God on the people of God entitled, **"Will the REAL Church Please Stand Up?"**

And we've already seen the **first thing** we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we've got practical amnesia is that the Church is the **Body of Christ**. The **second thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Brides**. The **third thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of One**. The **fourth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Hope**. And last time we saw the **fifth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Joy**. And there we saw, believe it or not, how the American Church is actually behaving joyless when the Bible says we should be joyful. **Why?** Because we've **lost the joy of our salvation, a trust in God's provision, and our sense of celebration**. And because of that, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of Joy, we're actually turning into a Body of **depressing dead people**. And I don't think that's the kind of Church Jesus came to die for, how about you?

But people, believe it or not, did you know that's not the only thing we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we got practical amnesia? The **sixth thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of Love**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

**John 13:33-35** “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. If you and I want the world to know we really belong to Jesus, what do we have to do? We have to **love** one another right? **Why?** Because if people who have never seen Jesus are going to believe in Jesus, then the followers of Jesus must love like Jesus, right?

**And here’s my point.** Surely, we all know that, right? I mean, surely every Christian who’s ever lived knows that the Church is to be a **Body of Love**, where people look at us and say, “Wow! Now there’s a group of people who always get along and goes out of their way to help others. They must be disciples of Christ,” right? Well, you’d think so, but we’ve got some problems. **Why?** Because if you look at most Churches it doesn’t look like we’re full of the love of God for all the world to see. Are you kidding! It looks like we’re full of hatred, strife, and animosity!

So why in the world would Christians **look so loveless** when the Bible says we should **be so loving**? Hey, great question. I’m glad you asked. It’s pretty simple. The **first reason** we look so loveless is because **We Refuse to Love the Needy.**

**James 1:27** “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. If we want our relationship with God to be considered pure and faultless, what do we have to do? We not only have to **stay away** from the pollution of this world, but what? We have to **give away** God’s love to the people of the world, right? And notice to whom this love is directed towards. It’s to the who? To the widows and orphans, to **those who are needy**, right?

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that we’re to **love the needy** if we’re going to keep a tight relationship with God because after all, that’s what Jesus did when He was on earth, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you’ve been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don’t see Christians busting their backs taking care of the needy. No! You see them folding their arms being selfish and greedy!

But you might be thinking, “Okay, so I don’t go out of my way to personally get involved with the needs of others. But you don’t understand. I just don’t have the time. I mean, I’m just trying to take care of my own needs let alone someone else. Besides, those people kind of creep me out and don’t we have government programs for that?” Excuse me? Have you

not read your Bible? What did Jesus do? He wasn't just concerned about His needs. Are you kidding! And He certainly didn't cast off His responsibility to help others on to a government program. No people! Read your Bible! He went out of His way and **sacrificed his time** day in and day out again and again to hang out with the who? The tax collectors, the sinners, the prostitutes, the outcasts of society, right?

**Therefore**, if that's what Jesus did then when He was on earth, then what do you think His followers who are still on earth should be doing? The very same thing, right? **Why?** Because people when we die and stand before God, He's not going to ask us how much stuff we had in life. Are you kidding! **He's going to ask us how much of His love you gave away in life**, just like Jesus did! And that's right, for those who may have forgotten this, we're going to take a little test. Let's see what God's going to ask us on the other side so we can see how well we're doing on this side.

1. Did you know that God won't ask what kind of car you drove. He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have a car.
2. Did you know that God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived. He'll ask how you treated your neighbors.
3. Did you know that God won't ask the square footage of your house. He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your house.
4. Did you know that God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet. He'll ask how many people you gave clothes to.

5. Did you know that God won't ask what your highest salary was. He'll ask if you used your salary to be a blessing to others.
6. Did you know that God won't ask what your job title was. He'll ask if you shared His love to the people at your job.
7. Did you know that God won't ask how many friends you had. He'll ask how many people you were a friend to.
8. Did you know that God won't ask about what kind of physical shape you were in. He'll ask how well you took care of the physical needs of others.

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say there's going to be a whole lot of Christians failing that test when they meet God one day, how about you? Uh huh, slightly!

And people, **the point is this**. If you want to live like that as a Christian and fail the test in the end, I guess that's your prerogative. I feel sorry for you. But what you need to know is it doesn't stop there! When you and I as Christians refuse to **love the needy**, we're not just jeopardizing our walk with Christ. We're keeping other people from believing in Christ! **Why?** Because when all we do is live for our needs, ourselves, our stuff, what in the world are we doing? We're not just ceasing to be a Body of Love. We're acting like a **Body of Greed**. And I don't know about you, but if that's all I ever saw from people who were supposed to be followers of Christ, I'd never want to follow Christ, how about you?

Oh, but that's not all. The **second reason** we look so loveless is because **We Refuse to Love Our Enemies**.

**Romans 12:19,20** "Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. Instead, do what the Scriptures say. If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. The best way to get rid of your enemies is to what? Treat them like your friends, right? We don't get revenge on them for what they do? No! We take them out to lunch for a cheeseburger or two!

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that we're to **love our enemies** if they're going to become our friends because after all, that what Jesus did when He was on earth, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see Christians loving their enemies and seeking a truce. Are you kidding! You see them fighting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!

But you might be thinking, "Okay, so I don't make it a point to treat my enemies like friends. But you don't understand. You don't know what they did to me and how wrong it was. Besides, they don't deserve to be treated like a friend." Excuse me? Have you not read your Bible? What did Jesus do? He didn't just love those who loved Him. Are you kidding! He



voluntarily died on the cross for who? For his enemies, for people like you and I who hated his guts, right? And I don't know about you, but I'd say we don't **deserve to be loved like that**, right?

**Therefore**, if that's what Jesus did then when He was on earth, then what do you think His followers who are still on earth should be doing? The very same thing, right? **Why?** Because people when we love our enemies **just like Jesus did** it turns out to be one of the most profound ways to share the gospel. In fact, it might be the only way to reach some people for the Lord. And that's right. For those of you who may not know of what loving your enemies looks like in real life, I'm going to share with you a true story of a man named Rhett. And you tell me if his love for his enemy didn't have a profound affect on him.

“It was a seemingly normal day at work for this average American Christian named Rhett Falkner. Only little did he know that on this day, an enemy was going to start working right beside him. So being a Christian and all, Rhett felt he should go out of his way to welcome this new employee and so he said hello and introduced himself.

But that's when the trouble started. As soon as this enemy found out Rhett was a Christian he began to laugh and make fun of him and declare how stupid Christians were. **So what did Rhett do?** He promptly invited his enemy over for supper to give him a chance to meet his family.

But even a nice home-cooked meal with a pleasant family didn't seem to make a dent with this enemy. He merely continued his tirade about how Christians were a bunch of mindless brainwashed idiots who had to have somebody else tell them how to think. **So what did Rhett do?** He invited his

friend to a Christian singles group because he knew his enemy would never go to a regular Sunday Church service.

But while he was there, his enemy defied the leader during the devotion time by staring at him in anger the whole time and even refused to bow his head in prayer. And when it was time to ask for prayer requests and others were praying for their loved ones to be saved or healed, this enemy spoke up in complete mockery of God and asked everyone to pray for the dying slugs and snails in the world. **So what did Rhett do?** He simply prayed to God on behalf of the dying slugs in the world, just like his enemy requested.

But one day Rhett told his enemy that his family was moving back to New York and he'd probably never see him again. But even despite the fact that Rhett had continually invited his enemy into his own home, constantly took him out to eat for free, chauffeured him around town with his own gas, his enemy didn't even say goodbye. **So what did Rhett do?** He simply kept praying for his enemy even though they were miles apart.

But that's when months later, at another workplace 3,000 miles away, Rhett got a call from his old enemy. And naturally, being surprised for the call, Rhett asked his enemy why he was calling him. And as it turned out, Rhett's former enemy had not only become his friend, but he was now his brother in the lord. Why? All because Rhett's love for his enemy had enabled him become a Christian as well."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say Rhett's love for his enemy had a profound affect on his enemy, how about you? And by the way, in case you haven't guessed, Rhett's enemy was me! And people **the point is this**. When are we going to realize that when you and I as Christians refuse to **love our enemies**, we're not just jeopardizing our walk with Christ, we're actually keeping others from believing in Christ! Trust me! I was one of them! And people, that's why we've got to wake up and realize then when all we do is repay others with and eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,

what in the world do you think we're doing? We're not just ceasing to be a Body of Love. We're acting like a **Body of Vengeance**. And I don't know about you, but if that's all I ever saw from people who were supposed to be followers of Christ, I'd never want to follow Christ, how about you?

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** we look so loveless is because **We Refuse to Love God's Family**.

**1 John 3:10** "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. If you and I want to prove that we're no longer a child of the devil but now become a child of God, what do we got to do? We have to **love the family of God**, right?

And **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that we need to love **not just the needy** or **even our enemies**, but we've got to **love God's family**, right? I mean, of all three of those, surely that's the easiest one, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see Christians loving each other because God loves them. Are you kidding! You see them kicking, screaming causing tons of division!

But you might be thinking, “Okay, so I don’t get along with everyone in the Church. But you see, you don’t understand. You have no idea what they said to me and how wrong it was. And because of that, they don’t deserve to be my friend!” Excuse me? People, what did the text say? When you and I act like this we’re acting like what? Not a child of God but who? **A child of the devil!** And if you want to live like that as a Christian, I guess that’s your prerogative. I feel sorry for you. But what you need to know is it doesn’t stop there! **Why?** Because a **hypocritical** lack of **love for God’s family**, will not only kill a Church, it will kill people’s desire to be a part of the Church, like it did with this man.

“Years ago in Germany there was a young Jewish boy who had a profound sense of admiration for his father. The life of the family centered around the acts of piety and devotion prescribed by their religion. The father was zealous in attending worship and instruction and demanded the same from his children.

But while the boy was a teenager the family was forced to move to another town in Germany. And in the new location there was no synagogue, and the pillars of the community all belonged to the Lutheran Church. So suddenly the father announced to the family that they were all going to abandon their Jewish traditions and join the Lutheran Church.

Well, when the stunned family asked why, the father explained that it was necessary to help his business. And of course, the young boy was bewildered and confused. But pretty soon his deep disappointment gave way to anger and bitterness that plagued him throughout his life. And one day when he was old enough, He left Germany and went to England to study.

He sat daily at the British Museum formulating his ideas and composing a book. And in that book he introduced a whole new way of life and a

worldview that was designed to change the world. And also in that book he described religion as an 'opiate for the masses.'

Today there are billions of people in the world who live under the system invented by this embittered man. His name is Karl Marx. The influence of this father's hypocrisy is still being felt around the world."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say one man's hypocrisy had a profound affect on his son, how about you? And people, **the point is this**. If that one man's hypocrisy birthed communism, which by the way has killed millions of people, can you imagine how many more millions of people have **died and gone to hell** over the Church's hypocrisy? **What hypocrisy?** Well, what do you think we're doing when we don't love each other as God's family? We're not just ceasing to be a Body of Love, We're acting like a hypocritical **Body of Hate**. No wonder people don't want to become Christians!

And people, that's why if we can't stop **playing Church** instead of being the Church then maybe it's time to **get out of the Church? Why?** Because being a Christian is not a game. What we say and do literally affects the eternal destiny of people around us. Therefore, it's high time we get rid of our **practical amnesia**. We've got to remember who we are! We're not a bunch of greedy, vengeful, hate-filled people. Are you kidding! We are the Church of Jesus Christ. We are a **Body of Love!**

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To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

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