

## Living by Faith in the Body of Christ

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Resource: In His Image by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. (1984).

In Fearfully & Wonderfully Made, Philip Yancey and Dr. Paul Brand revealed how God's voice is encoded in the very structure of our bodies. In His Image takes up where its predecessor left off, beckoning us once again inward and onward to fresh exploration and discovery. Yancey and Brand show how accurately and intricately the human body portrays the Body of Christ. In five sections—Image, Blood, Head, Spirit, and Pain—the acclaimed surgeon and the award-winning writer unlock the remarkable, living lessons contained in our physical makeup. This Gold Medallion Award-winning book will open your eyes to the complex miracle of the human body, and the even more compelling spiritual truths that it reflects.

Brand suggests that God takes pleasure in His Church – the Body of Christ. And that God the Creator wants fellowship with us. That He longs for communication from His Body in what these authors call "The Way In". The health of the human body is based on an elaborate communication system. The health of the Body of Christ is no different. God created us that He might receive our love. People in ancient religions believed that the actions of gods in the heavens could affect the earth. That is in earthquakes, rains, storms, etc. Christ reversed this dynamic as now what happens below affects heaven.

Think of prayer for example. The conversion of one sinner causes all of heaven to rejoice! **Luke 15:7** – "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

God hears the prayers of His people - even the murmurs and cries of mourning. Like the human brain staying in constant communication with the various cells in the human body, our triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) thrives on such contact with the cells (people) in the Body of Christ, His Church.

How does our faith affect this spiritual dynamic? I have titled this devotional – Living by Faith in the Body of Christ. Dr. Brand says that every person around the age of 12 months (1 year) has a profound change of perception from a predominant reliance on touch to a reliance on sight. It happens so naturally we often don't even think about this transition in the development of a child. He writes that one's sight cells aided by touch to this point can gain dependable notions of shape and distance and solidness (p 153). However, sightless people (blind from birth) never make this transition as they have to forever depend on touch unless they somehow gain their sight. Even then the transition from depending on a touch to sight is stressful and overwhelming. When someone can finally see, their principles of the world are far different than what they had imagined. Parts of things and animals suddenly become something larger and whole. When a person becomes a believer in Christ, he or she finally sees with new spiritual eyes. They gain a new perspective on life. There is a much larger entity called the Kingdom of God and every Christian is a part of that

Kingdom. All things change for the new believer. Navigating these changes requires “living by faith”. Discipleship is a process of helping someone as they grow in and out of these dependency issues.

Dr. Brand says that blind people who regain their sight will sometimes say that there was much more ease and far less stress in being blind guided only by touch. The new Christian struggling to live by faith will sometimes fall back into a life of un-confessed sin for the same reasons. Frankly, there may be fewer challenges for a pagan (non-believer). Interestingly, when I was doing the research for my Master’s thesis, I found that the Christian medical resident (doctor in training) had more perceived stress than the non-Christian resident in training. Abortion issues, working on the Sabbath, medical ethics, personal integrity issues, etc. all can be added stressors for the believer.

However, faith in the God of Creation usually brings man real peace, real understanding – real sight. (**Phil 4:6-7**) - “<sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This new perspective or orientation to life is what motivates a person to pray as the primary way to communicate within God’s Body – the Church. Brand says “the lack of such contact and the absence of human faith limit the Spiritual Body as surely as the lack of a sense like sight limit the entire physical body” (p 158). **James 5:16** – “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”. Prayer can be our cries for mercy but it can be when we set still and listen along with God’s community where He places us. Sometimes we long to hear God communicate to us. Knowing that He has a reason to use our pain is enough to keep us moving forward in life. Too often we seek to impress God and others in the Body with our knowledge and skills of communication and more about what we want others to hear.

Brand says that “in the Spiritual Body, The Way Out describes the descending aspect of the Head’s channels to each cell”. That is God speaking to us as part of His Body. We have access to God through our relationship with God the Son and an awareness and dependency on God the Holy Spirit. Think about it, God has access to us as we have access to Him.

We can and should listen to the stream of messages being sent from the Head to each of us. Messages such as what we read in the Holy Scriptures (God’s Word to us) and counsel from wise teachers and advisors, etc. We can also send messages back to the Head. Much like the instant communication that occurs when we burn or smash a finger. We can cry out for mercy. The Body of Christ (Church) must respond to that cry for help from one of its cells (members). Either that or there will be death of some kind.

**Psalms 28:2** “Hear my cry when I call to you for help” (The Way Out). **Psalms 30:8** says “To you Lord, I called, to the Lord I cried for mercy”. But not as one who has no hope. **Romans 8:24** – “<sup>24</sup>We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn’t hope. Who hopes for what they already see?”

Like a new infant to 12 months who has a dependency on touch vs. sight, we are told to be like a child in receiving the Kingdom of God. **Luke 18:16** - Then Jesus called them to

him and said, "Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. That is, we are to live by faith especially if we cannot see the Kingdom of God. Keep growing to develop the mind of Christ and one day, you should see (better understand) the Kingdom of God.

Brand reminds us – "Keep in mind, God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, is not dependent or limited by perceptions gained through the members of His Body. We cannot increase God's knowledge or wisdom nor alter the existence of His Kingdom. We can ask that His Will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

Dr. Brand wrote, "God self-limits His activity (The Way Out) by relying on bumbling human agents (us). In ways beyond our comprehension, God also has chosen to make His presence on earth dependent on The Way In (the communication from the members – the cells of His Body.

As a physician, he says that "there is no greater wonder than that every one of the hundred trillion cells in a person's human body has access to the brain. And in the Body of Christ, there is no greater wonder than that each one of us has direct access to Christ Himself, the Head." (p157-158). This should give us peace.

We are made In His Image – a cell in His Body intended to have fellowship with other cells (people of faith). We can move from loneliness and solitary confinement to full functioning as a health cell in His Body. We may not see this at first but living by faith and not by sight will move us out of a life of unhealthy loneliness to a healthy relationship with our Creator and His people.

The Way In and They Way Out both are essential for a healthy body. Each cell must do its part to communicate danger such as pain. If they fail, then individual parts of the body and probably even the whole Body suffers. Don't be a silent participant in your Church Body. Be the valued individual cell that is an essential part of the whole Body. Get help to discern your unique gifts and do your part and do it well. Don't be just a healer for example, but be a wounded healer able to communicate your own pain at times. Wounded healers seem to be more effective.

Dr. Brand suggests that we be like David who found favor with God and was called a man after God's own heart (**Acts 7:46**). Full of emotions and contradictory moods as we see in **Psalms 21-25**, he hid nothing from God who David took seriously. Living in faith, David communicated with God and about God and he also expected – even demanded - that God communicate to him. We are encouraged to do the same in our faith-based communities. We are to enjoy the benefits of transitioning from touch to sight – from spiritual darkness to awesome light and life.

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