

Staying Connected to the Head

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A.
MedicalMobilizers.org

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

Dr. Paul Brand, a hand surgeon, estimated he had operated on 10,000 hands of leprosy patients while serving as a medical missionary in India and at a leprosy center in United States. However, the estimate of the number of hands suffering from leprosy in need of surgery is about 4 million. The solace he felt was that in virtually any thriving leprosy work in the world today, you can find doctors that he had trained at Vellore in India or at Carville in Louisiana.

In his two companion books, [Fearfully and Wonderfully Made](#) and [In His Image](#), Dr. Brand with the good help of Yancey, places an emphasis on the individual human cells in our body and their varying roles within the body for the sake of the body as a whole. He then points to the Body of Christ (the Church) and makes similar analogies. He writes of the connections, the forces, uniting and guiding our bodies (and the Body of Christ) and the involvement of God. These two books can become your best devotional resources as you study your Bible.

Studying the human body sheds light on a metaphor used over thirty times in the New Testament: The Body of Christ (the Church). In comparison, Christians are the individual members in a universal Body in which Jesus Christ serves as the Head. Brand and Yancey writes that a likeness does exist between the human body and the Spiritual Body – a likeness that derives from common authorship: God – The Creator of both.

“Analogies to the Spiritual Body (Church) apply only partially for dysfunction there never results from brain damage” like in the human body. “But many nervous disorders – cerebral palsy for example – occur when synaptic channels below the level of the brain somehow clog up. Poisons, such as cocaine, botulinus, and atropine can also jam the chemical transmission across synapses” (p. 145).

Brand writes that “we have a theological word for poisons that affect the Body of Christ; sin. Sin steals into the intimate channel between the Head (Christ) and the members, interrupting communication and separating the cell from the higher authority that directs and coordinates its actions. The usefulness of a single cell requires unimpeded communication from above and an obedient response from below.” And “once severed, new pathways linking the mind and body do not establish themselves easily.” (p. 145-146)

Spiritually, we can lose connection with the Head (Christ). **Colossians 2:18-19** – “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. ¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom

the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Likewise, once a member of the Church loses connection with the Head, re-connecting with the Head and the Body spiritually is a challenging process.

These authors write that the normal brain assigns a specific area to govern each significant body part (finger, toe, etc.). Dr. Brand would get involved in disrupting these associative pathways and trying to establish new ones. For example, he would transplant a swatch of hairy scalp to establish a new eyebrow on a leprosy patient. If a fly crawls across the transplanted eyebrow, the patients will likely respond by slapping his crown or the donor site. In a tendon transfer, he would move a healthy tendon from the ring finger to replace a weak or useless one on the thumb. To the recuperating patient, orders from the brain to the thumb still feels like the ring finger should respond. If told to move the ring finger, the thumb would respond. Over time, the patient must re-pattern or re-train his brain to interpret or reestablish new communication patterns to that part of the body.

SO...how is that similar or any different from the individual members of the Body of Christ? What does it look like to train or re-train a person, young or old, who has not been living with the mind of Christ? And how can we expect to function with any kind of unity in the Body of Christ if we are not all transformed or being transformed to the mind of Christ? How can a choir make a joyful sound if each person or even one person is singing from a different song sheet?

The Apostle Paul urged fellow-members of the Church, that is, cells in Christ's Body, to learn God's good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:2** (NIV): ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Also, we have exhortations to show us how God's will should express itself in our lives such as **Phil. 2:5** – "let his mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus". He tells us what the mind or attitude should be in **verses 6-11**: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The point is that we all must be engaged in this renewal or discipleship process – even children who are taught the mind of Christ in a Vacation Bible School in the summer months across the country. It is an intensive effort to develop a smooth, steady stream of transmissions between the cell and its head - both on ascending and descending fibers - physically and spiritually.

We learn the mind of Christ by forming a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Relationships make things possible and are valuable. I was richly blessed to have had a personal relationship with Drs. Paul and Margaret Brand. Paul invited me to visit he and Margaret at Carville, LA. He gave me a tour of the leprosy center. After a tour – visiting several patients, etc., Margaret fixed my first meal with curry. Paul was the key speaker

for several of my conferences for medical and dental students and grads when I served as a regional director for the Christian Medical and Dental Associations (CMDA). Students would take a sharp interest in even his bedside manners that communicate care and compassion to his patients. I recall his illustrating how he rubbed his hands together to get them warmer prior to touching a patient's hand.

The biological process can be observed in patients and the spiritual process can be observed in many Christians as they exercise the disciplines of faith.

The solution is fairly simple. Disciples (those who call themselves Christians or believers in Christ as their Lord as well as Savior) must learn some disciplines of faith such as meditation, fasting, prayers, simple living, worship and celebration. All of these build proper communication between us and the Head of the Body of Christ. Prayer for example, needs to be more about hearing from God than about us telling God what He should do in our lives. And they must be repeated regularly. Dr. Brand says that "in neurophysiology as well as in spirituality - repeated acts of obedience strengthens the connections".

Members of Christ's Body (the Church) can develop an ever-increasing richness of association between themselves and the Head. **Romans 7:3** speaks of "another law at work in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind". But with time and with practice, unless there is a disability, we can learn or re-learn to walk, then run and sometimes even excel physically and spiritually. Some will even overcome their disability. That is, both in our physical bodies and in the Body of Christ.

Where are you in your training process? In what area of life do you still need a trainer – maybe a Life Coach to offer some advice and accountability? Men and women of all ages can benefit from a seasoned wise Biblically-based Life Coach. Are you willing to ask for help? And, are you willing to take the time and put in the hard work and practice necessary to become the aroma of Christ?

2 Corinthians 2:15-17 (CEB) – "We smell like the aroma of Christ's offering to God, both to those who are being saved and to those who are on the road to destruction. ¹⁶ We smell like a contagious dead person to those who are dying, but we smell like the fountain of life to those who are being saved. Who is qualified for this kind of ministry? ¹⁷ We aren't like so many people who hustle the word of God to make a profit. We are speaking through Christ in the presence of God, as those who are sincere and as those who are sent from God."