

## TRANSFORMING OUR THINKING

7 JUNE 2026

### SUMMARY

This message explores the profound truth that Christians are not merely followers of Christ, but are actually the body of Christ in the world. Bruce Downes emphasizes the distinction between Jesus (the historical person who walked in Galilee) and Christ (the risen, glorified Lord who reigns at the Father's right hand). The central message is that Christ continues His mission through His people. Wherever believers go, the body of Christ goes. This understanding transforms how we view our everyday lives, relationships, and interactions. Our worth comes not from what we contribute, but from being united to Christ. The gifts we receive are not for personal benefit but for serving others and making Christ visible in the world. This identity extends far beyond church activities into every aspect of daily life - work, family, shopping, relationships - making every encounter an opportunity for others to experience Christ's presence.

### KEY POINTS

- The church is not an institution but a people united to Christ so profoundly that His life becomes visible through them
- There is an important distinction between "Jesus" (our personal Lord and Savior) and "Christ" (the risen, glorified Messiah who continues His mission through believers)
- When Saul persecuted Christians, Jesus asked "Why do you persecute me?" revealing that Christ identifies completely with His people
- Faith is more than believing truths about God; it is communion and participation in God's life and mission
- Wherever a Christian goes, the body of Christ goes - to homes, workplaces, schools, shops, everywhere
- Gifts are not what make us members of the body; Christ makes us members, and we contribute because we belong
- Our gifts are given for the common good, not for personal status or fulfillment
- The wrong question is "What can I do in church?" The right question is "How does Christ desire to love, serve, strengthen and reach others through the life He's given me?"
- Ordinary life matters profoundly - being a parent, grandparent, worker, neighbor—all are expressions of being Christ's body
- We don't belong because we contribute; we contribute because we belong
- Even in our brokenness and weakness, God's Spirit remains upon us and we remain the body of Christ

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:**

- 1 Corinthians 12:27 - *"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it"*
- 1 Corinthians 12:4 - *"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord"*
- Romans 12 - *"For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function"*
- 1 Corinthians 12:7 - *"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"*

**STORIES:**

- The conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, where Jesus asked "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" rather than "Why do you persecute my followers?"
- Bruce Downes' personal experience traveling during the week, encountering hotel receptionists, shop workers, and others, and being struck by the reality that they were encountering the body of Christ through him
- Leaders from the Melbourne community visiting and later expressing they felt "lost all week" after leaving because of the presence of God they experienced
- A women's event (Heart Ministry) where attendees spoke about sensing a powerful presence in the people serving, on stage, and at the doors
- Bruce Downes' meeting with Archbishop Comensoli in Melbourne discussing the community's mission and future plans

## **TRANSFORMING OUR THINKING**

### **SMALL GROUP GUIDE**

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

### **ICEBREAKER**

Share about a time this week when you interacted with someone (at the store, at work, in your neighborhood). How might that interaction have been different if you were fully aware that you were representing Christ's presence to them?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

#### **Understanding the Body of Christ**

1. What struck you most about the distinction between "Jesus" and "Christ"? How does this change the way you think about your faith?
2. The message emphasized that "to attack Christ's people is to attack Him." How does this truth affect the way you view:
  - How you treat yourself?
  - How you treat other believers?
  - How you respond when other Christians are criticized or persecuted?
3. Saul heard, "Why do you persecute ME?" not "Why do you persecute my followers?" What does this reveal about Christ's identification with His body?

#### **Living as the Body**

4. The pastor shared his experience of standing at hotel receptions and shops, suddenly aware that people were encountering the body of Christ through him. How does this realization challenge or change you?
5. Read the list of places Christ enters when you enter them (workplace, home, neighborhood, shops, etc.). Which of these locations feels most challenging to you? Why?
6. The message states: "You cannot go anywhere without taking the body of Christ with you." How does this truth impact:
  - How you drive?
  - How you use social media?
  - How you watch TV or consume entertainment?
  - How you speak to family members?

#### **Gifts and Calling**

7. Many people think gifts are only "church things" (teaching, leading worship, serving on teams). The message expanded this dramatically. Which of these examples of gifts surprised you most?
  - A mother raising children in faith

- A tradesperson serving with integrity
  - A person who notices the lonely
  - A business owner creating meaningful employment
  - A grandparent faithfully praying
8. Reflect on this question: "How does Christ desire to love, serve, strengthen and reach others through the life He has given me?" What answers come to mind?
  9. The message emphasized we're not the body of Christ because of our gifts—Christ makes us His body, and THEN we bring our gifts. Why is this distinction so important?

### **Difficult Situations**

10. For those with unbelieving spouses, children who've walked away, or difficult family situations—how does understanding that YOU are the body of Christ change your perspective on these relationships?
11. The message concluded by noting that being the body of Christ has nothing to do with ability, intellect, capability, or health. How does this truth challenge the world's definition of worth and value?

### **PRACTICAL REFLECTION**

This Week:

1. **Option 1: Morning Awareness** Each morning before you leave home, pray: "*Lord, I am Your body today. Wherever I go, You go. Help me make You visible to everyone I encounter.*" Journal about your experiences.
2. **Option 2: Specific Encounters** Identify 3-5 regular interactions you have this week (grocery checkout, gas station, work colleague, family member). Before each interaction, pause and remind yourself: "*This person is about to encounter the body of Christ through me.*"
3. **Option 3: Gift Inventory** Complete this sentence in as many ways as possible: "*God has entrusted me with \_\_\_\_\_ through which His life, goodness, and love can reach others.*" (Include both "spiritual" and "ordinary" things—your job, your personality, your experiences, your availability, etc.)
4. **Option 4: Reframe Your Week** Look at your calendar for the coming week. For each commitment or activity, write: "*Christ enters \_\_\_\_\_ [this place/situation] through me.*" How does this change your approach?

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL PRAYER**

- Where do I struggle to believe that I am truly the body of Christ?
- What would change in my daily life if I fully embraced this identity?
- In what areas have I been thinking "I have nothing to offer"? How does this teaching challenge that belief?
- Where has my understanding of "gifts" been too narrow or church-focused?
- How can I become more conscious of Christ's presence in me throughout my day?

**KEY QUOTES TO REMEMBER**

*"When someone meets you, they are encountering Jesus."*

*"A gift is anything God entrusts to us through which His life, His goodness, and His love can reach others."*

*"We don't belong because we contribute. We contribute because we belong."*

*"The body of Christ doesn't disappear when Christians leave a church building. The body of Christ goes wherever its members go."*

*"How does Christ desire to love, serve, strengthen and reach others through the life He has given me?"*

**CLOSING PRAYER**

*Father, help us to truly grasp what it means to be Your body in the world. May we never again go anywhere—to work, to the store, to our homes—without awareness that we carry Your presence. Transform our understanding of our worth, our gifts, and our calling. Help us to make You visible wherever we are. We pray this in Jesus' name, through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*