

The Power of Blood for Life for the Human Body and the Body of Christ

Chapter 4: (BLOOD / Power): Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org / Studies

Resource: *In His Image* by Dr. Paul Brand & Philip Yancey. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. (1984). *In his two companion books, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made and In His Image, Dr. Brand with the help of Philip 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 insightful analogies about the connections and forces that unite and guide our human bodies (and the Body of Christ). The suggested process is to review the questions prior to reviewing the content. If time is limited, each person in a group discussion should read the content prior to spending time in a group discussion to answer the questions.*

Questions for Personal Applications or Group Discussions:

1. Most of us are uneasy at the sight of blood. What about you? Be honest. How do you react to the sight of blood?
2. If you are comfortable with blood and pus, what happened to bring you to that point?
3. There is a hymn titled – There is Power in the Blood. Like Dr. Brand, if we can understand the nature and value of blood, does that help us better understand what it can accomplish? That it is vital to life?
4. Scriptures tell us that man is “fearfully and wonderfully made” – in the Image of God.
5. Did you know that each human body has about 60 thousand miles of blood vessels linking every human cell?
6. Discuss the wonder of the many amazing facts about our God-made bodies.

There is a simple goal of the three components of blood (red cells, white cells and platelets) and the vast circulatory system in the human body. Likewise, there is a simple goal of all of the three unique parts of the Body of Christ - to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever”? (Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechism #1).

Dr. Brand saw the drama of resurrection in a patient which forever had him incurably in love with medicine as a career. What he has written helps us ponder what gives the Body of Christ the power for life?

Psalm 139:13-14 - *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”*

Blood is indeed a powerful force overall for our well-being. Brand wrote, “A person can live a day or two without water and several weeks without food, but only a few minutes without oxygen, the main fuel for our hundred trillion cells”. Millions of red blood cells in a single speck of blood carry the oxygen on a fascinating journey in our body providing the nutrients and recycling the waste. This is miraculous!

Paul Brand refused initially the opportunity to enroll in medical school even though it was offered free of personal cost. The reason which he was ashamed to admit was fairly common. He was afraid and actually repulsed by the sight of blood and pus. So he chose to become a builder intending to build houses, schools and hospitals. He knew he was truly disappointing his parents and his generous uncle by not accepting his financial offer to study medicine. As children growing up in India, he and his sister assisted their father when he would dress wounds without anesthetics. Maybe that was too traumatic for anyone to watch. Paul’s pride would not let him admit that he had a visceral reaction against shed blood and pus.

But something unique happened in the course of learning to be a carpenter, mason, painter and bricklayer. He was advised to take a college course in hygiene and tropical medicine while in London studying with plans to return to India to practice his building skills. On one evening at Connaught Hospital, a young patient was admitted after a car accident. She was unconscious and very pale from the loss of blood (oxygen). Paul was assigned to monitor her while she received a transfusion. He couldn’t detect a pulse and since she didn’t seem to be breathing, he thought she was dead. But as she received the second bottle of life-giving blood, he could feel a slight pulse.

The young girl's color started to return along with other signs of life. This single experience changed Paul's life forever. He saw first-hand what blood could do to save a life and thus become incurably in love with medicine. He felt shame at not initially accepting his uncle's offer of a medical school education. He wrote, "The memory of shed blood had kept me out of medicine; the power of shared blood (i.e. transfusion) ultimately brought me to it". What a story! No doubt Paul would have been a first-class builder but thankfully he eventually fulfilled his deceased father's wish to become an educated and highly qualified physician for the sake of the people in need in India.

He writes that blood has power that sustains our lives at every moment. We fear the loss of this power to sustain life when a person is bleeding out. Trained health professionals rush to stop the bleeding for good reasons. This thick red sticky liquid runs through an amazing 60,000 miles of blood vessels linking to every cell in your body. He says, "There are highways that narrow down to one-lane roads, then to bike paths, then footpaths, until finally the red cell must bow sideways and edge through a capillary one-tenth the diameter of a human hair". He calls this tube for blood a pipeline that links cells together for the life of the body. Brand says, "Such a pipeline exists inside each one of us, servicing not four billion but one hundred trillion cells in each human body. An endless supply of oxygen, amino acids, nitrogen, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sugars, lipids, cholesterols, and hormones surges past our cells, carried on blood cell rafts or suspended in the fluid. Each cell has special withdrawal privileges to gather the resources needed to fuel a tiny engine for its complex chemical reactions."

This pipeline does more than carry life-giving oxygen. It miraculously carries away refuse, exhaust gases, and worn-out chemicals much like a slurry pipeline that uses water with coal to travel long distances. The body needs five or six quarts of this vitally important fluid for the body's hundred trillion cells.

Dr. Brand didn't elaborate too much at this point about an analogy to the Body of Christ but it seems apparent that there are similar processes that exist to maintain health in the Body of Christ (the Church).

Next, he describes the composite nature of blood stating that every drop of blood the size of an "o" has a staggering number of 5 million red cells along with 300,000 platelets and 7,000 white cells. He says each speck of blood is like an ocean stocked with living matter. That red cells alone, if removed from a person and laid side by side would carpet an area of 3,500 square yards. After some time, the red cells go into the recycling business to make new cells!

We learn that each of the three parts of blood have valuable roles to sustain life. Brand says that the body's survival depends on the flower-like shaped platelets. They are essential in the life-saving process of clotting – a mobile first-aid box that detects leaks, plugs them and then tidies up the debris. If needed to stop a leak, these platelets form a web like a spider's web of fibrinogen that catches red blood cells much like automobiles crashing into each other when an interstate highway is blocked. What is serious and sad is when a person has blood with no ability to clot so that even a tooth extraction can be fatal.

So, in the Body of Christ, who or what are the red cells. The platelets? Or the white blood cells?

To summarize, Dr. Brand wrote that once blood repulsed him until he saw first-hand the value of these life-giving cells. So much so, he said that he felt like assembling all of his blood cells together and singing to them a hymn of praise. But what is amazing is that every normal heartbeat of a healthy human being is likewise a drama of resurrection similar to what he experienced in Connaught Hospital. Most of us probably don't recognize or appreciate what goes on in our bodies that allow us to live another second or minute. Do you? Do you sing a hymn of praise to your body's organs for doing their job without complaining? I have a vivid memory of hearing Dr. Brand saying that he would awake each morning and envision what each of his organs were accomplishing and thanked them while praising God, our Creator, for making him so "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14)