

God Confined Himself to Matter in Christ Jesus who Confined Himself to the Body of Christ (Church).

Chapter 11: (HEAD/Confinement): 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 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). We suggest you memorize the key verse and read that chapter in the Bible then review the questions prior to reading the content together. This is meant for life-to-life discipleship training sessions.*

Key Verse: Romans 8:19-21: *As humans / believers/saints in Christ, we are organs (Cells) in the Body of Christ. We are like the stones and pillars in His Temple.*

Key Points to Learn from this Study - Did you know?

1. Our brain is performing 5 trillion operations per second?
2. That a human brain begins to hallucinate without constant activity? No, you weren't going crazy!
3. Every cell in our body ages and has been replaced with new cells every seven years. All except our nerve cells which maintain the entity of ourselves as a person – my identity?
4. That the image of God is being restored in and by people such as us?

Dr. Brand starts this chapter by stating that God made a fundamental choice of how he interacts with the world. He illustrates how the head of a human body explains how Jesus is the Head of the Church.

Brand says that our brain receives information from much more than our five senses. We also feel hunger, pains, muscle tensions, and more even in our subconsciousness. He says that our brains must need senseless turmoil since in the absence of that normal activity, the brain will fill the void with sensory content of its own from a bank of our memories. This gets confused with our reality.

He gives an example of Beethoven, who was deaf and not able to hear the great music that he created. However, he did hear the tone and harmony and rhythm in his brain that had created in code. He says our brain receives all the signals in this kind of morse code.

Paul's wife, Dr. Margaret Brand, could recognize one of Beethoven's pieces in seconds relying on her own mental list of sounds she had filed in her memory. She didn't have to hear the sound of the music to hear it in her brain's memory. In two seconds, she could pull up the memory of the tune. This is all done with great speed and with little conscious effort.

Thankfully, we can create intelligent sounds as we speak without taking the time to spell each word or scan a dictionary for its meanings. We can make whole conceptual meanings without the brain having to see, hear, feel, taste or smell. The brain doesn't feel cold or heat like the rest of our body parts. We perform such tasks as reading or speaking from our memory of stored knowledge.

He states that very small flowered shaped neurons shoot chemicals at each other making life as we know possible. These neurons obviously fail when we are in trouble or simply unable to act or speak normally. Dr. Brand says that our brains contain the person we are in life. Unlike all other cells in the body, the neurons or nerve cells do not change every seven years. (No wonder we change our looks as we grow older). Basically, our skin, eyes, heart and even bones change every seven years. Like a plant, he says we reach out towards impulses of smell or sound or touch in a world of light and matter.

Brand points towards the summary function of the brain which is an amazing lump of cells that we carry around in our skulls. He then lays the groundwork for what I think is his greatest contribution – the analogy of Christ as the Head of the Church.

He says that New Testament uses the title of Head for the Lord seven times - more than the word "power". This biblical metaphor is mostly about the actual physiological working of the human brain – the head of the body as Christ is the Head of the Church.

God perceived a problem of how He, an infinite Spirit, could communicate with us as finite beings limited by time and matter. He had a solution of course which required Him to confine himself when he enfleshed himself (sent the baby Jesus). He moved into our bodies. As we have already discussed, Jesus wants us to commune with Him by celebrating the Lord's Supper/Communion.

We became a living cell in His Body (Church). Christ eventually ascended away from us here on earth but more accurately was transformed to the role as Head. His Spirit lives in us as His children. We are His worker bees who serve as ambassadors to be, serve, and advance the Kingdom of God.

Brand wrote that God asks for and uses our prayers, actions and our proclamations of His truth and justice as his means of communicating himself into a world of matter – all that we are without his Spirit.

We are called wounded healers! We all have sinned (become wounded), and we become healers by his Spirit and his plan. He chooses to rely on us when he could've used other means as he did in the Old Testament (the burning bush). God intentionally chose a self-limiting way. Many cannot understand God's decision as if he was too weak to do otherwise. In fact, God chose this indirect, hidden or unclear style of activity. Did God imprison himself in his own resolve? Maybe - but with good intentions it seems.

Dr. Brand tells a story of their one-year-old daughter who had a fascination with playing with danger by aiming to stick her wet fingers into a 220-volt electrical outlet while living in India. Not a wise way to live or die he wrote. Paul learned with his daughter in the situation and with people in other cultures. Like God, he had to give information that humans can understand. He had success with his daughter when he relayed something she had already experienced which was a burn from a floor level fire in their home in India. Like God, he also had to issue a warning – one that she had learned to fear and respect.

Brand writes that God faced the challenge of communicating with us as human beings. He diminished his limitations by sending Jesus, his Son who was also Triune God. God lives (tabernacles) among us coming to Earth as a baby and growing up as a man for 33 years. We are made In His Image - the image of God - of Christ (the Messiah).

He writes that Christ's ascension was actually a further condescension. He now resides in millions of humans in frail, bodies of all sizes and shapes and colors. Christ withdrew into many ivory boxes (brains). He chose us to carry out his plan on earth. We are God's medium, i.e., his voice. He communicates with us by dwelling inside us. He chose to use language we could understand. He calls Jesus his Word. He sent his Spirit to guide us and to motivate us to do his work – with joy and success. His work is primarily to go make disciples - training them to train others on and on. That is, to make disciple-makers from the converts / believers He calls. This study guide is being used to enhance this kind of discipleship training.

Brand says the Church, his Body, is a humiliation but a disappointment that was planned with a clear purpose. We get to participate in His work of restoration and redemption. We get to share in the hope and liberty that belongs to us as His children. (Romans 8). We get to shine as pillars in the temple of God. He quotes I Peter 1:12 that says that even the angels will marvel at the privileges that we humans get to experience. Dr. Brand admits that as great as his work was as a hand surgeon, he helped only a small fraction of those in need (10k of 15M leprosy patients globally). He did have extreme joy in knowing that his training of doctors at the Vellore in India or in Carville, LA with leprosy patients did more than he could have achieved personally. He said that this is how God works in the world. He expresses himself through a body of believers in which he still and forever serves as Head. Christ had to die to start this era of headship. We simply submit to the Head and willingly receive his messages via his Word and his Spirit.