

**Hillcrest Adult Education (Fall 2022): Faith in Action**  
**Walk 8: Listening fo God – Accountability**  
**Romans 12:5**

**Lesson Objectives:**

1. Increase awareness of the importance of mutual accountability.
2. Understand accountability using the metaphor of “The Body of Christ.”
3. See examples of accountability in the church at Hillcrest.

**Preparation:**

The church is called (among many other things) the body of Christ. This is a metaphor that allows us to understand what God desires of His people. The metaphor was used in the New Testament to illustrate how different individuals and communities within the church have different and complementary functions, all of which are important for the functioning of the body as a whole. At the risk of straining this metaphor, I think that it can be used to guide us to an even deeper understanding of God’s intent for us.

We are not all experts in anatomy, physiology, medicine, etc., but there is something that we all know about bodies. If the healthy organs and tissues of the body are separated from one another, they die. Skin cannot live by itself. Hearts and livers and pancreases and intestines and brains and muscles and bones cannot live by themselves. No part of a healthy body lives only for itself. Each part of the body needs the others for its nourishment, protection, repair, maintenance, etc., and each part of the body gives back to the whole essential functions that support the life of the body.

There are, however, some parts of the body that, in sickness, do not follow these rules. These parts of the body appear to be alive. They grow. They metabolize food. They excrete waste. They can even reproduce and make copies of themselves. In fact, sometimes they seem to be more alive than the healthy tissue in their vigorous growth and activity. They appear to be a part of the body in that they are attached to the body; they consume the resources supplied by the body; and they at least superficially resemble body organs and tissues. On careful examination, however, they consume body resources heedless of the needs of other parts of the body, and they either provide nothing of value back to the body or provide what they provide regardless of the actual needs of the body. These diseased parts of the body are called cancers.

Some cancers are more scary than others. Benign cancers don’t use up too much of what the body offers and doesn’t cause too much of a stir by being too active. They just take up space that could be used by other healthy parts of the body. Malignant cancers, on the other hand, use up body resources, spread to disrupt other parts of the body, and pollute the body with toxic, harmful substances. Whether benign or malignant, these cancers do not answer to the common good of the body.

As painful as it is to consider, some people have chosen to be cancers on the body of Christ. This is not to pass judgment on them as evil or hateful, but it does fall short of what God wants us to be. We are called to be sensitive to one another and to meet one another’s needs. This means that we gratefully accept the care and provision of our fellow members and that we graciously provide for others from the blessings we have received. We don’t focus on our own growth at the expense of others but grow as part of a larger body.

### Invitation:

Loving God, we ask that you give us a glimpse of the body of your Son as You desire it. We ask that you show us the connections you desire for building up the health and strength of His body at Hillcrest. Keep from us the tendency to imagine ourselves as independent. Keep us from seeking a way to You apart from the body of Your Son. Awaken in us a heart for our brothers and sisters and an eagerness to grow Your kingdom by bringing others to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Biblical Texts that Highlight God's Expectation of Our Relationships with Others:

**Romans 12: 5:** so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

**Romans 12: 16:** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

**I Thessalonians 5:11:** Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

**John 13:14:** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

### Questions to Think About:

1. Can I be a part of Christ's body without partaking of its resources?
  - a. Am I comfortable being a "taker"?
  - b. Make a list of the resources the body provides.
  - c. Am I sensitive to others' needs for the body's care?
2. What do I give back to the body?
  - a. Make a list of possible things that members of the body can give back.
  - b. Am I sensitive to the needs of others as I give or do I give based on MY needs?
3. The heart of accountability is living in harmony with the body. We need to be attuned to our own needs and the needs of the body to see when it is time to give others the blessing of caring for us and when it is time to give others the blessing of being cared for by us.
  - a. Have you ever found yourself "out of step" with the body?
  - b. How do challenges to our unity endanger the body?
  - c. Is there any room in the Christian life for schadenfreude (enjoying the suffering of others) or feeling sad when others are blessed in ways we don't think they deserve?
  - d. Is it necessary for our taking and our giving to "balance out"?
4. How does Christ (as the head of the body) convey to all its members their proper role in building up the body and in the work of the body in the world?

### Closing Prayer:

Loving God, please give me your vision of the body of Christ and, in that glorious vision, make me content to be but a humble member. Make the growth and health of the body my joy. Make the sorrows and suffering of others my mission of comfort. May my actions, my words, my thoughts, and my dreams be acceptable to You, to whom I am finally accountable. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Questions/Meditations for Lesson X (Week 5 handout)

1. The parts of the body need many things – food, oxygen, direction, information, stimulation, etc. List the things that you need from God.
2. The parts of the body serve the needs of the other parts – feeding, cleaning, moving, informing, sensing, understanding, etc. List the services that Christians can provide to others, paying special attention to those that you provide.
3. All the body's needs are met by communicating them to the proper organs that satisfy them. Think of the body at Hillcrest and the community in which it sits. How do people make their needs known so that God can satisfy them? Pay particular attention to how you make the needs from Question 1 known.