

POEM To live above, with the saints we love,
My, that will be glory.
But to live below, with the saints we know,
Now that's a different story!

1. an assembly of people...

Ps. 149:1 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.

Ac. 15:12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul...

1Co. 14:33b As in all the congregations of the saints,

Heb. 2:12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

1Co. 5:2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?

Gal. 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Eph. 3:15 ...the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

1Pt. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

2. ...that has been called out

1Pt. 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Pp. 3:20a But our citizenship is in heaven.

2Co. 5:20a We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,

1Pt. 1:1 Peter, and apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world...

3. metaphors used to describe the church

family

Gal. 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1Pt. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Heb. 2:11-12 Both the one who makes men holy [Jesus] and those who are made holy [believers] are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

Mt. 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

body

Ro. 12:4-5 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1Co. 12:12-27 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Col. 1:18 And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Eph. 4:15-16 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

army

2Ti. 2:3-4 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.

Eph. 6:10-17 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ro. 13:12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Rev. 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse [Jesus] and his army.

flock

Lk. 12:32 [Jesus speaking] “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Jn. 10:11-16 [Jesus speaking] “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

Ac. 20:28-29 [Paul speaking to the elders at Ephesus] Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

1Pt. 5:2-4 [Peter writing to the elders] Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd [Jesus] appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

bride

2Co. 11:2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

Is. 62:5b As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

Mt. 9:14-15 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

Rev. 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

QUOTE "I wouldn't give you a nickel for a religion that's all emotion. But neither would I give you a nickel for a religion that has no emotion." - Almon Bartholomew

building

1Pt. 2:4-6 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

Eph. 2:20-22 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1Co. 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Ps. 40:2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

holy nation

1Pt. 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Jn. 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.
Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Rev. 17:14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

1Pt. 5:9 Resist him [the devil], standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Heb. 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

1Co. 10:13a No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.

branches

Jn. 15:1-8 [Jesus speaking] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

4. the universal church

Heb. 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

Eph. 5:23-25 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Col. 1:18 And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

1Ti. 3:15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

5. the local church

Ro. 16:23a Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Pm. 2 to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home:

Pp. 4:15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;

Ac. 11:26 and when he [Barnabas] found him [Saul], he brought him back to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

1Co. 16:19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

6. reasons to belong to a church family

Ps. 84:4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. *Selah*

Ps. 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

Pr. 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Mic. 4:2 Many nations will come and say, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."

Mt. 18:20 [Jesus speaking] For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Heb. 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Ps. 27:4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Ps. 26:8 I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells.

Ps. 122:1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

Ps. 84:10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Lk. 4:16 He [Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

7. the primary obstacle: offense

QUOTE I've heard many people say, "I'm not offended, I'm just hurt." If you feel that way, I'd like to propose an acid test to see if that's really true. Think of the incident that was hurtful to you. Replay it in the theater of your mind. What do you feel? If the first thing you feel is the pain of that incident, then you're offended and you need to ask and trust God to change you. If instead your primary feeling is a genuine love for the person who caused the pain, or you feel great joy over God having allowed the pain and how he used it to make you more Christlike, then you're OK. The truth is that when our pain exceeds the love we have for the individual who caused the pain, **we are offended**. Let me say that again. When our pain exceeds the love we have for the individual who caused the pain, we're offended and we need to get our hearts right.

QUOTE Keep your eyes on Jesus. No one else is your pattern. If you keep looking to Jesus, you will never be disappointed. He won't fail you! There is no danger of Christ being two-faced! He is no hypocrite! He doesn't stumble and fall! He doesn't set a bad example! He doesn't engage in questionable activity! He will never lead you astray! He is always the same! If you are a people-watcher, you are in danger of disappointment. Even the most devout Christians sometimes seem to be incorrigible, thankless, and unlike Christ. If you watch saints, you will see variety. Sometimes you will be deeply impressed with their saintliness, and at other times you will wonder how they can even name the name of Christ and be so sinful. In watching other Christians, you may occasionally be inspired to great heights, but as often as not you will be driven to the pit of discouragement. Saint-watching is a dangerous business, but watching Christ is not.

Jesus is the great example. There is nothing you are called by God to do that Jesus cannot show you how to achieve. He is the "express image" of God's person. All the good and wonderful things we find in God are reflected in Jesus Christ. All that God calls his followers to be, Jesus is already. Fasten your eyes upon him. Let his life be your pattern and his wonderful power your strength.

Every person is responsible for his own conduct. If a brother falls into sin, that is no excuse for you. **If you see hypocrites in the church, that does not give you an excuse to stay away. You will never be called to answer for their sins.** It is between you and Christ. Keep your eyes fixed upon him at all times and in all places.

(taken from the book, Revival by: Richard Owen Roberts, page 140)

Ps. 36:2 For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.

SONG TEXT The seers and the prophets had foretold it long ago
That the long awaited one would make men stumble
But they were looking for a king who was to conquer and to kill
Who'd have ever thought He'd be so meek and humble?

He will be the truth that will offend them one and all
A stone that makes men stumble and a rock that makes them fall
Many will be broken so that He can make them whole
And many will be crushed and lose their own soul

Along the path of life there lies the stubborn scandalon
And all who come this way must be offended

(taken from the song, Scandalon by: Michael Card)

Pr. 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Mk. 6:1-6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

further study on offense An excellent book on the subject of overcoming offense is The Bait of Satan by: John Bevere

8. the mission of the church

to worship God

Jn. 4:23 [Jesus speaking] Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

Ps. 96:9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

Ps. 95:6-7a Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Heb. 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

to evangelize the lost

1Pt. 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Mt. 28:18-20a Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Ac. 1:8 [Jesus speaking] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

QUOTE Reverend Robert Sirico talks about a letter from the second century A.D., sent by a Roman soldier stationed in Antioch, reporting to Rome what was happening as a result of the plague that had broken out in the city. He reports that a mass exodus had taken place.

Families had abandoned their loved ones. Doctors had deserted their patients. Of course the politicians had long since left. He informs Rome that he'd moved the troops back for their own safety, yet something very curious was happening. There was a sect of people in the city, some of whom were not infected themselves, who were staying in the midst of the death and danger in order to take care of the dying. When asked why they stayed and helped the disease-ridden who remained, these people said that they were doing it simply out of love for the God they worshiped.

(taken from Focus On the Family's The Truth Project, Lesson #12, starting at 54:43)

to help God's people become more Christlike

Ro. 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Eph 4:12-13 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

verse 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

2Co. 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.