

SUBMITTED BY
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ON
2011.09.23

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Keine Stimmen

Devotional: The Tarp, or 1.65 x 1.65 Meters



A tarp is a very practical thing—or rather, a square one, which is quite handy. It measures 1.65 by 1.65 meters and weighs 1.25 kg. However, this article is less of a technical analysis and more of a reflection. A reflection on tarps? Yes, it's an attempt to apply an object used in various youth organizations to spiritual life. Important: These are reflections in this specific context. **The intention** is **not for you to adopt this devotional word-for-word**. Perhaps you'll find other points of connection, or it will inspire you to use other everyday objects in your devotions as well.

Introduction with a little skit

So, my friends, I've brought something with me—a very practical tarp—or rather, a square one; practical, good. It's 1.65 by 1.65 meters. It looks like a military blanket, and I'm going to lie down and sleep now—it's noon, so it's time for a nap.

(Lie down, use the tarp as a blanket. Push the tarp up and down because it's too small.)

Hmm… maybe using the tarp as a blanket wasn't such a good idea after all. It's way too small. One minute my head's sticking out, then my feet, then my head again, then my feet again… and I'd be freezing my butt off at night. But what's a tarp like this good for, anyway? Well, you could sit on it when the ground's wet—it'd certainly be suitable for that. But it doesn't really have much else to offer. Really? I'm not so sure about that. There's still something about this tarp—oh, right, these funny little things here: buttons and slits—it looks like a shirt or like the button on my pants. Eight on each side, which makes 32 attachment points for a tarp like this. By the way, speaking of connection points, I actually wanted to tell you a story from this book here—it's the Bible, and it was written over a period spanning from about 1800 B.C. to the first century A.D. So the most recent writings are already about 2,000 years old. The problem is that back then, there weren't any tarps measuring 1.65 by 1.65 meters. In fact, there weren't any tarps at all. So today, too, I need points of connection, and there are quite a few that can also relate to our 1.65-by-1.65-meter tarp. But let's take a look at them one by one.

We need each other

We've realized that a single tarp isn't all that useful on its own. And that's the first thought I want to share with you today. We can't do it alone! On our own, we quickly reach our limits.

You probably remember those swings from the playground where one person sits on one side and the other on the other, and then you go up and down. It's hard to do that alone, and it's just no fun. Sure, you can play soccer alone, but when we form a team, it's so much more fun. And later on, you might

want to get married—but that's impossible on your own.

People are actually designed like one of those tarps. We also have those connecting points. We can build relationships (connect with other tarps), make friends, and are part of a family right from the start. Social connections are important; friends who stand by you, whether you're at the top or at the bottom, are very valuable. Or just think for a moment about how much your parents have done for you.

And it was no different for those who followed Jesus. Many people believed in him, and they formed communities (what we call "church" today). Back then, among the first Christians, these were usually house churches. They met in homes to pray together, to study the Bible (as we do today), and to share their experiences. These men and women were not lone wolves, each looking out only for themselves; no, they were on this journey together, side by side.

And this fellowship is also depicted figuratively. Here are two examples:

The First Image: The Temple

The first image is about the temple. In the Old Testament, the temple was the place where God dwelt and where He chose to meet with people. People gathered there to hear stories and to offer sacrifices to God: thank offerings and burnt offerings.

In the New Testament, however, the temple is used in a completely different way—but listen for yourselves:

Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells among you? Whoever destroys God's temple destroys himself, for he brings God's judgment upon himself. For God's temple is holy, and you are that holy temple. (1 Cor. 3:16–17)

In the Old Testament, it was clear: the temple was a stone building with massive walls, and that is where people sought God. The new reality is completely different—it is, after all, new. A building with solid walls is no longer the epitome of a temple; rather, it is us—people like you and me—who are the temple, and God wants to dwell among us. A temple was something static; you couldn't simply move it from one place to another. But if we are the temple of God and He dwells in our midst, then we can go from A to B and God comes with us—yes, He lives in our midst; He even lives in everyone who receives Him. We can ask Jesus to come into our lives, and He will come to us, move in with us, and dwell among us. What a powerful message.

Let yourselves be incorporated as living stones into the house (the temple) that is being built by God and filled with his Spirit. Let yourselves be built up into a holy priesthood so that you may offer to God sacrifices performed by his Spirit—sacrifices that please him because they are based on the work of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

You may know what a Sarasani is. It's a huge tent made of dozens of tarps and a large pole. A temple in those days consisted of stones, all of which were practically the same shape and size. It's very similar with the tarps; they're all exactly the same size—1.65 by 1.65 meters—and when joined together, they can form a large tent.

But in this house that God is building, there are no tarps, and there are no stones either—at least, not just ordinary stones—no, they are living stones. Because this house is about you and it's about me. We are the stones that God wants to use. Yet we are all very different in our appearance. We are either tall or short, we have long or dark hair, we are heavier or thinner... no matter what we look like on the outside, we all fit into the wall of this house, which represents the new temple of God. It is a living house, a house full of action, and a house where God lives. His church is full of life because He Himself gives life!

The Second Image: The Body

Furthermore, this fellowship that we as Christians are privileged to have is also compared to the human body—the second image we'd like to examine together:

Think, for comparison, of the "human" body! It represents a unity consisting of many parts; or, to put it another way: it is composed of many parts that together form a coherent whole. It is exactly the same with Christ. For we have all—whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free—been baptized by the same Spirit and have all drunk from the same source, the Spirit of God, and through this we have all become one body. And just like any body, this body consists of many parts, not just one. If the foot were to claim, "Since I am not the hand, I do not belong to the body!" it would still not cease to be a part of the body. And if the ear were to claim, "Since I am not the eye, I do not belong to the body!" it would still not cease to be a part of the body. If the whole body consisted only of eyes, where would hearing be? If it consisted only of ears, where would the sense of smell be? The fact is, however, that God, in accordance with His plan, has assigned each individual part "a special task" within the whole. After all, what kind of body would it be if all the parts had the same task? But that's not how it is. On the one hand, there are many different parts, and on the other, there is only one body. The eye cannot simply say to the hand, "I don't need you!" or the head to the feet, "I don't need you!" No, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem weaker that are especially important; it is precisely the parts we consider less honorable that we pay special attention to; it is precisely the parts that might cause offense that we take special care to cover modestly (for those that do not cause offense, this is not necessary). God himself, who has put together the various parts of the body, has bestowed special dignity on what is unremarkable. For there must be no division in the body; rather, all its parts should share a common concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the others suffer with it; and if one part is honored, all the others rejoice with it."All this applies to you as well, for" you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of this body. God has assigned a specific role to everyone in the church. First among these are the apostles, second the prophets, and third the teachers. Then there are those who are empowered to perform miracles, or who have been given the gift of healing, or who are able to provide practical help or take on leadership roles, or who can speak in tongues "inspired by God." Are all of them apostles? Are all of them prophets? Are all teachers? Of course not! Nor are all able to perform miracles; not all have the gift of healing; not all can speak in a "language inspired by God" or interpret what is said into understandable words. However, not all gifts are equally beneficial to the church. Strive for the gifts that are most beneficial to the church! And now I will show you a way that far surpasses all of these. (1 Cor. 12:12–31)

The church—the community of those who belong to Jesus—thus functions much like the body. The body consists of various parts (the heart, the kidneys, the hands and feet, the ears, the eyes, the mouth). All these parts perform very different functions, and every part of the body is important—without the eyes we couldn't see anything, without the ears we wouldn't hear anything, without the teeth it would be hard for us to eat, without feet we would have a hard time moving, and without hands we couldn't write.

With God, no one should feel useless, because everyone is absolutely important. In His church, everyone has their own role, and no two people have the same one. On the other hand, no one should claim that another person isn't important.

Brief Summary

We have now looked at two images that describe part of how we should live together as Christians. If we belong to God, we are His temple in which He dwells, and we are one body made up of many different parts. So far, however, we have focused almost exclusively on horizontal relationships—relationships between people.

The Significance of Jesus

However, one important aspect would still be missing: the vertical dimension—the connection to God, the connection with Jesus—because this is what matters most.

...in the picture of the temple

Who, then, is actually building the temple?

Let yourselves be incorporated as living stones into the house (the temple) that is being built by God and filled with his Spirit. Be built up into a holy priesthood so that you may offer to God spiritual sacrifices—sacrifices that please Him because they are based on the work of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

It is Jesus; he is the Master Builder; he is the one who sets the stones in place; he is the one who, figuratively speaking, ties the tarps together. He gives each of us our place. We do not owe any of this to ourselves or to our deeds and works. It is his work.

The foundation of the house into which you have been built is the apostles and prophets, and the cornerstone of this building is Jesus Christ himself. He holds the whole structure together; through him it grows and becomes a holy temple dedicated to the Lord. Through Christ, you, too, have been built into this structure, in which God dwells through his Spirit. (Eph 2:20–22)

Furthermore, Jesus is also mentioned as the cornerstone that holds the entire building together. The cornerstone was the foundation stone placed at the junction of two walls, thereby providing stability to the foundation.

The foundation has already been laid, and no one can ever lay another. This foundation is Jesus Christ. But however anyone builds on it—whether with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, reeds, or straw—it will not remain hidden; the Day of Judgment will reveal to everyone what material they have used. For in the fire of judgment, the work of each individual will be tested for its quality. If what someone has built on the foundation passes “the test of fire,” “God” will reward him. (1 Cor. 3:11–14)

But Jesus is also quite clearly the foundation of this house. Without Jesus, the house would collapse. You surely know this song: “Don’t build your house on sandy ground...” Jesus is that secure rock upon which a house will not collapse. He is the one who holds everything together, and he is also the Master Builder.

Applied to the Sarasani, one could say he is the foundation; he is the mast on which all the tarps ultimately hang; and he would also replace the entire leadership team, since he is the one carrying out the entire construction. So we see that Jesus holds a prominent place in this temple, in this house, in this Sarasani, and nothing can really go wrong if we leave the leadership to him.

...and in the image of the body

And how does this apply to the body? We now know that we are all part of the whole body. But which part does Jesus represent? Is He the foot? Is He the hand? Is He the heart? The Bible tells us that He is the head of the church—that is, the head. There is no church without Jesus. Ephesians 4:15–16 says: “Christ is the head. The body owes its entire growth to him.” In other words: Without a connection to Jesus, the church cannot exist. Separate the body from the head, and the person dies! Take away Jesus, the head—what remains of the church? A lifeless entity!

A body lives, so to speak, from the head: breathing occurs through the nose, eating through the mouth, thinking through the brain, and control through the cerebellum. Cut off the head, and not a single limb will survive. It is exactly the same for us as a church: We live through Jesus; he is the source of life. Without unity with him, without total dependence on him, every church will die sooner or later. But in union with him, a church has everything it needs. Jesus keeps us alive, and not only that: through him we grow, become strong and mature, and become what he desires us to be.

Closing Thoughts

Relationships with others are incredibly important to human beings. There are many lonely people in this world. God did not intend for humans to be alone; rather, He created them so that they could nurture relationships. No other living creature on earth has this desire as strongly as humans do.

The image of the temple, where each of us can be incorporated into this wall as a living stone—or, by extension, as a living branch into God's vine—illustrates this connection, as does, of course, the image of the body, of which each of us can be a part.

But the most crucial connection of all remains the one with God; if this connection is absent or if this relationship is severed, then death is really all that remains. As harsh as that sounds, it is unfortunately true. God gives us life; He gives us what we need, but without Him, it will be impossible to stand before Him. If you also want to experience this relationship—if you want to experience what it's like to be incorporated into this temple as a living stone—then you may claim this for yourself today. You're just a prayer away from God. But if you'd like to talk first with people who are already living and experiencing this today, then speak with them. You're absolutely certain to find someone here. Perhaps take advantage of this opportunity right now during your lunch break.

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Weitere Informationen

Tags
Dedication

Age
13–16 years
from the age of 16

Number of participants
No data available.

Bible
This information is missing.

Duration
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Material
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File download
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