

### **One Spirit, Many Members, One Body. 1 Corinthians 12**

In several of his letters the Apostle Paul uses the image of the physical body to explain the nature of Christ's spiritual body (the Church). Read 1 Corinthians 12. In this section of his letter Paul teaches us that in the same way that the physical body is made up of many parts with diverse functions, so the Church is also made up of many people among whom the Spirit has distributed various gifts and abilities. God has given the Church these gifts to help us grow and become like Christ and to complete the work he began on earth. According to Paul's analogy, Christ is the head of the Church and we are his Body.<sup>1</sup>

1. Read again 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 26. As members of Christ's body, in what sense are we all God's gifts to each other?
2. Give some general examples of how people within the Church can serve God and each other, regardless of our gifts and abilities.

There are five lists of specific gifts of the Spirit within the New Testament (although these 'lists' are probably not meant to be exhaustive). Read through the gift lists in Romans 12:6 – 8; 1 Corinthians 12:7 – 10, 27 – 28, 29 – 30 and Ephesians 4:11.

3. What trends can you spot in these lists and what do these lists suggest about the importance of the various gifts of the Spirit?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:29 – 33. What do these instructions teach us about the purpose of the gift of prophecy and the checks and balances placed on this gift?
5. Read Acts 2:1 – 21; 10:44 – 48; 11:1 – 18 1 Corinthians 14:13 – 19. What do these passages teach us about the purpose of the gift of tongues<sup>2</sup>?
6. First read Acts 2:22, 32 – 33; 5:12 – 16; 19:11 – 12. Now compare these verses with Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:7 – 9 and Philippians 2:25 – 27. What do these passages teach us about the purpose and limitations of the gift of healing?
7. Reflect on the general and specific gifts that are needed for the Church to function?

As we learned last week, the gifts of the Spirit will do us little good unless they are combined harmoniously with the fruit of the Spirit. These 'fruits' such as love, humility and kindness are like the central nervous system that controls the body and makes it operate as one organism. Without the existence of the Spirit's fruit in the Church our best efforts to function as one body would become uncoordinated, frustrating, and even counter-productive.

8. Read Romans 12:3 – 8; 1 Corinthians 13:1 – 7; and Ephesians 4:1 – 13. What do these passages teach us about the relationship between the gifts and fruit of the Spirit?

---

<sup>1</sup> Or to use an agricultural analogy: Christ is the vine and we are the branches – we can only bear fruit by remaining in him (John 15:5).

<sup>2</sup> In Biblical language receiving the gift of tongues means that the Spirit enables someone to speak in a previously unknown language (either human or angelic).