

UNITED THROUGH THE SPIRIT

Leader pages on pp. 128-131

THE POINT:
THE HOLY SPIRIT
BRINGS US TOGETHER
AS ONE CHURCH.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-14

⁴ Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. ⁷ A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good:

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⁸ to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, ⁹ to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ One and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as he wills.

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MEMORY VERSE

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¹² For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body — so also is Christ. ¹³ **For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.** ¹⁴ Indeed, the body is not one part but many.

KEYWORDS

Different gifts . . . ministries . . . activities (vv.4-6)—Within the unified church, these reflect the essential unity and unified work of the persons of the Godhead (vv. 6,11,24,27-28)—the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God.

A manifestation of the Spirit (v. 7)—This phrase refers to the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's

presence and power in a believer through the use of spiritual gift(s).
Baptized (v. 13)—The term refers to baptism in the Holy Spirit, by which every believer is incorporated into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation.

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT UNIFY BELIEVERS?

In a scene from the 2002 film, *Drumline*, new band recruits stood on the football field facing Dr. Lee, the band director. A group of recruits arrived late, and Dr. Lee asked one of them who was his roommate. After locating this student's roommate named Devon, the band director asked Devon why he failed to wake his fellow band member. Devon responded, saying that he was not his friend's momma.

Hearing this Dr. Lee asked the band section leaders, "What is our concept?"¹³ With purpose and in unison, they replied, "One Band, One Sound." Lee went on to remind all the band members that when one is late, they are all late, and when one sounds bad, they all sound bad. This scene presents a very important truth.

Paul sent the same message to believers. He told the Ephesian saints that they must "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit" because the church's concept is, "One Body, One Spirit" (Eph. 4:4). The body may have different parts, but it is still one body, and what unifies the members is the Holy Spirit.

United in One Purpose //

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

When the apostle Paul traveled to a new city, he would first go to the synagogue to preach the good news of the Messiah to the Jews who lived there. Jews shared a common culture, a common view of the world, and a common knowledge about God. As Paul told the good news of the Messiah, many responded to the message of Christ by placing their faith in Him. Paul then carried the gospel to the marketplaces of the city and proclaimed Christ to the Gentiles. They also would respond to the gospel. The resulting group of believers—both Jews and Gentiles—would form a single church family, but they were far from homogeneous.

Paul addressed this diversity in the Corinthian church because, while diversity is good, the church had become divided into factions. They were not only divided by culture, but also by their understanding of ministry and of spiritual gifts. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 12 was a call for unity in the church.



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A key word in this passage is the adjective “different:” Paul discussed “different gifts,” “different ministries,” and “different activities.” The Holy Spirit is the One who equips, but He does not give the same gifts to all believers. These three areas of difference—gifts, ministries, and activities—describe the working of the Holy Spirit, but each word captures that work from a slightly different perspective.

- **Gifts.** A gracious bestowal (a gift) of blessings on the members of the church by the Spirit.
- **Ministries.** The service carried out with those gifts focuses on the purpose the Lord has for those gifts.
- **Activities.** The power behind those gifts and the work of God through the gifts. These activities point to the leadership of God to work out the use of those gifts.

Rifts were occurring in the Corinthian church; therefore, Paul stressed unity in the body. Pride over certain spiritual gifts and one-upmanship caused tremendous damage to the fellowship. The gifting of the Spirit does not create divisions. The same Spirit gives all the gifts, the same Lord calls us to use them in ministry, and the same God leads us to action. God is one: Father, Son, and Spirit. God is one, and He expects His church to function as one.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS SATAN USES OUR DIFFERENCES TO TRY TO DIVIDE US?

However, Paul was not calling for uniformity. Uniformity means we are doing the same thing in the same way. The Holy Spirit works through people differently, but, in our various ways of living in the Spirit, we exhibit a unity of purpose.

United Without Uniformity //

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

One key truth resounds through these verses: there is one Spirit! Paul mentioned a variety of gifts individuals might use in the body of Christ, but regardless of the gift, they all come from the same Spirit.

Paul’s list of spiritual gifts in this passage differs somewhat from other lists contained in the New Testament (Rom. 12:6-8;



DIGGING DEEPER GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Paul introduced a benefit that comes with being indwelt with the Holy Spirit. He brings gifts. He places special emphases on the categories of giftedness. The Spirit’s gifts are not possessed by unbelievers, which then eliminates natural talents, skills, or abilities as a part of this giftedness. Based entirely on the will of the Spirit (vv. 7,11), saints are given at least one or more gifts (1 Cor. 12:8–10; Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Pet. 4:10,11) which may fall into two broad categories—enhances communication or enhances serving. The point or purpose of the gifts is for the edifying of the body and not for personal promotion. Understanding one’s giftedness is achieved as each member surrenders to the Spirit. As with everything a believer does, the use of the gift is done so God will be glorified through Christ.

How can we use our gifts with emphasis on others and not on ourselves?

Eph. 4:11, 1 Pet. 4:9-11). Paul did not provide a comprehensive list of gifts; His emphasis was more on the Spirit who gives gifts.

Over the years, people have attempted to group the gifts in various ways, but perhaps the simplest way is to put them in four broad categories:

- **Gifts that support.** Gifts such as helping and leading guide the work of the church and help to get it done (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Gifts that share.** Gifts such as showing mercy and hospitality are tangible ways of communicating God's love—both inside and outside the church family (Rom. 12:8; 1 Pet. 4:9).
- **Gifts that speak.** Gifts such as prophecy and teaching ground the church in God's Word (Rom. 12:6,8; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11).
- **Gifts that supplement.** Gifts such as wisdom, knowledge, and faith support the other gifts.

The Spirit works in diverse ways through the people of God to carry on the mission of God.

Not everyone does ministry in the same way. The idea is to minister out of the movement of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

WHAT'S THE VALUE OF HAVING SO MANY DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH?

Verse 11 is the key; "One and the same Spirit is active in all these." He moves among the people of God in a variety of ways to accomplish the common good. Why does the Spirit demonstrate the gift of leadership in one person's life while a gift of hospitality in another? The Spirit distributes His gifts "to each person as he wills." The Holy Spirit knows what's best and He does what He sees fit.



United in One Body //

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Paul used an analogy to illustrate his point, describing the church as Christ's body. He extended this analogy through the rest of the chapter, and in so doing, he gave us a strong visual picture of the unity of the Church.

Paul wrote that the human "body is one." Your body "has many parts": hands, feet, eyes, a pancreas—lots of parts. All the parts of your body are important to you. Your body can function with only one eye, but the loss creates new challenges. And even though you can't see your pancreas, try living without one. But you still only have one body. Your body is not a collection of random spare parts; all the parts add up to one body.

It is the same with the body of Christ. We are one spiritual body in Christ. There are many of us, but we are not a disconnected group of random individuals that just happen to be sitting together in the same building. We are one.

HOW IS THE HUMAN BODY A GOOD METAPHOR FOR THE CHURCH?

Our unity is not because of the similarity of the parts. The bricks in your house have a

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certain sense of uniformity because they are all pretty much the same—same size, same color. Uniformity, though, is not the same as unity. Unity comes from having a shared Lord and a shared purpose.

Paul pictured the work of the Spirit to bring people together in two ways.

- **“We were all baptized by one Spirit.”**
It seems likely that Paul uses the picture of water baptism to remind us of a spiritual truth: believers are united because we were all immersed in Christ and His Holy Spirit.
- **“We were all given one Spirit to drink.”**
We are immersed in the Holy Spirit, and we also filled up with Him. We are in Him, and He is in us. We share the same Spirit who works through us.

Unity among different kinds of people seems unrealistic, but the Holy Spirit works in us, binds our hearts to each other, gives us a common purpose, and makes us one.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many benefits of being a part of a team. Teamwork relieves stress. Teamwork improves productivity and gives better results. Teamwork blends complementary strengths. The best example of teamwork is the relationship between believers. Romans 12:4-5 speaks of this. We all have unique abilities and talents. None of us have every single ability. When we are united; we bring our love, help, gifts, and abilities together. We are glorifying God and lifting up each other. Regardless of our race, creed, color, or socioeconomic status, we all need each other. When we can live our lives together; the outcome is amazing. We should be encouraging one another and spreading God's love towards one another. As the church, we should display unity. There should not be any discord among us. We are showing the world an example of Christ's love. Ecclesiastes 4:9 states that two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor.

What would it look like if believers practiced unification?

LIVE IT

How can we promote the concept of “One body and One Spirit?”

Can you imagine what would happen when the members in your church come together in unity by “speaking the same message, being perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10)? For a picture of what that looks like, remember the church on the day of Pentecost. Now, play your part by repenting, desiring it, and seeking it. Then encourage others to do the same.

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- **Repent:** Are you the so called “bench member” who is sitting and souring? It's time to turn from your unbiblical attitude and inactivity and submit to the Spirit.
- **Desire edification of the church:** Resolve to want what God wants in being used in different ways or areas by the Spirit within your giftedness.
- **Seek unity:** In this individualistic culture in America, it is imperative that believers work to keep the unity of the body in the bond of peace.

DAILY READINGS

1. ONE IN THE SAME // I CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the trinity, are three yet one. Though the Trinity is one, each member has unique roles. First Corinthians 12:4-6 reveals “there are different gifts, but the same Spirit.” This means as believers, we have different roles too. This makes us stronger and gives us the ability to minister to a variety of needs. Having the same gifts is like a human body having ten noses and no ears.

Each of us have been given at least one gift that we must use to serve others.

2. GIFTED // ROMANS 12:6-8,

Christians are gifted by the Holy Spirit to “build up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Members of the body should use their spiritual gifts to accomplish the important work God has given us to do. God has done His part. Because of His love, He sent His Son to die in our place. Then He raised Jesus from the dead. Now we have been charged to go and share the gospel so others will be saved and live for Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). Spiritual gifts equip members of the body to share this gospel message and disciple others so they will become mature believers. Each member has a role to play in kingdom building. At times our gifts may vary depending on the work that needs to be done.

Use your gift to do your part to help build the kingdom of God.

3. NONE GREATER // GALATIANS 3:27-29

Each member of the body of Christ, possesses spiritual gifts; however, no one spiritual gift or member is more important than another. Galatians 3:27-29 declares that “those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.” For the body to flourish all members must work in harmony, recognizing that no one is greater than the other.

Christ’s body, the church, like the human body does not function properly if one part of the body is hurt. Thus, the body of Christ functions best when all the members value the worthiness of each person.

Since no one person is greater than another, our gifts work well to encourage others.

4. MANY YET ONE // EPHESIANS 4:4-6

The universal church has many members; yet we are one. In America it is not unusual to see church buildings in nearly every community. Additionally, there are many churches in other countries. Collectively, the body of Christ has many members, but Ephesian 4:4-6 reminds us that “there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God the Father of all, who is above all and through all in all.” The church universal consists of many churches. Each of these churches have their own individual ministry strategies. Each member in these individual churches serve the kingdom of God. That includes you.

Our individuality still points us in one direction to glorify to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5. COMMON GOOD // PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Some people go to church to hear the choir or preaching. Yet, Philippians 2:3-4 reminds us to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interest, but rather to the interest of others.” That means our reason for going to church should be to fellowship with others and be used to further the Great Commission. Individual preferences should be set aside for the common good of winning the lost. This should be our goal not only as a single church, but churches should unite globally to support missionary efforts around the world.

Christians united for the common good, always end at a common place of love.



WALKING ALONE: WAYS WE SHUT OUT THE SPIRIT

MARK CROSTON

In John 14:16 Jesus says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.” Forever. What a powerful word! The Counselor John speaks of is the Holy Spirit. He enters the life of the believer at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:9 says, “You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.” Further, it is the Holy Spirit that seals every believer until the end, “forever.” Ephesians 4:30b informs us, “You were sealed by him for the day of redemption.”

So, if all believers have the Holy Spirit and are in fact sealed by the Holy Spirit, why the talk

about walking alone? Are there ways we can shut the Holy Spirit out of our lives? Indeed, there are! We can shut out the Holy Spirit through our sinfulness, stubbornness, and self-centeredness.

Overcome Sinfulness

We grieve the Holy Spirit through our sinfulness. The Holy Spirit lives in the life of every believer. Our bodies are His temple. First Corinthians 6:19 charges us, “Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.” So, then the presence of sin in our lives, not only impacts us, it also impacts the Holy Spirit living inside of us. No wonder Ephesians 4:30 declares, “And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit.”

The word “grieve” in the Greek is *lupe*. It means to make sorrowful, to offend or to make one uneasy. Such is the case when our sin stains the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and we shut out the Spirit.

Overcome Stubbornness

We can stifle the Holy Spirit through our stubbornness. The Holy Spirit is present in our lives to counsel, console, comfort, confront and correct us. First Thessalonians 5:19 directs us, “Don’t stifle the Spirit.” The word for stifle in Greek is *sbennumi*. It means to extinguish or quench. Hence, when our hearts are not open to hearing and following His voice, we essentially stifle, or quench His fire in our lives and shut out the Spirit.

Overcome Self-Centeredness

We can blaspheme the Holy Spirit through our self-centeredness. First John 5:16-17 says there is one sin that leads to death. “If anyone sees a fellow believer committing a sin that doesn’t lead to death, he should ask, and God will give life to him—to those who commit sin that doesn’t lead to death. There is sin that leads to death. I am not saying he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that doesn’t lead to death.” We learn in Mark 3:28-30 that the one sin that cannot be forgiven is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin”—because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Here the Greek word is *blasphemia*. It means to slander. It is speech injurious to another’s good name, impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty. Since the Holy Spirit is by nature holy, just, good, fair, and true, who would speak against Him except one that is totally self-centered, rather than God centered. Self-centered means one is only concerned with oneself. And that, says Jesus, is the sin that will not be forgiven, willfully and knowingly rejecting the truth about Jesus that God graciously reveals through the Holy Spirit. This is the most dangerous way to shut the Spirit out.

The Holy Spirit is indeed the Counselor and

Comforter that God has sent to be with us to remind us of His perpetual presence. Jesus affirms this as He charges us with the Great Commission. It ends in Matthew 28:20 saying, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Ludie Carrington Day Pickett (1867-1953) encourages us with this eternal truth in her hymn “Never Alone:” “I’ve seen the lightning flashing, And heard the thunder roll, I’ve felt sin’s breakers dashing, which tried to conquer my soul; I’ve heard the voice of my Savior, He bid me still fight on: He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone.”¹

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1 “Ludie Carrington Day Pickett (1867-1953).” EHymnBook. Accessed December 20, 2021. <http://ehymnbook.org/CMMS/writers.php?id=wd03081>.