

# One Body Many Members - Many Members One Body

by J. Vernon McGee

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*The Church is the Body of Christ, and every believer has a gift that enables them to serve and function in the body, bringing glory to God.*

**Duration:** 44:54

**Scripture:** Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:14, Ephesians 4:11

**Topics:** "Spiritual Gifts", "Resurrection Power"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of focusing on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of believers. He highlights that in the early church, every sermon preached was centered around the resurrection, not just on Easter. The preacher also discusses the concept of spiritual gifts, using the term 'charismatone' to refer to these gifts. He emphasizes that each person has a unique gift and should use it for the glory of God. The sermon concludes with a call to understand and appreciate the gifts of the Spirit, as there is a lack of knowledge and understanding in this area within the church.

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## Transcript

This is Through the Bible Sunday Sermon Program number 1568 for Sunday, February 23, 2003. In the Bible, the Church is portrayed in many different ways. In John chapter 10, Jesus makes references to those who put their faith in Him as His sheep.

In this passage, Jesus clearly states that He is the Good Shepherd, and that we are His sheep if we follow Him. In John chapter 15, Jesus uses another type to describe the Church. He said, I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. A third picture of the Church found in Scripture is that of a temple that has been built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Paul gives us this perspective in his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 20.

Other outstanding illustrations of the Church include that of a bride, a priest, new creation, and many more that could be mentioned if we had the time. But today, we want to join Dr. McGee as he presents to us one of the most meaningful portraits of the Church and her relationship to Christ. It is our position as the Body of Christ that provides us with practical insight in how we are to participate in, and with our local gathering

of believers we call Church.

Dr. McGee titled his sermon, One Body, Many Members. It was during his 21-year pastorate at the historic Church of the Open Door in downtown Los Angeles that Dr. McGee first gave this sermon. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your wonderful grace in allowing us to take part in your work of reaching the world with the message of your salvation through Jesus Christ. Bless your word as it goes forth today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This contradicts the law of mathematics. This is when many equals one, and it's because it's supernatural. I have a verse, verse 14, For the body is not one member, but many.

This is not a text, but a launching pad to take off into the wild blue yonder of a subject that is sadly neglected in the Church today for what I believe is a twofold reason. The subject is the gifts of the Spirit. First of all, there is a woeful ignorance of Scripture of this particular Scripture, yet a great deal is said about it, as far as I can tell that none of these who overemphasize this chapter really spend any time studying it in detail at all.

The second reason is that when it is handled, it's handled gingerly by others because of the fanatical fringe of Christians who have overemphasized the gift of tongues and the gift of healing. I want first of all this morning to define what we mean by a gift. In verse 1, I read, Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Now you will note that the word gifts is in italics, which means it is not in the original, and in my judgment it ought not to be there. I believe this has been a great fallacy because of the fact that it means something else, as we shall see, and Paul says here, I would not have you ignorant. Now Paul uses that expression, I would not have you ignorant.

Many times we saw it over in 1 Thessalonians 4. Brethren, I would not have you ignorant concerning them that are asleep. And when Paul uses that expression, you can put it down that the brethren are ignorant. And it was certainly true of the Corinthians concerning the subject that he's going to discuss with them.

It's what is known in rhetoric as litotus. A litotus is an understatement, and it's done in order not to offend. And Paul was very gracious in his manner.

He says, Now concerning spiritual what? Well, certainly not gifts. Brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Now the word in the Greek is pneumaticon, and it simply means spiritualities, a noun that could stand by itself.

And the word gifts are supplied, and I'm not objecting to that provided we understand what we mean. You see, Paul in this first epistle to the Corinthians, you divide it into two major divisions. The first section deals with carnalities.

The second section deals with spiritualities. When he got to the third chapter in verse 1, he says, And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. And so in the first part of the epistle, he deals with carnalities, and what he says is corrective.

The carnalities are these. He talks about wranglings, divisions in the church, adultery, going to court against a brother, sex, meat offerings, headdress of women, gluttony, and drunkenness. Those are carnalities.

And may I say to you, they may have a place and probably do. But as far as I can tell, there's too great an emphasis on them in the church today. I think we've had enough lectures on sex.

And believe me, in this day and generation, if you don't know about sex, something's wrong with you, because that's all that certain people are talking about today. And it's not anything but the carnalities Paul dealt with, but he is glad to get away from that. And so in the second section, he's now come, he says, Now concerning the spiritualities, I do not want you to ignorant, brethren, you're carnal, and I don't want you to be ignorant of them.

And so he's going to talk to them. And what he has to say now is not corrective but constructive. These spiritualities, I wish it was translated like that.

And you know, translators are like sheep. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone in his own way.

When one sheep goes off, all the sheep follow. One translator way back under translated spiritual gifts. And every translator, even these modern ones, they come along and call it spiritual gifts.

Why not call it what it is, the spiritualities? And Paul was glad to change the subject to the spiritualities. And the church needs to change its subject today from the carnalities. We spend our time with these fringe things and not with the important thing.

He mentions three, and I don't think he touched on all of them because he gave the Corinthians all they could take at one time. First, he talked in chapter 12 here about the unifying spirit of God and how that's needed today in the church. The second, the law of love.

And we had to wait till a bunch of hippies outside thought of it. Shame on the church today. They've rebuked us, and rightly so.

He talked on sex and forgot to talk about love. And then in the last part of the epistle, chapter 15, he talks about the triumph of Christianity centered in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of believers. You see, every sermon preached in the early church that's recorded in the book of Acts, the subject was the resurrection.

Every Sunday was Easter. We have trouble getting through it once a year. It was every Sunday, the resurrection of Christ.

Now, will you hear me carefully now? Gifts are one of the spiritualities. Will you listen to him? Verse four, now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. Now, the word here is a different word for gifts, and it actually is charismaton.

Charismaton. And there are those today that have taken this over, and they're using it. They are calling it today this tongues movement, the charismatic movement.

A man asked me the other day, he said, are you interested in this charismatic movement? I said, yes, I am. He said, do you speak in tongues? I said, no. Well, he said, then how could you be interested in it?

Because I said, charismatic has to do with all the gifts, not just one.

Not just one that actually has gone out. Not today one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I come to a definition now of the gifts of the Spirit, and I'll have to let Paul give us the definition.

Will you listen very carefully? Verse seven, but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. What is the gifts of the Spirit? It's the manifestation of the Holy Spirit of God. I want to give you a definition.

It's not mine. Mine would not be as good as this one. This is Dr. Chaffer's.

Will you listen to it carefully? A gift in the spiritual sense means the Holy Spirit doing a particular service through the believer and using the believer to do it. It's the Holy Spirit moving through the believer. That's the gift of the Spirit, and it's not the exercise of a natural gift.

Now, don't misunderstand me. It's conceivable that the Holy Spirit will use the natural ability of a believer, and I don't think the Holy Spirit made a mistake this morning when he put Rudy Atwood at the piano and put me here. Now, if Rudy was here, it would be all right, but if I sat there, it would be tragic.

May I say to you, I do think that he uses, and it's conceivable that he does, but we need to understand one thing clearly. That's not the definition, and that's a great comfort, should be to a great many folk, because many do not have any particular natural gift. I hear people say this.

I cannot sing. I cannot speak in public. I cannot teach.

What can I do? Well, my friend, there's something for you to do. I hope this morning you will find that out. That leads me to the second one, and I want you to follow me now very carefully.

The second startling statement I want to make today is that every believer has a gift. If you're a child of God, you have a gift that the Holy Spirit has given to you. Now, do not ask me what your gift is.

I do not know, but you can know, you should know, it's important for you to know, because that is the basis on which the Lord Jesus will judge you someday, the exercise of the gift that the Spirit of God has given to you. Every believer has a gift. Will you listen now to several scriptures here? Verse 7, but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man.

The word man is generic, anthropos, means man and women. It means every Christian man, every Christian person, but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Christian person to profit withal, everyone, what he said. Not only that, will you look with me at verse 12, for as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ.

He's not through, because if you'll drop down with me to verse 27, he says, now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. Everyone here today who's a believer is a member of the body of Christ, every person. Now, the very wonderful thing is that Christian service is the exercise of the gift.

Now, will you hear me carefully? It's not teaching a class, necessarily. It's not preaching a sermon, necessarily. It's not singing in the choir, necessarily.

Christian service is the exercise of the gift that the Spirit of God has given you. Now, we're going to get this morning down to the nitty-gritty. Are you today exercising a gift? Oh, I taught a Sunday school class.

I didn't ask that. When you taught that Sunday school, did you exercise a gift? When you preach a sermon, are you exercising a gift? I have to ask myself that question. When you sing in the choir, are you exercising a gift that God has given you? That's Christian service, is the exercise of a gift.

Now, will you follow me again? Do not ask me what your gift is. I do not know. But you can know.

You should know. It's important to you. Now, I come to the third tremendous statement.

There are many gifts. Now, Paul uses the dramatic and the very plain and expressive comparison of the body of believers to the human body. One body, but many members.

Will you listen to him again? For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. Not only that, but listen to verse 14, it was where we began this morning. For the body is not one member, but many.

Verse 27, Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. There are many gifts, and the human body is used as our illustration. Now, this human body that we have has many members, hundreds of members, thousands of members, and each one functions in a different way.

In the church, in the body of Christ, there are many members. There are hundreds of gifts. There are thousands of gifts.

They're not the same. The human body has bones, and muscles, and tissues, and glands, and organs, and nerves, and blood vessels, and a lot of other things. There are a whole lot of bones in the foot.

I was a student at Columbia Seminary, and there was in Atlanta a very fine Presbyterian prep school, a finishing school for the rich, young folk. That one year, they decided they ought to have a young person give the baccalaureate, and they asked me, and you can see that was a long time ago. And so I went to give the baccalaureate, and I gave the usual kind in those days.

See, I hadn't been out to face the world yet. I think I must have made it, something like a cowboy coming out of the bullpen riding a bucking bronco, and they would ride the world. Only thing is, when I came out, it threw me.

And so that day, that evening, I had dinner with a prominent doctor in Atlanta, very wonderful Christian. He'd had a daughter in the graduation, and he very gently gave me a good lesson that evening. He said to me, do you know what is the most, or was the most important part of your body when you were up there talking? And I said, no, I imagine my mouth or tongue.

He said, no, it wasn't. It was your big toe. He says your big toe balances you.

In fact, you wouldn't have been able to make it down there if it hadn't been for the big toe. And you're able to stand up because you got a big toe. And if you didn't have that big toe, you wouldn't have been able to give that message.

I've been thinking about that for years, and this morning, I want to do something I probably should have done years ago. Because this morning, that big toe said to me, he said, look, you've been down there quite a few years, and you've never recognized me at all. And I'd like for you to call attention to me, because you already know how important I am.

I may not even take you down there today. And that bothered me, because, and I promised to recognize him, would you like to see my big toe? Don't worry. I keep a sock on him and a shoe all the time because he's ugly.

A human foot's not pretty. And yet, it's these feet that brought me down here today. And your feet brought you down here today.

And yet, we all got them stuck down here where nobody can see them. My friend, the church is a body. And there are many members in the body.

And there are big toes. And there are little toes. And there are all kinds of bones in the foot.

And the gifts differ. I emphasized last Sunday morning that probably the most important word in the New Testament is the little preposition in, when it precedes Christ, or a pronoun that refers to him. In Christ.

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to be in Christ. How do you get in Christ? Join something? No. No.

You know how you get in Christ? Here's where we're told about it in this chapter. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

And the Holy Spirit, the moment that you trust Christ, he puts you in the body of believers. And where do you think he puts you? He puts you in a place to function. He wants you to function, my beloved.

Puts you in for a very definite reason. Now, there is no complete list of the gifts. There are too many.

And when I say too many, I do not mean T-W-O many. I mean T-O-O many. There are a whole lot of gifts.

Just as the body has many members, there are many gifts. Now, he lists some, and unfortunately these are held up as the only ones they're partial lists for a very definite reason. Paul couldn't have given you all of them.

But he mentions those that were in existence in his day. Let me read them again. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom.

That's a gift. I had an officer years ago in the church I served. He never said very much.

He was one of the quietest, most retiring men. And if you know anything about a church board, they can go in more different directions. And after they had discussed the subject and got thoroughly confused, this man in a very quiet way had a way of just saying about two sentences, and the whole thing opened up to everybody.

And somebody made a motion and seconded. We prayed and went home. He had a gift of wisdom.

That's a gift. To another, the word of knowledge. Somebody says, I don't know much about the Bible.

Maybe God didn't intend for you to. It's by the same Spirit. To another, faith.

And there are those that have the gift of faith. Sitting down front here, dear lady this morning, she has a gift of faith. She's been a great encouragement to me.

And she also has the gift of helps that we'll see later on. Because I don't have the gift of faith. I have just enough German in me to be pessimistic about the future.

And she has that gift. My wife has that gift. I thought I was dying of cancer.

She said, God will raise you up. So did this lady. May I say to you, that's a gift.

If you were on the tongues binge today, get off of it and get a good gift, would you? To another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. Somebody says, well then there is the gift of healing. There was in the early church because there was the gift of the apostle.

But when the apostles got off the scene, the gift of healing left because that was the badge of the apostle. Not the badge today of we have no apostles, but it's not the badge of a believer today at all. To another, the working of miracles.

That gift is gone. We have the Word of God today. John says, if any come to you not having this doctrine don't receive him.

He didn't say if they perform miracles. To another, prophecy. And that is writing Scripture.

It's all finished. John says it is. You don't add to it anymore.

To another, discerning of spirits. And I wish that gift were around a little more today. To another, divers kinds of tongues.

The word divers is not here. No diver here at all. Kinds of tongues.

That gift is gone. May I make this statement and I'm making a strong statement. The basis, somebody says, but what's the basis of tongues today? It's psychological.

Are there some sincere person looking for all they can get from God? Or it's demonic. Those are the only three explanations there can be for tongues today. Kinds of tongues.

To another, the interpretation of tongues. And these were never unknown tongues. These tongues were understood by somebody because somebody could interpret.

And he was to interpret. On the day of Pentecost, they didn't speak in an unknown tongue. They spoke in tongues that people from all over the Roman Empire could understand.

There's nothing silly or foolish about tongues at all. It's not needed today. The Wycliffe Bible translators come nearer being the tongues movement of any group I know of that are doing it in a scriptural way.

I was down in Mexico, some of that when we were having the epidemic of tongues here, they said, send some of those people down here. We can use them. They can speak to some of these tribes that we've been working for years to reach.

You see, we'll see in a moment, but the gift has to be for a very definite reason. Now over in the 12th chapter of Romans, you have here another list and I'd like to read it. Romans 12, verse 4, for as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ and every one members of another, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.

Well, the prophecy let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Our ministry let us wait on our ministering. Are he that teacheth on teaching? Are he that exhorteth on exhortation? He that giveth let him do it with simplicity.

He that ruleth with diligence, he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness. And you see that's a different list all together. Now we come back to first Corinthians 12 and will you look here in Paul's day what he's trying to say.

He says, but now are they many members yet but one body. And he gives here a list after that, that I believe is chronological as well as in prominence. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongue.

Governments is administration. These are just some of the gifts. There are literally thousands of gifts, my beloved.

Now there are certain gifts that are no longer needed today, sort of like the appendix. You don't need it today. However, the doctor told me, he said, that's the way a young doctor gets started.

Today he's taking out appendixes and he says that's a wonderful part of the body. We don't need it today. And there are certain gifts that are not used in the church today at all.

They are signed gifts at the beginning before the scripture. Now not all have one gift. There are those that suppose, for instance, today that, granted that tongues was a gift today, and I don't grant it, but granted that it was, not all would be able to speak in tongues.

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? So that the body is not just one, the body is many gifts, many members that constitute the body. And the normal human body is not all tongue. I have met a few, but they are the exception to the rule.

We have more than just a tongue, and therefore even if tongues were a gift today, you wouldn't find everybody speaking in tongue. You see, all do not have the same gift. Now what is the purpose of the gifts? And that's another question that should be answered this morning.

And will you look at Ephesians 4 verse 12 for the perfecting. He mentions the man with gifts who've been given to the church, and it's for the perfecting of the saints, that is their development, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a complete man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now gifts therefore today are to enable the body to function, not as an organization.

Now will you follow me again very carefully? We today have made the church an organization. We have presidents, we have committees and chairmen and boards and groups and classes, and they're about as sterile as anything possibly can be. Why? Because men and women are not functioning as a member of the body of Christ, and they're trying to do a job they were never called upon to do.

And there is a lack of vitality and virility today. The Holy Spirit places us in the body in a certain place to function in a positive way, and we are given a gift when we're saved, in order that we might function in that particular place. And if God has called you to do something, the Spirit of God will empower you to do that sort of thing.

Again, let's get down to the nitty-gritty. May I use my staff here as an illustration? May you forgive me, I trust. I think Dr. Cole has the finest gift of administration of anybody I've ever met in the church.

This man won't know what I'm talking about. Al Hovey went out to see a family. He doesn't know I know this.

The girl's 23 years old and has cancer, and then she was in an automobile accident. Can't imagine trouble like this family had. The mother wrote me and told me what the visit of this man meant.

Just sitting down with the family, doing what I cannot do. Dr. Cole does what I cannot do. May I say to you, friend, these other men have gifts.

I could not do Christian aid. May I say to you to do what you have a gift to do, my friend, and you've been given a gift today. Now, there's a fifth thing I'd like to mention.

Gifts are given and exercised by one person, and that's the Holy Spirit, and he does it according to his sovereign will. Now, will you hear me this morning? This is an important message, and I'd like to turn you back to the 12th chapter to verse 4. Now, there are diversities, are distributions of gifts, but the same Spirit, he does it. And there are differences of administrations, are ministrations, but the same Lord.

The Lord Jesus is still head of the church. And there are diversities of operations, and that word is the word we get our word energy from, are powers. There are diversities of power, but it's the same God which worketh all in all.

Now, I have two eyes, and the purpose of these two eyes is to see. One eye, it's not quite 20-20, it was once. And this one, it just never did do too well.

But they're both for seeing. I know an evangelist that I think can preach a better sermon than Billy Graham. I know an evangelist today that gets results, but not like Billy Graham.

What's the difference? Both have the gift of an evangelist, but you see there's difference of energy, difference of power. Just because some man way out yonder preaching in the sticks today doesn't seem to be sophisticated and suave and know all the answers, don't think he's not God's man. There are differences of energy, but it's the same Spirit that is energizing all of them.

Now, the church does not function to please any individual or any group, but to please the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the head of the church, and the Holy Spirit is sovereign in his work. You could be a believer here with a small gift and be yielded to God and be invaluable to the church of the open door, to function for the church, the benefit of the church, for the body of Christ.

You want an illustration? Dorcas. You've heard of her? Dorcas died, and when Simon Peter got there, the widows showed him her needlework, and you know where the needlework was? It was on their backs, because they would not have had those clothes if this woman with the gift of doing needlework, of sewing. Somebody says, you mean to tell me that sewing is a gift of the Holy Spirit? It certainly is.

That big toe is pretty important, I'll tell you, and those widows would not have had clothes if it hadn't been for Dorcas. And Simon Peter says, we need people like this in the church, and he raised her from the dead. Ananias and Sapphira are put to death, and Dorcas is raised from the dead.

May I say to you that you have a gift. I insist that you have a gift this morning. Will you listen to verse 11 here, and let me read it? But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally, as he will.

He's in charge. Peter makes that clear also, and I must turn over and read what he has to say this morning. First Peter 4, verse 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the articles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever.

And if you are exercising your gift, it'll be for the praise of God and the glory of God today. I know a man who has the gift of making money. He thinks he can preach, but he can't.

And I do not have the gift of making money. I wish he and I could get together. May I say to you today that what is your gift? You have a gift.

Now here's the test of gifts, and this will be our last. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all. That word profit is wealth.

Remember the Lord Jesus said, gather not up for yourselves treasure on earth, but gather treasure in heaven. Where is your wealth this morning? Well, if you're exercising your gift, it's for the profit of the church, and you're making a deposit up yonder, not in the Crocker Citizens Bank. And it'll be for the common good of the church.

Will you listen again? If the foot shall say, because I'm not the hand, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? The foot that brought me down here this morning, did it for the common good of the body. And his feet have not said to me, you're walking on me all the time. What's your gift? Why aren't you exercising it today? Because that's the thing the Lord will talk to you about.

He puts you in the body of believers. He gave you a gift. And he said, function.

And there are thousands of gifts, thousands of gifts. Sewing a dress, baking a cake, ushering, shaking hands, a lot of gifts. And then let me say this, closing.

Are you in a position today where you don't have a gift and you're muddling up everything? Do you have sense enough to get out and exercise your gift that you have because you do have one? If you have not become part of the body of Christ by accepting his gift of salvation that he's offering you, it's not too late. Take the time right now and tell God that you want to be forgiven for your sins and that you want to put your faith in the one who can save you, Jesus Christ. If you'd like more information on God's plan of salvation for your life, then we'd like to send you some helpful information in the form of our salvation packet.

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Today's sermon, One Bride Many Members, is available on cassette tape. If you're interested in the issue of spiritual gifts, then you may also want to order Dr. McGee's booklet, Gifts of the Spirit. For more information on purchasing today's sermon or any of our booklets, you can contact one of our service operators at 1-800-652-4253 Monday through Thursday from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific Time.

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