

Where is the Body?

By George Davis, Michael Clark and Ron Stoothoff

Those baptized into one body by one Spirit are Christ's Body--Christ in session. They are the collective body of Christ--a Body more real, more actual than our physical ones. If its members are allowed to express their unique functions, they manifest the fullness of Christ together. They are that "one new man" of Ephesians 2:15, called to stand collectively in the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Whenever you search for something it goes without saying that you sense something is *missing!* You have no doubt heard of the lost tribes of Israel, the Lost Wheelbarrow Mine, the lost chord, and where would a modern household be without the famous lost TV remote? But what if something got lost so long ago that hardly anyone knows it is missing?

Recently a high profile person has been in the news. His assistant turned up missing. He is a suspect in her disappearance, but without a *body* the investigation of the crime has been on hold. Where is the body? Well, almost 2000 years ago the apostle Paul asked the very same question.

And if they were all one member, **where were the body?** (1 Corinthians 12:19 ASV)
A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. (1 Corinthians 12:19 TCEV)

Here Paul refers to the members of Jesus' church, or *ekklesia* as it is known in the Greek text, as His body with Christ as the Head. We will be referring to "the church" as "the body" or "the body of Christ."

The authors of this article have, over the years, been very blessed and privileged to be part of different fellowships where true *body ministry* was allowed to function. The word "awesome" is overused these days, but one place it fits without exaggeration is the workings of God. It is *truly awesome* to watch God, through His Holy Spirit, raise up different ministries within a group. And it is equally awesome to be in a fellowship of saints that is fully directed by His Spirit.

Over the last few years, the Lord has been putting a deep hunger in many of our hearts for something *more*. More than what, you say? More than a continual chain of weekly meetings in which we all sit in a large auditorium with little or no interaction from our innermost beings required. Yes, in such meetings we stand, we clap, we sing, and if we are really spiritual we even raise our hands in worship of our Lord! But somehow we know down inside that there must be *more*. What is this gnawing hunger that we feel in our innermost beings that tells us something is missing?

George, Ron, and myself (Michael), are attempting to describe what this haunting "*more*" consists of. All three of us experienced it as we walked away from the typical church meeting that is served up as "going to church" today. We hope that by writing this together, we can demonstrate the unity we feel is lacking.

There is a sad indictment against the three of us from the beginning. Like so many in the American church, we are physically scattered from one another and have used the Internet and an occasional visit to write about a body relationship. We hope it will not always be this way and someday we will live in closer proximity. We will each contribute from our own experience the things the Lord has shown us and will blend them all together, Lord willing, in "one accord."

The Mystery of the Body

In the physical world around us we can see earthly examples of the greater heavenly realities. Creation cries out, attesting to the existence, nature and purposes of the Creator. The invisible things of Him are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made (see Romans 1:20). In the fearful and wonderful workmanship of the human body we can see a spiritual reality regarding the true church--Christ's Body.



When God created the human body He created it as a parable of the church. The Body of Christ existed in God's mind long before the world began. In His redemptive dealings with mankind, God always foreshadowed His purposes in earthly type before He brought the spiritual fulfillment. He forecasts in the natural what He intends to fulfill in the Spirit. For instance, the Tabernacle of Moses foreshadowed

in every detail God's redemptive purposes in Christ. It was a "worldly sanctuary" (Hebrews 9:1) serving as a "shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5), an earthly Shadow of the *true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*. In this *true tabernacle* Christ our high Priest now sits "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (See Hebrews 8:1-2) The same is true of the tabernacle of David, which foreshadowed our New Covenant relationship with God, allowing us free access to His throne of grace.

The order is the natural first, then the spiritual. As Paul explains,

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being.*" The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1Corinthians 15:44-46)

Christ's natural body was the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died that he might bring forth much fruit, a spiritual, multifaceted Body made up of "many sons." (John 12:24) First the natural body or seed was sown, and out of that death came fruit--the spiritual Body--MANY members--ONE Body.

As far as we know, the apostle Paul was the first human to see this. He called it a great mystery that the Old Testament prophets wanted to understand. God revealed the Divine design, the greater heavenly reality, demonstrated by the function of the human body. Paul saw that all believers are members of the Body, such as ears, eyes, arms, hands, or feet. ALL have different functions, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

In 1970 the town where I, Michael, lived experienced the Jesus movement. A rag-tag bunch of street kids met Jesus in such a powerful way that they were filled with His love and just couldn't keep silent about it. In their zeal, they went out on the streets and shared Jesus with their friends and anyone else who would stop and listen to them. I was one who was touched by their love.

Soon a group formed, sharing a coffee house and meals. Those who had homes invited those who had none to live with them. Soon we were having impromptu Bible

studies, sharing the things the Holy Spirit taught us out of the Scriptures. It was truly alive. Though there was little organization, *life was everywhere!*

The Lord drew me out of a cold, dead Bible church into this torrent of spiritual life. I had been raised in the Catholic Church and converted to a Protestant denomination at age 21, but I had never seen anything like this. Dead religion could not hold a candle to what I found in the fellowship of these *agape* filled believers. God had already given me a hunger to know Him beyond the confines of religion and when I finally saw life in the Spirit, I went for it. I was filled with the Spirit of Christ and became an active, alive part of a true Spirit led body for the first time in my life. From that point on I was ruined for nominal church membership and mere pew warming. I had seen a manifestation of the living Jesus where every member was a viable and living part. The only thing that compared to what was happening was the first few chapters of the Book of Acts.

First the Natural--The Body of Christ--God's Habitation

For approximately 33 years the Body of Christ was the man Jesus of Nazareth, who grew up before God and Israel "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: who had no form nor comeliness" (Isaiah 53:2). From an infant nestled in his mother's arms to a fully-grown man, from the manger to the cross, His body was God's habitation on the earth. He was Emmanuel, God with us. Christ's earthly body was the house that God lived in, "the temple of His body," (John 2:21). With the death and ascension of Jesus and the gift of His Holy Spirit, the multi-membered Body of Christ became the temple of and habitation of God.

In him dwelt all the **fullness** of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9)

It pleased the Father that in him should all **fullness** dwell; (Colossians 1:19)

God has put all *things* under Christ's feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, and that Church is His body the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22 & 23)

So we see that the ONE who contains the fullness of God lives in a spiritual body called the Body of Christ--God in Christ and Christ in us. It is God's intention that the Body of Christ contain the glory of His Son. The Body is the fullness of Him who fills all in all, the dwelling place of God as He resides in His fullness in Christ. This

is not metaphoric. This is reality! Christ still has a Body in which he functions on the earth!

In Jesus Christ - the chief *cornerstone* we are being **built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit**. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) Peter also understood the Body of Christ as a spiritual house. "You also, as lively stones, are built up a **spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God **by Jesus Christ**." [Note: Jesus Christ carries out all true ministry in the body!] (1Peter 2:5)

Knowing that we, the Body of Christ, are the true temple of God, is it any wonder that the church did not build a single church building for almost three hundred years? They knew God does not dwell in houses built with the hands of men, but in a temple built of living stones by the Spirit of God, the church. Looking for Him anywhere else is resisting the Holy Spirit (see Acts 7:47-51)!

Then the Spiritual--The Birth of the Body, the Ekklesia

Let's take a little journey back to that critical time of transition when God first made **every** member of His ekklesia an active member in His Body.

The last few weeks had left the disciples stunned. They had been on an emotional roller coaster. They watched in sorrow as their Lord and Master was crucified. They wept at His tomb. They stood in shock and unbelief at the news of His resurrection. They rejoiced when they saw Him alive once again. They felt they had entered a hurricane and had come out naked. Nothing was the way they had thought it would be. If they had learned anything, they had learned not to second-guess God. Nothing could surprise them now! Now they were waiting, as Jesus had instructed, waiting for the promise of the Father.

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

Today was the day of Pentecost and still they waited. They had come to enjoy each other's company, worked out their differences and strangely the thought of missing the feast did not occur to them. Suddenly they heard a sound like a violent wind that filled the room in which they were sitting. (Acts 2:2) Yes, they were sitting. They had finally assumed the posture the Lord had asked of them, *rest*.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (See Act 2:1-4)

This was the birth of the Church--the Spiritual Body of Christ. There were about a hundred and twenty "earthen vessels" gathered that day. Like the first Adam, they had been shaped of the dust of the earth, awaiting the breath of God. God breathed the breath of life into them that day and they became a living organism. This is God's doing! The Body of Christ is as a miraculous creation as the first man. God has formed it, setting every member in the body as it has pleased Him.

(1Corinthians 12:18)

Jesus said, "He, [The Spirit of truth] dwells with you and **will be in you**. . . I will not leave you orphans: **I will come to you**." (John 14:17,18 NKJV). In the coming of the Holy Spirit, Christ came to earth in a twofold way. First, each believer was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus took up residence within every believer.

Second, there was an imparting of grace to each believer, "a measure of the gift of Christ," which comprises the corporate Christ-- "ONE body, being MANY." So Christ has come to us both by the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the collective witness of the Body as the members contribute the measure of the gift of Christ imparted to them.

ONE BODY, BEING MANY - So Also Is (the) Christ

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12 NKJV)

This is where we often get off course. In mistakenly relating to the Body of Christ as a metaphor, we tend to view it like some fractured fairy tale. Instead, the Body of Christ is the reality! Paul is not speaking figuratively. The term "the Body of Christ"

is not a metaphor! Though Jesus did often speak in parables and figurative language, it is important to realize that sometimes what we take to be figurative is actually language speaking literal truths.

There is nothing figurative in what Paul is saying here. It is easy for us in twenty-first century America to miss this truth and think the "things which are seen" are the only reality, when these earthly things are only shadows of the real.

Our physical bodies resemble the substantive reality of the Body of Christ. They are living, moving and functioning metaphors reflecting this eternal reality. As the earthly prototype, the human body is ONE and has MANY MEMBERS, "So also is Christ." The literal translation reads, "so also is **the** Christ." The word "the" implies the genuine article. The many-membered body of Christ, growing up into the Head, is *the Christ* on earth just as surely as Christ, Emmanuel, was "God with us." Jesus told His disciples, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father," and He also said, "What you have done to the least of these my brethren you have done unto me." Do we really love and prefer one another the same way we say we love and prefer Jesus? He is measuring our love for Him in the way we see and treat His body.

The Body of Christ is such a reality that Paul made no distinction between it and Christ, referring to Christ's many-membered body as *the Christ*. How different would our present forms of fellowship be if we really believed that the way we honor or despise one another is the way we are treating that One who died for and now lives for us? Can you see why what we call "church" in our culture leaves us so lacking and empty?

Those baptized into one body by one Spirit are Christ's Body--Christ in session. They are the collective body of Christ--a Body more real, more actual than our physical ones. If its members are allowed to express their unique functions, they manifest the fullness of Christ together. They are that "one new man" of Ephesians 2:15, called to stand collectively in the fullness of the stature of Christ. As Paul so clearly points out, this is not a one-man show.

For in fact the body is not one member but many. (1 Corinthians 12:14)

Imagine a conductor standing before a symphony orchestra waving his wand. The many instruments that make up the orchestra are all playing the same piece. They are all on the same page of the score. Although each has its own sound and each plays a different set of notes, the whole functioning correctly is one beautiful, complimentary sound. The Holy Spirit has given each one an instrument and the ability to play it, but it is God himself who leads us in that heavenly anthem. In this kind of unity He is truly worshiped "in Spirit and in Truth." He is worthy of nothing less.

The great German reformer Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains this mystery as follows.

"The Church is the real presence of Christ. Once we have realized this truth we are well on the way to recovering an aspect of the Church's being which has been sadly neglected in the past. We should think of the Church not as an institution, but as a person, though of course a person in a unique sense. Through his Spirit, the crucified and risen Lord exists as the Church, as the new man. It is just as true to say that this Body is the new humanity as to say that he is God incarnate dwelling in eternity." (*The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.)

The Body is Christ in the earth, provided each member contributes his or her measure. Otherwise, we may assume the correct name and gather with great regularity, but have no more impact than any other neighborhood society or sorority. Now let us discuss some of the hindrances to the Body and its full expression.

The "ALL" Inclusive Body

As long as even one member fails to function within the measure of grace given to him, the body falls short of the full expression of Christ. We all *need* one another. Let's focus for a moment on this matter of foremost importance--every-member-participation. Let's settle the question of whether every member is endowed with spiritual power to fulfill a specific and vital role in the Body.

After Christ was received up into heaven He gave gifts to men. They are unique expressions of Him. Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would begin to understand the incredible greatness of the power of the ascended Christ, released toward those who believe. The very same mighty power that raised Christ from the

dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand has been imparted to ALL believers. (See Ephesians 1:19-21) Remember Jesus' words, "I will come to you."

Before explaining the so-called "five-fold ministry," Paul encapsulated the entire subject with these few words. "One God and Father of **all**, who *is* above **all**, and through **all**, and in you **all**" (Ephesians 4:6). Note that the Greek word *pas*, "all" is used four times in this passage. This is very significant. The Father of all is **above all** and **through all** and **in us all**. The Body is all-inclusive or it is not the Body.

What did Paul mean when he wrote that God is "through all"? The word *through* here is "a primary preposition denoting the channel of an act (Strong's)." God has chosen to move through all in a corporate synergism. One will put a thousand to flight, two ten thousand. Paul explains further, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7) The Greek word *measure* is *metron*, from which we get our English word *meter*. It means a limited portion or degree. Each one is given a limited portion, a metered-out amount, no more and no less.

Then Paul summed it up in this way, ". . .the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16) Christ is the Holy Spirit's gift to us and each member has a limited portion of that gift. When each contributes his measure, we can see the whole Christ. It is important that we understand this context. "Every one of us is given grace." Every joint supplies. Nowhere is there a hint of elitism implying that Christ gave grace to a few for the purpose of equipping the body. No! "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Paul included himself when he wrote, "Unto every one of US is given grace." He included his calling as a messenger (apostle), seeing himself in the same pool as the rest. He made no distinction except in differences of function. He did not see himself as set apart from the Body, like the clergymen of our day, but as one graced to do a job. Paul constantly recognized that grace in all that he said and did. (Romans 12:3, 15:15, 1Corinthians 3:10, Galatians 2:9, Ephesians 3:2, 3:7).

In Paul we see an effective member working toward the edification of the Body according to the grace of God that was given to him. Paul was faithful with the limited portion that God had given to him. He honestly and simply recognized his place in the Body. Paul had been given grace for a task, just like every other believer. "Every one of us IS given grace." Today we tend to view these five-fold gifts as the titled "offices" of an elite caste set apart from the Body. This is contrary to the context of this passage. It is a perpetuation of the clergy-laity distinction, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans that Jesus hates.

We are not saying that God has not given pastoral grace to some, prophetic grace to others, and so forth, but that this occurs unpretentiously within the Body context. Few in the first century thought to elevate themselves by their gifts. Their gifts made room for them. They did not see themselves as exceptional or in any sense set apart from the rest, above the rest or superior. This perversion of self-elevation and position seeking became the norm in the church years after the first apostles were killed. Any such distinction is not Biblical.

In 2 Corinthians 10:13, we see Paul's sensitivity to his God ordained limitations.

We, however, will not boast beyond measure, *(things without measure, immense)* but within the limits of the sphere *(Kanon--a definitely bounded or fixed space within the limits of which one's power of influence is confined-Strong's)* which God appointed us--a sphere *(metron)* which especially includes you.

Is Body Ministry Five-Fold or Mani-fold?

Peter wrote:

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10, NKJV).

The term "five-fold ministry" is extra-biblical. It is a term invented and used to justify and perpetuate the Old Testament priestly order, which was done away with on the cross. If we continue to follow this old way, which God said many times He would replace, we deny the efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice. We deny the value of His shed blood by rejecting the New Testament that His blood purchased for us.

This entire forced (and enforced) concept of five exclusive ministries comes from ignorance of biblical servant leadership. Peter describes us as a kingdom of priests. The imposition of the hierarchical paradigm that allows some to lord over the others (Matthew 20:25-28) is a source of confusion in the church. We still cling to the clergy/laity distinction, which fits the Old Testament order, but not the New. This distinction produces a bad situation for *both* sides of the dichotomy. It gives the clergy all the duties of the ministry that have actually been given to the whole church, so that they cannot possibly fulfill those duties. It also gives the laity the completely wrong impression that they do not have a ministry to perform -- at least not at the spiritual level. As a result, much of God's work simply does not get done. Many of the sheep are not found, or healed, or fed, or experience the Kingdom that is their inheritance, and the world does not see the reality of Christ.

The priesthood of the few gives some people a preeminence that steals from God's glory and provides very strong temptation that Satan can easily exploit. At the same time, it relieves people of their God-given responsibilities and full membership in His body. It robs people of the blessings that come from doing God's work, from being in His will -- the blessings of spending more time with Him. Worst of all, it gets people looking in the wrong direction -- to these supposed spiritual leaders -- instead of to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith. It totally undermines God's plan for the church.

This elitist view of ministry has become something of a sacred cow to many because it gives a few a highly coveted, special identity. But this cow has yielded very little milk or meat. It has yet to produce the goods it promises. It has yet to bring the body to maturity. It fortifies what Juan Carlos Ortiz called "the perpetual babyhood of the believer." This false paradigm never will produce heavenly fruit. It is filthy with pride and position seeking, and has caused more shame than glory. It promotes the work of the flesh, and not the fruit of the Spirit. As Jesus put it, "The flesh profits nothing." This man-made system has done more to retard the effective working of every part than anything else that has come against the church! We will see the kingdom of God here on earth only when every member does his or her God-appointed work. We must see the gifts given to men by God as tools, not entitlements--as graces, not offices. (It is important to note that often in our modern Bible translations, as well as the KJV, we find the word *office* in association with

these ministry gifts. In each case the word *office* was added by the translators and was not in the original.)

God has put apostles, pastors, teachers, prophets, and other kinds of leaders and ministries in the church--*but they are put there to lead us into Christ, NOT TO TAKE HIS PLACE!* So much is made of the five fold ministries that we forget their purpose and function and that they are temporary. Look more closely at what those verses say: they are given "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built. . .until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (NIV)

These ministries should bring us to Christ's *maturity*. God never intended us to remain babes and always be in need of these ministries any more than Jesus intended for a few men to rule over the church! Please note this: "until we ALL." This maturity, this unity in the faith and unity in the *knowledge* of the Son of God is for *ALL*, not just a few. It is part of our inheritance in Christ. It is part of the promise in the New Covenant. It is necessary for the proper functioning of the Royal Priesthood to which we are *all* called.

Call No Man Teacher

Jesus said, "And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ." (Matthew 23:10, NKJV).

The author of Hebrews expected the entire body of believers to be teachers. How can this be when Jesus commanded that we are not to be called teachers? The context of what Jesus said above was the Jewish system, which consisted of men called Rabbis, Masters, and Fathers. Jesus came to do away with that system and replace it with His Body. In that sense, no man is a master or teacher, for He is the Teacher in each one of us. While all believers do not have the same function ALL are to be teachers. Christ is to be all in all (1 Corinthians 12:6).

When the body of Christ does not rise to the level of maturity where all are teachers in Him, it is grounds for concern.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers (didaskalos), you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. (Hebrews 5:12 NKJV)

The word *teacher* used here is the same Greek word *didaskalos* (teachers) used in Ephesians 4:11, the text used by today's hierarchical church to justify the fivefold offices. Today the word is used to propagate the notion of an elite cast of teachers who fill the supposed "office" of teacher or pastor/teacher. The author of Hebrews made no such distinction. He saw teaching as the responsibility of the whole Body. The body cannot ultimately be built up by an elite few, but, in order to reach maturity, all members must *build itself (themselves) up in love*.

I, Michael, remember going down to our Jesus People coffee house many an evening and sitting there until the wee hours of the morning, sharing with other brothers or sisters the things that Jesus had been teaching me, and they did the same. These times of dialogue were precious to us. Never once did any of us think of ourselves as having an office from which to teach. Once in a while, a Sunday church member would come in and listen and remark, "You know more about the Bible than our pastor!" What finally brought an end to these precious times of sharing was a rebuke from an older man in the group. He thought only HE had the "office of teacher" and everyone should learn from him. How many of God's children have been squashed and sentenced to silence in the church by a similar rebuke?

Paul said an elder (Greek *presbitos*) must be "[apt to teach](#)." As we grow older in Christ, we should be learning a few things and one of them is the ability to teach what we have learned. Our system prevents believers from growing into maturity, and so we have mass memberships spending Sunday after Sunday "ever learning" and needing milk, but never able to share from a level of maturity that draws others up into the full measure of Christ.

We can learn something from the apostle John's posture toward the late first century Christian community. Consider the following passages from his first epistle.

[But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ...But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing](#)

teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. (1 John 2:20, 21, 27)

Notice how careful John is not to usurp the job of the Holy Spirit. When he wrote, "You do not need that anyone teach you," he was also referring to himself. The believers did not need John to lead them into all truth. They were so well established in their relationship to the Holy Spirit that they needed no man to teach them. This is the only true objective for teaching. There is a big difference between giving someone a fish and teaching him to fish. Today's concept of discipleship is a welfare line, doling out fish to beggars at regular intervals. True discipleship can be known only in union with the Source of Life.

Is the Church Eastern or Western?

There are two basic schools of thought when it comes to teaching. We are most acquainted with the Western system, where the student enrolls for a specific period of time for a particular curriculum, taught by professors who give textbook assignments during the duration of the course. The students have little personal involvement with the instructor. They sit in rows of chairs, all facing forward, while the instructor lectures them from a raised platform. If the student can successfully parrot back on exams what was "taught" in these classes, he receives a degree that says he is accomplished in that particular field of study.

In the Eastern way of teaching, there is a deep relationship built between student and teacher. This method resembles a family rather than an institution.

Some of us remember a TV series called "Kung Fu," in which a young man was taught by an old, blind Master in a Chinese monastery. The young boy lived with the man, often learning one on one, and interacted with him. He proved himself by performing the things taught before he was sent out as a priest of that religion. This is the eastern method of teaching. This is discipling.

How did Jesus teach the disciples? If you have read the Gospels, the answer is obvious! When Jesus taught he walked among His disciples and lived with them. They walked around Judea and Galilee together and did the work of the kingdom of God together. They had such a personal relationship with Jesus that one disciple later wrote:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3, NKJV).

Walking with Jesus was not a Sunday school classroom or some dry seminary. It was life! These disciples were graduated from this life-giving school when they could do the works of the Master and manifest His life. Their graduation often resulted in martyrdom.

Christianity has its roots in the culture of the East. Since Constantine, emperor of Rome, first forced his will on the church in 312 AD, there has been a steady erosion of the fundamentals of the faith. It has progressively changed into something western, something that it was not meant to be. We have been robbed! It happened so long ago that we don't have a clue what has been taken away from us! The church of Jesus has lost all sign of spiritual life.

Jesus forbade the Master-to-pupil teaching in the western sense when He commanded, "Call no man Master." There is but one teacher, "*for one is your Master (Teacher), even Christ*" (See Matthew 23:8-12). The apostles did not go forth as Masters recruiting pupils to themselves, plopping them down in classrooms or sanctuaries and lecturing them for hours on end. In fact, Paul mentioned this as a sign of the coming apostasy. "*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*" (Act 20:29-30) We must not draw away disciples after ourselves. We must make disciples of Christ--those taught directly by Christ. We do by directing them to The Teacher--Christ. As each of us collectively manifest Jesus in our corporate lives among one another, we teach Christ and create a body that corporately manifests HIM.

But didn't Jesus commission His disciples, telling them to "*go and make disciples*"? Yes, He did, but we tend to misunderstand the true nature of that commission. After years of indoctrination into an institutional paradigm, the word *disciple* means

something totally different to us than it did to the early apostles. The problem with discipleship today is that men no longer teach the first principles, but instead usurp the Holy Spirit by their weekly (and weak) endeavors to lead everyone into all truth. Average believers today are rarely taught dependence on the Holy Spirit as their Teacher, but instead place their trust in a handful of men who have mistakenly filled His place. (1 John 2:20-21)

Jesus sent the apostles with a call to recruit disciples unto Him. To be a disciple of Christ is to be taught by Christ. It is to be joined to Christ in living vital union as a branch abiding in the vine. As he taught His followers of this vital discipleship, Jesus said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." (John 5:7-8) Here Christ defined discipleship in terms of abiding in relationship with Him. The apostles made Vine-abiding-disciples who drew their strength directly from Christ. In this way--in abiding in Jesus--His words will abide in us so we will be His disciples.

Paul continues,

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ--**from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.** (Ephesians 4:12-16)

How is the body built up? Answer: It edifies itself in love! The Body does the edifying OF the Body by the effective working of EVERY PART! Every part works effectively toward the overall growth of the Body. The body is knit together by what **every joint contributes** as they individually receive life from the head-- Christ.

The Body and the "Wind"

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to

another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

(Notice in this list of gifts, teaching is not mentioned, because we are all to be teachers. We are all to make disciples.)

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ...distributing to each one individually as He wills." The Body of Christ is a spiritually sovereign organism. What do we mean by this? Our Lord spoke of this sovereignty to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8)

T. Austin Sparks described the effects of this spiritual law as follows.

"On the day of Pentecost there was "a sound as of a mighty rushing wind." Have you ever been in a really mighty rushing wind? The thing about a real windstorm is that it takes the government out of all other hands and proceeds to do as it chooses without reference or deference to conventions, traditions, common acceptances, inclinations, or fixed ideas."

This is where the current concept of church radically deviates from the true Body of Christ, where everything is done through or by the Spirit/Wind, blowing where He wills, *distributing to each one individually as He wills*. Philip was one born and literally borne of the Spirit. He was transported on the wings of the "Wind" to where a man was struggling to comprehend the scriptures about the Messiah. Stephen is another example. With their traditions and fixed ideals, the religionists of his day were could not resist the wisdom by which Stephen spoke. (Act 6:10) The book of Acts is the record of one great Windstorm, sovereignly blowing where God wished.

"To one He gave the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healings, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues." Man has no control in this Kingdom, except to yield to the Spirit's distribution. Everything is dependent on the Wind of the Spirit. Whether we will yield our traditions, inclinations, and fixed ideals determines whether we will be part of the building of His Kingdom.

Compared to the organic Body of Christ that is animated by the Spirit, today's churches are artificial. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word *artificial* as; "Made by human beings; produced rather than natural. Brought about or caused by sociopolitical or other human-generated forces or influences. Made in imitation of something natural; simulated."

Note that the primary definition of the word *artificial* is "made by human beings." In spite of the fact that most of today's institutional churches claim to be the unique expression of Christ's Body on the earth, they are man-made. They are founded and maintained by men who set out to begin a work or plant a church. They are human copies of the glorious creation Jesus said He would build. Make no mistake, anything that is not built by Him is artificial! Anything that is not divinely created and sustained by God cannot be the Body and is only a copy, a sociopolitical organization. What makes the difference between the genuine and the artificial is the "manifestation of the Spirit" given to each one.

In the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, the prophet interprets a dream the King of Babylon had. In that vision there was a statue made of many different elements. A mighty stone "not cut with the hands of men" fell out of the heavens and struck the image in its feet, destroying the statue by grinding it to powder. That same stone grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth. The important lesson here is that everything manmade is coming down! Only what is from above, what has been sent forth and destined by God will stand forever.

Artificial Function

Despite illusions to the contrary, today's institutional churches are not made up of many members, but one dominant member. The many are passive while the one, or at best a few, do all the work of ministry.

You may feel that your progressive church encourages every-member participation, going out of their way to find a job for all. Some are assigned to parking lot detail. Others are more suited to ushering or greeting strangers at the door. Those with musical ability serve on the worship team. Others serve as janitors or grounds keepers. Those with secretarial or accounting skills may help with the church finances or serve as church secretary. Those with a grasp of scriptures may be

asked to teach a Sunday school class. There is something to accommodate the natural abilities of all. This is NOT body ministry.

Activity in and of itself is not sacred. The activities listed above are not spiritual gifts, and are not listed in the scriptures. They are based on natural ability, the flesh. They are not graces. It would require a total rewrite of scripture to justify them as Body functions. They are artificial, originating with human beings, produced by man in an institution. Instead of the manifestation of the Spirit, we see the managerial skills of men. This is the "let us build" of Babel (Genesis 11:4) rather than the "I will build My church" spoken by Jesus (Matthew 16:18).

Just because every one is busy does not mean that they are building the church or functioning as a body. Didn't Jesus say that this would be a sign of the end?

Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:28-30, NKJV).

God is looking for people who do His works by His Spirit, not people keeping busy doing religious activity in His name (Mark 7).

No flesh shall glory in God's presence. Anything that is not spiritual is not acceptable in this spiritual house. God is Spirit, and His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." As Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) The difference is in the origin. If it is born of flesh, it is flesh. It can be nothing else. It can be neatly groomed, dressed in the finest garb, taught to speak when and what it should. It can undergo the most radical cultural conditioning and emerge to the sounds of the praise and adulation of men but it is exactly what you started with--FLESH. Only what is born of the Spirit--through or by the Spirit-- can be sacrificed to God. Everything else, like the sacrifice of Cain or the birth of Ishmael, are the works of our own hands, finding their origin and energy in the flesh. This fails to impress the Creator and does not further the work of the Kingdom or bring glory to God.

For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

For anything to meet God's approval it must be of Him, created by and originating from Him. It must also be sustained through Him, born along by His Spirit. Otherwise it will never truly glorify Him. He will not receive it because its origin and life are wrong. It is wood, hay, and stubble, to be burned up in the Day of testing.

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. (Psalm 127:1)

The Head of the Body

Paul went on to teach about the anatomy of the body:

But I would have you know, that **the head of every man is Christ**; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. (1Corinthians 11:3)

And has put all things under his feet, and **gave him to be the head over all things** to the church, (Ephesians 1:22)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, **which is the head, even Christ**: (Ephesians 4:15)

God promised He would establish a new covenant radically different from the old. We learn from Ezekiel that the coming New Covenant would be marked by a change in leadership, not just in format but also in priesthood. Where there were many shepherds there would now be ONE. "And I will raise up over them one Shepherd. And He shall feed them. My servant David, He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David shall be a ruler among them. I, Jehovah, have spoken." (Ezekiel 34:23-34)

David was long in the grave when Ezekiel gave this prophecy, so someone other than David is referred to. That someone is Christ. This prophecy predicts the end of the old priestly aristocracy and the transfer of all rule and dominion to ONE--Christ the seed of David. The government shall be upon His shoulders. Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God defined the coming covenant as follows:

"But this *shall be* the covenant that I will cut with the house of Israel: After those days, declares Jehovah, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and I will write it on

their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall no longer each man teach his neighbor, and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah. For they shall all know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest of them, declares Jehovah. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:33 NEV)

In Joel 2:28-29 we find these words. "And it shall be afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also I will pour out My Spirit on the slaves and on the slave-girls in those days."

We learn from the prophecy of Joel that in this New Covenant, the anointing for ministry is no longer given to a few but is given to ALL. Slaves would prophesy as surely as the prophets of old. Old men would dream dreams and young men see visions. The Spirit that was once poured out on a few would now be lavished on ALL. Under the New Covenant ALL are taught and anointed of God under the careful nurturing of ONE SHEPHERD, Christ Jesus. There are no longer priest-mediators running interference between God and the people, for there is only "ONE MEDIATOR" (Christ) and all believers are priests. All may enter the Holy of Holies, all are anointed to do so! An elitist concept of ministry has no place in the New Testament Church; this very notion is contrary to the New Covenant.

The Christian churches of today resemble the conditions described in Ezekiel more than the body of Christ described in Ephesians. God is not mocked. Though all men be liars, His word is true. The true body of Christ is made up of many members, *each one* led by the Holy Spirit, *each one* connected to the Head. We may have trouble discerning His body, but He does not. He knows who is following Him, who is hearing His voice, who is doing the will of the Father.

Without exception, no one except Christ is referred to as the Head of the church in the New Testament. This function is reserved exclusively for Christ. Consequently, few dare claim this title for themselves. But it is one thing to humbly decline the title and another altogether to decline the function. It is very possible to decline the title of "head" and still usurp the functional headship of Christ. We have a good example of this in the modern clergy/laity system.

By attempting to do the job of the Head, the modern clergyman unwittingly undermines both the headship of Christ and the priesthood of ALL believers, effectively cutting the believer off from the life of the true Head and fostering dependence on the clergy-system rather than Christ. Eventually, instead of all things finding their origin in Christ this one man becomes the originator and regulator of everything. Nothing can be done without first clearing it with him. Although there is no biblical example of such, this subdued state of the Body is viewed as normal and praiseworthy in Christendom today. It has gone so far that in some cases believers feel that they must ask permission of their pastor before making the most personal decisions.

Christ alone is the Head, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Who do the directives to the Body flow from? Answer: Christ! Everything originates from and is regulated by Him "from whom the whole Body is joined and knit together.

We see an example of this in 1 Corinthians 14:26.

How is it then, brethren? when you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

This is how it was in the Body two thousand years ago. It can be so again. Believers brought what Christ gave them to the fellowship. They spent time with Him during the week, in prayer, in meditation, or whatever. They didn't have to wait till they came together to receive something, but were overflowing with the Spirit. Everyone ministered and served one another in the power of the Spirit and everyone was blessed and built up.

It was not a matter of one leading and the rest following, but each member contributing what the Spirit had imparted to them individually. Nothing was determined by man, except whether to obey Christ's Spirit or not. God gave to EACH ONE as He willed. The Wind blew as He pleased.

We believe that this understanding led to the Spiritual outbreak at Azusa Street. Robert and Deborah Burgess wrote the following.

"Many years ago, during what is now called the "Azusa Street Revival" (in Los Angeles, California) an incident occurred which stands out in our thinking. The Pastor of the Azusa Street "Apostolic Faith Mission" was a one-eyed black Brother by the name of Seymour. History records that Bro. Seymour would pray with his head covered by a Cardboard shoe box until the Spirit of God either moved upon him or someone in the congregation to bring forth the Word. One night a denominational minister came demanding to know just "Who" it was that was in charge of the service. The first answer he got was, that "The LORD was in charge" of the meeting. He replied somewhat angrily, "Oh I know all that, but who is the Head of this Church?" Again the same answer came, "Why, the LORD is the Head of this Church." "Well who is running it then?" And again the answer was "Why, the LORD HIMSELF runs these services!!"

Man could no more facilitate body-life than he could build a real, living tree. Man cannot build organic matter. He cannot create life out of nothing. The best he can hope for is to clone his own likeness. If a dominant member attempts to set the members in the body, they all become replicas of himself. Within such a context the ones that are diverse become threats--defying the DNA of the dominant member.

Paul warned,

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? (1 Corinthians 12:17)

The entire Body must be encouraged to function to its fullness. The so-called "one talent" saints are especially needed.

In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. (1 Corinthians 12:22 NLT)

This is where the danger lies. How often those who are esteemed as least important are dismissed as unnecessary! They live their lives out within the four walls of institutional Christianity silent, ignoble and unappreciated, taking to their graves the

secret of the dynamic measure of Christ veiled in them. Few are fully aware of the riches of the glory of Christ vested in these common and less comely vessels. Please hear us! Until we discern the Christ in these, apprising them correctly, until we see the wealth in these earthen vessels, the body will remain crippled. In the Body, Christ has chosen to hide in the strangest places and will remain hidden until we discern Him there. In His first advent, Jesus was found by lowly shepherds and despised Babylonian astrologers in a stable where the religious community who looked down their pious noses would not go. So seems to be the case today.

Spiritual Leprosy

The body today is in a diseased state, wherein it rejects its own members, especially those that are thought to be weakest and least important. The eye is saying to the ear, "I have no need of you," and the arm is saying to the hand, "I have no need of you." The condition of the body of Christ today is best described as leprous, leading to paralysis, gangrene, deformation and desensitization to pain. It is out-of-joint with its members.

Leprosy is a virus that attacks the nervous system. The body's members are cut off from the head and each other. When they are burned or damaged, it goes undetected by the rest of the body. Thus the member suffers alone, often enduring greater damage because the body does not feel the pain and come to the rescue. Such is not the case in a healthy body where, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (I Corinthians. 12:26).

Whatever happened? Where did the wheels fall off the wagon? Is the church we see today truly the Body of Christ? Do we allow God to set the members, each one of them, in the body as He pleases? Do we allow Him, by His Spirit, to fully orchestrate the function of those members? If the church does not function like a body, it is not THE Body! If each member is not true to his unique grace and task, however humble it may appear, but instead is encouraged to bury his part in obscurity, there can be no Body-expression. It may be a fine institution, run by a fine man, but it is not the Body of Christ. For the Body of Christ is not one member. Not two! Not three! Not four! No! The Body of Christ exists only where every member contributes to its wholeness and functionality. It consists of many unique,

diverse and complimentary parts working in session empowered by the measure of the gift of Christ given to each.

A Call to Sober Thinking

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. (Romans 12:2-5)

What does it mean to think soberly? It means we view things as they really are, without excess, exaggeration, or speculative imagination. As Christians, it means we accurately assess ourselves in relation to God and the rest of the Body of Christ. We have an honest view of where we fit in the greater scheme of things. We are "members of one another." Each one is a part of the whole, mutually dependent upon and obligated to the other parts. So Paul begins by appealing to believers not to be conformed to the world's way of thinking, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Through the *grace* given to him, he exhorts us not to think of ourselves above what we should, for this is the world's way of thinking. He reminded us that God has divided to each one a measure of faith.. It is an exaggeration to see oneself as more than just a part, having a measure of the gift of Christ. Christ is calling all believers from an exaggerated view of their individual worth to a humble, corporate participation within the limited measure of the gift given to them. It is a call to Body-integrity, which can only be realized when each part lives within their God-appointed perimeters.

It is a call to, "*Be who you is, 'cause if you be who you ain't, then you ain't who you is.*"

This brings us to the rudimentary cause of disorder in the Body. To appreciate and overstate oneself is to devalue others. To overestimate our individual worth is the seedbed of pride. Humility means each member of the Body abides in the measure that God has given them and honestly appreciates the measure given to the rest of the members, unselfishly preferring the ministry of the others. Each member lives

and functions within the measure of grace given to him or her and esteems and receives from everyone in the Body without jealousy. Each one discerns the Body of Christ, recognizing His grace distributed throughout and preferring one another in love.

The church today lives in an ecclesiastical condition of insobriety or a state of altered reality where the opposite is true. A few see themselves as more than they really are, and the many depreciate themselves. We see two extremes--those that have been exalted beyond measure and those who have been unduly abased as a result. We see a picture of this in John the Baptist's call to repentance. ["Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low"](#) (Luke 3:5).

Those who have been abased (valleys) shall be filled or elevated. Those who have been exalted (mountains/hills) shall be brought low. This is the straight pathway on which the Lord will come to His people. As long as some abase the Body by exalting themselves, we will not see the full expression of Christ in every member. Body-function today is in this very state of Body-stupefaction, frustrated to the point of inactivity, more a corpse than a body. Hence we issue a call to "Be who you is."

God is about to give witness of His Son in the earth as each member rises to fill the measure of the gift of Christ within him or her. When He is seen, in His fullness, He is irresistible! The world has seen evangelism on this level only once before-- evangelism so radical that it "turned the world upside down." [\(Acts 17:6\)](#) We will see it again! But first the world must witness the functioning, living body of Christ. There remains a two-fold repentance that must first take place in the Church.

A Two-Fold Repentance

Some must repent of their disobedience in rising to rule in a manner like the kings of the gentiles, which our Lord has strictly forbidden. ["It shall not be so among you"](#) (See [Matthew 20:25-28](#)). We exhort the ones who have been exalted to think soberly, to realize that you are no more than a member, possessing only a measure of grace.

Others who have been subdued must also repent. You have a measure of the gift of Christ needed by the corporate Body. Don't bury your gift in a napkin. Come forth! See yourself as that field where a great treasure is buried ([Matthew 13:44](#)).

In reality, there is only one "Mountain" or eminent ONE, and He is the Stone of Daniel chapter two, which became a Mountain, which fills the whole earth with His glory--the rock of ages-- the Lord Jesus Christ.

Discerning the Lord's Body

We are given this sobering warning about sharing the bread and cup, which represent our Lord's body and blood, shed for us.

For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. (1 Corinthians 11:29 NLT)

Remember the context of this scripture. The Corinthian believers loved to party, probably in the same manner they had before they were saved. They came together to eat the Lord's Supper in their usual Corinthian style. Paul quickly pointed out that when they came together in this manner they were NOT eating the Lord's Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:20) Something was seriously wrong! Paul explains the reason like this, "For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk." (v.21) Something was grossly missing, and that was a consideration for the rest of the Body, i.e., Body-awareness. Theirs was not a common meal that reflected the care and unity of the body as the Lord had intended, but each one took their own meal ahead of others. They ate to the total disregard of the hungry among them. You might say some were drunk with selfish ambition while the others were starving by neglect.

Then Paul asked them a telling question. "Do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?" (v.22) Here Paul is addressing their insensitivity to the principle of the body, the congregation, the church. Each had their focus on themselves.

I, Michael, remember a vivid lesson from my early years in the Jesus Movement. One night in our Bible study an older brother was trying to teach us what it means to minister as a body-- to properly discern the body of Christ.

It was hot that night and there were at least fifty of us crammed close together in a living room. At one point one of the brothers got up, went to the kitchen, came back

with a glass of water, and sat back down. The brother teaching stopped the show and asked, "Chuck? Did you think that the people you're sitting with might be thirsty too?" Chuck said he had not. Then the older brother said, "This is what I am talking about. We all need to start thinking like a body. If one member is hot and thirsty, then chances are all members are thirsty. The thirst of the body is not quenched until all members drink." This example of what it means to think like a body will stick with me forever.

Paul continued by sharing what he had received from the Lord.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

(Note here how Jesus gave food and drink to all, making sure that they were served first and none were lacking. He also stripped Himself, wrapped Himself with a servant's towel and washed their feet. He gave us examples over and over of what true servant-hood [ministry] to the Body really is.)

The significance of this meal defies explanation. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion (fellowship, sharing) of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." WE are the bread!. And WE are the partakers of the bread! WE are the bread that must be broken for all, and we must all accept the breaking of the rest of Christ's body. As we share the life of Christ that is in each one of us with one another, we are participating in the life of the Body, the true church life. Our present church life is out of balance because some expect to receive and not give while others expect only to give, not realizing that they also need to receive from the other members of the Body.

When Paul wrote, "he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," he was not only speaking of recognizing your place in that Body, but also discerning the place and condition of others. (verses.11:29) He went on to explain that this was the reason for sickness

and death among them saying, "for this reason many *are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*" (verse. 11:30) Failure to discern the measure of grace that each member brings to the Body disrupts the flow of life and health throughout. Some are given gifts of healing (1 Corinthians 12:28); if we do not discern those members in a joint to joint relationship, we will not benefit from the measure of grace they possess. Many remain sick because they have cut themselves off from God's source of healing. Others need more drastic and immediate results and need those members with the gift of miracles.

Years ago Bob Mumford told a story of a pastor who despised a particular woman in his congregation. One morning, while preaching, he doubled up in pain, draped over the pulpit. Meanwhile, God was dealing with the very woman this man despised, telling her to rise from her seat, go up and lay hands on him so he would be healed. She reluctantly obeyed, but when she approached to lay hands upon him, he refused to allow it. Instead he called for the elders. She turned and walked back to her seat, taking the unused gift of healing with her. This story does not have a happy ending. This man needlessly bore that infirmity for many years thereafter, perhaps even to his grave. In this instance, the lady had his healing, not the elders! Because of his pride he devalued her to his own hurt and remained *weak and sick*.

I (George) once heard Jack Hayford share at a weekend retreat. A physically and emotionally wounded believer came to him for help. Jack's response was, "I commend you to the Body of Christ, they will heal you!" This was prophetic! Jack expressed amazement at this simple, God-inspired word and I have never forgotten it. Jack discerned the Body of Christ and did not presume to possess all the answers himself. I saw in Jack the humility of a member. Although many called him a great apostle or teacher, I saw only a member who had discovered his place--who knew his limitations.

Just as a revelation of Christ is required before one can be saved, we must have a revelation of His Body before we can serve. We must discern the Body of Christ before we can think soberly, proportionately, knowing our part. Otherwise we will assume too much, and run the risk of usurping both the Head and the other Body members.

Dear believer, please take these things to heart! Having been baptized by ONE Spirit into ONE Body, you have been given a measure of the gift of Christ, needed by the rest of the body. We need you! Perhaps you have felt that you are not of the Body because you are different. You are an eye in a congregation of ears. Maybe others have treated you as if to say, "I have no need of you, you are not like the rest and are therefore not one of us." Take heart! The Body of Christ desperately needs you! You have a unique function, which we are handicapped without.

I (George) often tell people that if they get a taste of Body ministry it will ruin them for anything else. They will never be any good at playing church again, and that is exactly what God intends. In fact, every believer I know who hungers for Body-life has received such a foretaste. Those who have not seem to be oblivious to the possibility of any greater Body reality.

One of the most awesome meetings I (Ron) was ever in began with the usual singing and praise but became an actual seminar in praise, with God himself doing the teaching. As we praised Him and His presence filled the room, various ones were given a word from God which related to our praise and led us to enter into a deeper and higher level of praise. God revealed what He desired from us as we praised him as a group -- a body in unity -- and as we responded, he led us into new levels. Various ones in the group started songs as they were led. This went on for nearly three hours and it seemed like almost no time had passed. No one got bored, no one fell asleep, and no one wanted it to end. No one presented a message or a teaching other than the brief words that came from time to time from several different individuals who were moved by the Holy Spirit. There was no big name speaker, no worship team up front, and the pastor of the group wasn't even there that night! The result was not just a teaching, but an *education* in praising and worshipping God. Not just theory, but a practical demonstration.

Sometimes at other meetings of this same group, there was little praise and singing. Instead the meeting was filled with different ones sharing insights that the Lord had given them about a certain passage of scripture. Again, it is awesome to see God speaking through several different people (with no previous planning) and through them present a unified teaching! None of these who spoke was the designated teacher! The Holy Spirit does know how to teach! He will lead us into all truth if we just have the faith to let Him.

As awesome as such meetings can be, it is even more edifying and wonderful to experience God raising up individual ministries within a group as the group carries out the particular ministry the Lord has led them into. To see ministry needs within the group met by God Himself is a daily witness to His love, His wisdom, and His sufficiency. It is so different from the situation where people are placed according to the leader's estimation of their natural abilities. Remember, David would never have been made King of Israel if men had made the choice! We look at the natural, the flesh. God looks at the heart.

Our prayer is that ALL may know the joy of living in that corporate expression of Christ, the vehicle through which His glory will fill the earth, the fullness of Him, the corporate vessel through which His manifold wisdom is known. We pray that ALL members might become whole and complete, that the world can once again see Jesus Christ in His fullness as we obey His voice.

Jesus, we, your Body, are longing for the real thing. Awaken in us that *agape* love that made men sell their possessions so that those in need were not left lacking. Lord, take these stony hearts out of us and give us hearts so filled with your love that we MUST take action when a member of your body suffers. Give us hearts that truly rejoice when another member rejoices. Dear Lord, open our eyes so we can see You as You really are in one another. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, please pray for the full restoration of Christ's Body on the earth that He might be seen and glorified! The gates of hell tremble at the very thought of it!