

How To Identify A Christian

Part 6

A Christian Is A Part Of Christ's Body On Earth

Acts 9:1-5 [NIV] *“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.”*

In his reply to Saul’s question “*who are you?*” Jesus Christ revealed Himself as the One whom Saul was persecuting by persecuting Christians.

Ephesians 1:22-23 [NIV] *“And God placed all things under his feet and **appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is His Body**, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

Jesus Christ is the Head, and all other Christians are part of the rest of His Body on earth.

What does this mean to us individually?

What difference should it make to us individually that we are members of Christ’s Body on earth?

Romans 12:4-5 [NIV] *“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so **in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**”*

We as part of One Body are joined one to another.

We can summarise the effect such a union with Jesus Christ by being part of His Body should have on us in five different ways.

1 Vitality

The union we have with Jesus Christ is a living union.

When we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we began a spiritual life in union with the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised to send to His disciples.

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the **Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for **he lives with you and will be in you.**”*

The promise made by Christ.

John 16:13-14 [NIV] *“But when he, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, he will **guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”*

What the Holy Spirit would do for us.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 [NIV] *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by **one Spirit** into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

This entry of the Holy Spirit into our lives included every Christian.

Note that we did **not** put ourselves into Christ’s body, nor did another believer do it for us by some religious ritual.

This entry of the Holy Spirit into our life was totally and solely accomplished by God in response to our trust in what He had done for us through His Only Son Jesus the Christ.

The use of the Greek word *“baptizo”* in this passage of scripture is used in its figurative meaning of *“to be identified with”*.

Our literal baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, indicates our being closely bound to them and become their property.

We become part of the Body of Christ by illustrating our trust in Him, through baptism. This experience is for all believers and it takes place once at the time of conversion.

Paul never commanded believers to be *“baptised by the spirit”* as separate experience, but he did admonish us to be *“filled with the spirit”*.

Ephesians 5:18 [NIV] *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”*

This experience must be repeated as we seek to witness and serve our Creator God.

Romans 8:9-16 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**”*

How does the Holy Spirit witness to us?

- a) **speaks to us through the Word of God** that He inspired the prophets and apostles to write;
- b) **through our contact with God’s people** as we worship together and serve one another, giving us that feeling of *“belonging”*. We, by the Holy Spirit in us, love God’s people and want to be with them;
- c) the Holy Spirit also **witnesses through us** and enables us to share Christ with the *“lost”*.

Acts 1:8 [NIV] *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

This witness is **not** something we manufacture in our own power. It is the Holy Spirit in us that enables us to witness and do it in a way that is natural, not forced.

A Christian is **not** somebody who tries to imitate Christ.

A Christian is a person who is identified with Christ as a member of His Body and the life of Christ [the Holy Spirit in us] flows in and through us.

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

This is the power in us that enables us to live a life that is producing the fruits of the spirit in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Such characteristics in our life are the most powerful witness we can ever give to the “lost” world.

Our first responsibility as Christians is to maintain the close relationship with the Holy Spirit that we may receive the vitality to fulfil the work God desires to do through us.

2 Unity

Ephesians 4:4 [NIV] *“There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called...”*

There are many local “church bodies” around the world, but all true believers are members of that **one body** of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

Ephesians 4:3 [NIV] *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Our individual task is to endeavour to safeguard the unity the One Holy Spirit brings to us.

Ephesians 4:4-6 [NIV] *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

Here are listed the seven [Seven has been called the “signature” of the Holy Spirit] bonds that unite the people of God.

a One Body – the church

Ephesians 1:22-23 [NIV] *“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

b One Spirit – the Holy Spirit sent from the Father

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

c One Hope – of the return of our Saviour Jesus Christ

Titus 2:13 [NIV] *“while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,”*

d One Lord – our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 12:3 [NIV] *“Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no-one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”*

e One Faith – the basic Christian doctrine as given to the apostles

Jude 3 [NIV] *“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”*

1 Timothy 6:20-21 [NIV] *“Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.”*

f One Baptism – the baptism of the Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13 [NIV] *“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

g One God – the Father of all

Mark 12:32 [NIV] *“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.”*

1 Timothy 2:5 [NIV] *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”*

What the above brings to Christ’s Church is unity **not** uniformity.

Unity comes from life within each person and is a living thing.

Uniformity is something that is mechanical and manufactured by pressure from without.

Unity comes only from a power that is within each person, that is the Holy Spirit, actively working within us.

The Church is an organism, a living body, energized by the Holy Spirit, organised only for the people in it to be able to serve one another.

When organisation becomes more important than the spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ through the active presence of the Holy Spirit; the Church starts to exist only for itself and is not the body that God wants to use to fulfil His Will on earth. How tragic!

Local churches may differ from one another in minor matters of interpretation of scripture and organisation, but it is important that they all present a united witness of love.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**”*

The most powerful witness.

John 17:20-21 [NIV] *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

Christ's prayer.

Why is this so important?

Ephesians 1:9-10 [NIV] *“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment, **to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.**”*

This is the Father's ultimate goal.

If local churches are divided and competing with each other they are working against the very will and plan of God!

The spiritual unity of God's people is **not** something that we must bring about ourselves, it is already an accomplished fact.

Ephesians 4:4 [NIV] *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.”*

This does **not** say that there ought to be one body.

This spiritual body is made up of people who **have** trusted Christ and **have** received a new life through the Spirit.

3 Diversity

Unity and diversity must work together or one will destroy the other.

Unity without diversity is uniformity.

Diversity without unity is anarchy.

The Church needs both unity and diversity, if it is to function in this world.

Note we have unity and diversity in the following passages of instructive scripture.

Unity – Romans 12:1-5 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

Diversity – Romans 12:5-8 [NIV] *“so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **We have different gifts,** according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

Unity – 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 [NIV] *“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus*

be cursed,” and no-one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. **There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.** The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and **we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**”

Diversity – 1 Corinthians 12:14-31 [NIV] “**Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.** If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.** The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.”

Unity – Ephesians 4:1-6 [NIV] “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Diversity – Ephesians 4:7-13 [NIV] “**But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.** This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”

God has given a diversity of gifts to His people and these gifts must be used for the building up to maturity the Body of Christ.

The only thing that can balance unity and diversity is maturity.

Paul uses the human body as an example of the fine balance between unity and diversity.

The human body is only healthy and effective when all parts are in harmony inspite of being of great diversity.

Just as all the parts of the human body belong to each other, affect each other and need each other; so we as humans with diverse gifts must work together for the benefit of the whole spiritual body, the Church.

The Church matures as all the people use their individual gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unity is the result of the active gift of the Holy Spirit.

Diversity is the result of the active use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For this balance to work the Church must also, by grace, be developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit their lives.

This is where the Church at Corinth failed.

They used their gifts as weapons to fight each other with, **not** tools to build with, because they lacked love, a fruit of the active influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

4 Maturity

Maturity is the result of unity and diversity being bonded with love.

Love is the product [fruit] of an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Directly after speaking about unity and diversity in **1 Corinthians 12** Paul emphasises love in **chapter 13** and how that love should be exercised in the practical activities in the Church in **chapter 14**.

1 Corinthians 13 is a lovely poem of love that is often read at funerals and weddings but actually it ought to be read at church business meetings.

The Corinthian Church lacking the lack was –

Divided – 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 [NIV] *“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”*

Defiled – 1 Corinthians 5:1 [NIV] *“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife.”*

Disgraced – 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 [NIV] *“If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another, and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.”*

Disorderly – 1 Corinthians 11:17-18 [NIV] *“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.”*

– 1 Corinthians 14:23-26 [NIV] *“So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!” What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.”*

Members were flaunting their gifts [especially the gift of tongues] and causing disorder in their meetings.

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul uses the word edify [build up] seven times in showing how personal gifts of the Spirit should be used.

The body matures from within.

Ephesians 4:11-13, 16 [NIV] *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.” ... “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

The body is nurtured by the Word as expounded by those given by Christ the gift of teaching or pasturing.

Ephesians 4:15 [NIV] *“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”*

The truth that must be spoken in love, for this is the secret formula for maturity.

Truth without love is brutality.

Love without truth is hypocrisy.

To grow more like Jesus Christ we need to have both truth and love.

Truth and love sum up the very character of Jesus Christ.

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| Truth | – John 17:17 [NIV] <i>“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”</i>
God’s word, The Bible, is truth. |
| | – John 14:6 [NIV] <i>“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”</i>
Personified by Christ the Word. |
| Love | – 1 John 4:16 [NIV] <i>“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”</i>
God is love. |
| | – John 1:1-2, 14 [NIV] <i>“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” ... “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”</i>
Jesus Christ is God. |

God uses love to call a person to Him, through the love sacrifice of Jesus Christ His Only Son.

Then the written word inspired by the Holy Spirit and brought to mind by the Holy Spirit when needed **to build up the person called until maturity is reached.**

All this needs to happen in the fellowship of the Church where Christ has provided gifted leaders to serve the believers by helping them discover and develop their own spiritual gifts.

There is no substitute for the local church when it comes to balanced spiritual growth.

Each member is gifted to serve in a certain way for the benefit of the whole.

Each should realise and fulfil their particular gifted role.

Acts 6:1-7 [NIV] *“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, **“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”** This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. **The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.**”*

Those gifted as teachers should major on prayer and the ministry of God’s Word, **not** the administration of the assembly.

The applying of this principle resulted in a rapid increase in membership.

2 Corinthians 13:9 [NIV] *“We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection.”*

Prayer is a spiritual tool for maturity for it releases the power of God in our lives and in the lives of others, leading to spiritual growth and service.

Another tool God uses to bring us to maturity is suffering.

1 Peter 5:10 [NIV] *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”*

Suffering if rightly used will bring us closer to God as we pray for help and strength to prevail.

Satan wants to use suffering to tear us down but God can use suffering to build us up and equip us to serve Him better.

We have to let God use his *“tools”* to equip us and mature us as we share in the ministry of the local church.

5 Ministry

Hebrews 10:5-7 [NIV] *“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: **“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, O God.’”**”*

When the Son of God came to the earth He needed a physical body to fulfil His ministry.

After this earthly work was finished Jesus Christ left behind a spiritual body, the church, to continue the work the Father had given Him to do.

There are many kinds of Christian service within the spiritual Body of Christ, the church, other than preaching.

“Life power” in the spiritual body is equipping God’s people, enlisting them for service and then encouraging them to get the job done.

“Few things help an individual more to mature than to place a responsibility on them, and let them know that you trust them.”
Quote: Booker T. Washington

Ephesians 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

Church membership is far more than “supporting” the church with our money, attendance and occasional work.

Membership means that we, as part of the spiritual Body of Christ on earth, have the responsibility and privilege of contributing to the strength and growth of that body.

We all must use our gifts in loving ministry to the church and through the church to the “lost” world who needs what we have received from our Creator God, love, mercy and salvation.

Take time to review these five aspects of our Christian life as part of the Body of Christ on earth.

Then rejoice at what an exciting thing it is to be a member of the Body of Christ.