

# Our Spiritual Journey: The Gifts of the Spirit

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 4:1-16

As we continue our study of the Gifts of the Spirit, we now come to Ephesians chapter four. Jesus Christ died for us to provide unity for His people. Those who are members of the body of Christ have unity with God and with each other. Compare Ephesians 2:11-22, where the unity of the members of Christ are likened to a building. Christ rose from the dead and gave spiritual gifts to His people. These gifts introduce diversity to Christ's body. Unity (not uniformity) works hand-in-hand with diversity in the body of Christ, as a whole, and also in the local church.

## **The Body of Christ: Grounded in Unity – Ephesians 6:1-6.**

The things that Christ's people share in common might be seen as the skeleton of the body, which gives stability and strength. Compare Ephesians 2:18-22 – note a stabilizing foundation. What do Christ's people have in common?

- **The Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace – Ephesians 4:3**  
This is not something we created. This is the work of the Spirit of Christ. We need to keep / maintain this unity. It requires us to exercise humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love (Ephesians 4:1-2). That Christians be united in peace has a note of urgency. On the other hand, doctrinal unity can take time (see Ephesians 4:13 – “Until”).
- **One body – Ephesians 4:4**  
The Lord did not design denominations and sects for people to create various sub-cultures and movements. Satan's divisiveness and man's ignorance, pride, and impulsiveness have brought about the various factions and movements that exist two thousand years after Christ first formed His church.
- **One Spirit – Ephesians 4:4**  
“...The LORD our God, the LORD is One” (Deuteronomy 6:4). The unity of God must be reflected in the inter-relationships of God's people (Galatians 4:4-6; I John 3:23-24).
- **One Hope of your calling – Ephesians 4:4**  
There is only one way of salvation / one gospel (John 14:6; Romans 1:16; Acts 4:12; Galatians 1:6-10; 5:5; Colossians 1:3-6; 2:6-10; Titus 3:5-7).
- **One Lord – Ephesians 4:5**  
One Master (Matthew 23:8,10).
- **One Faith – Ephesians 4:5,21**  
One doctrine (Matthew 28:18-20; I Timothy 4:1; 6:1-5; II John 1:9-11; **Jude 1:3,20-21**).
- **One Baptism – Ephesians 4:5**  
A spiritual baptism, at the time of our coming to faith (I Corinthians 12:13 cp. Ephesians 1:12-14; 2:11-19). This is symbolized by water baptism (Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 2:12).
- **One God and Father of all – Ephesians 4:6**  
All of God for all of us (Romans 8:9; I Peter 1:2-5; Matthew 6:25-34; 23:9; I Thessalonians 5:23)

## **The Body of Christ: Girded with Diversity – Ephesians 6:7-16.**

By giving us different abilities and different jobs to do, Christ has strengthened us all as a whole. Let's look at the diversified ministries, listed here in the fourth chapter of Ephesians.

### **Christ took away our sins and gave us gifts – Ephesians 4:7-11.**

Christ was victor over sin and death. Descending into the earth he took those who were in paradise and lead them away, not as victims or prisoners, but as His reward (Luke 23:43; I Peter 3:18-19; Isaiah 61:1). These people had been in the bondage of sin and Satan, but now they are His to take to heaven (II Corinthians 5:8). From heaven, Christ has given / is giving a variety of spiritual gifts and jobs for His people to do:

**Apostles** – Literally, the word means *“Sent Ones.”* They are delegates / representatives / ambassadors. Christ had twelve specific apostles for the nation Israel. Judas defected and committed suicide. He was replaced by another (Matthew 10:1-6; Acts 1:15-26; I Corinthians 15:3-5). There are others who are called *“apostles”* who are not of *“the twelve”* (Acts 14:14) They are similar to what we would today call *“missionaries.”* Apostles were used to advance the work of the kingdom and establish churches. Evangelism and teaching gifts were also needed for this ministry. The authoritative ministry of the original apostles is preserved for us in the writings of the New Testament. There is no need for apostolic succession.

**Prophets** – We often think of prophets telling the future. Study the Old Testament Scriptures and you will find that was a small part of their work. Their main job was to communicate God's Word and make people understand God's will. In the early years of Christianity, people were without Bibles. The people needed the Word of God delivered to them. New Testament prophets primarily made the Scriptures known. They gave people a fresh revelation of what God wanted them to know and to do. They gave knowledge and understanding to the believers (*“edification, exhortation, comfort”* - I Corinthians 14:3).

**Evangelists** – Literally, the word means *“Bearers of the Good News.”* The Greek word is directly tied to the word for *“gospel.”* The evangelist's job was to preach the gospel and win people to faith in Christ. The apostles and prophets laid a foundation (Ephesians 2:20) on which the evangelists could build.

**Pastor-teachers** – Notice the phrase *“and some”* is not mentioned between the words, *“pastors and teachers.”* This implies that the two words describe one office. A pastor is a shepherd. Other words that describe this office are *“elder”* and *“overseer” (bishop)*. Descriptions of their qualifications and work are found in I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4. Their attention is given mostly to the local church.

### **The Body of Christ ministers to itself in love – Ephesians 4:12-16.**

The body of Christ is perfected and protected when everyone is developing and using their gifts.