

# Many Members

1 Corinthians 12



Apostle Paul (~ 5 – 67 A.D.)  
By Andrei Rublev (1410)

Many Members    Introduction

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- One of the biggest problems in the Corinthian church was disunity.
- Christians in Corinth did not value each member's place within the church.

# Many Members    Introduction

- Paul takes on this problem of disunity by comparing the church to a body, specifically, the body of Christ.
- He explains that the body is composed of people who all have differing spiritual gifts.

# Many Members Introduction

1. The Spirit distributes the gifts. **12:1-11**
2. The body needs all its members. **12:12-26**
3. God gives the members differing gifts. **12:27-31**

# Many Members    Introduction

God builds the church out of a variety of people who  
have a variety of spiritual gifts.  
All of them are needed.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

# The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

- 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts
- The way Paul says this implies that he is answering a question from the Corinthians.
- Proper functioning of spiritual gifts was something they were evidently talking about in Corinth.
- Paul uses this to teach them about the unity they need.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

- 12:2 mute idols
- In contrast to those mute idols, the true God is a living, speaking, active God who moves his people to various kinds of activity.

# The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

- 12:3 Jesus is Lord!
- Anyone who said this in those days admitted Christ's deity.
- That is what "Lord" means in this context, and some Roman emperors demanded a similar confession.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

- 12:4-6 same Spirit ... same Lord ... same God
- Strung together as they are, these phrases point to the reality of the Trinity.
- God himself is a complex unity.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

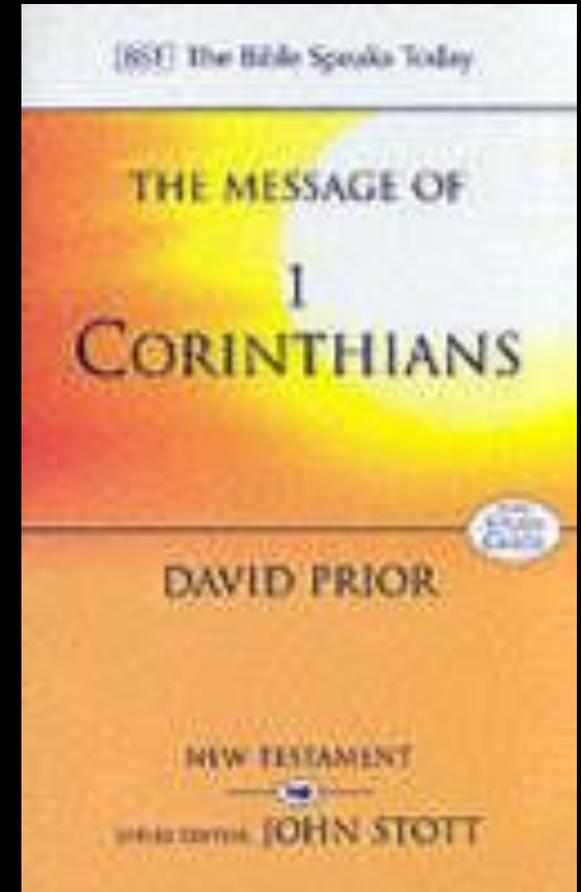
- 12:7, 11 to each, to each one
- Every Christian has received at least one spiritual gift.
- It is our responsibility to use the gift(s) we have for the good of the whole church.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

*Paul is adamant that 'to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit'. That refrain runs through the chapter like a theme in a symphony. The Christian community is the community of the Holy Spirit, of the living God. He is a richly diverse God and every single member contributes to this living diversity.*

– David Prior, former director,  
The Centre for Marketplace Theology,  
London.



The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

- 1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

The Spirit distributes the gifts.

12:1-11

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The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

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12:12-26

- 12:12-14 A healthy church needs both unity and diversity.
- We need to work together as one team – with each person fulfilling his or her responsibilities.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:12-14 Two types of teams:
- A bowling team and a football team.
  - On a bowling team each person bowls individually.
  - They each repeat the same process, one at a time, and then you add up the scores.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:12-14 Two types of teams:
- A bowling team and a football team.
  - On a football team each player has different a job to do on each and every play, but each job is vital.
  - The church is more like a football team.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:15-25 Paul now describes Two Big Deceptions.
- Big Deception #1: The “I don’t fit in” deception.
- Big Deception #2: The “You don’t fit in” deception.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:15-20 Big Deception #1: The “I don’t fit in” deception.
- The thought that “I don’t fit in” is not only wrong, but harmful.
- It can deceptively sound like humility.
- It may even be a way to hide the fact that we want to be someone else – our displeasure with who God has made us.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:21-25 Big Deception #2: The “You don’t fit in” deception.
- The thought that “You don’t fit in” is not only wrong, but harmful.
- We may not immediately see why everyone is important.
- This is especially true of the weaker members of the body (v.22). The weaker members are necessary.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:21-25 Big Deception #2: The “You don’t fit in” deception.
- Consider the lowly appendix.
- Darwin believed it was useless.
- In a 2009 article in the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, researchers concluded otherwise.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- Researcher Heather Smith also spoke with Jinny Cho of the Duke *Chronicle*.
- *Darwin lacked these modern tools 150 years ago, Smith noted, adding that Darwin's conclusion that the appendix served no function was a "very valid hypothesis given the data available to him."*

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- Researcher Heather Smith also spoke with Jinny Cho of the Duke *Chronicle*.
- "*Darwin didn't have the advantage of having histological data [pertaining to microanatomy] on the appendix, so there is no way he could have known about the biofilm that indicates a layer of beneficial bacteria housed in the appendix," she said.*

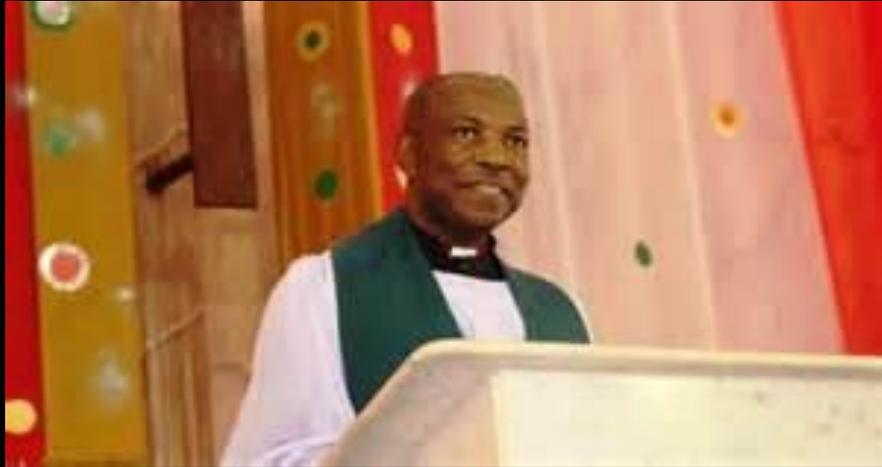
The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

- 12:21-24 Every member counts. This is part of the complex unity that exists within the body.
- 12:25 that there may be no division
- Diversity need not lead to division, and won't, as long as we each care for one another.
- 12:26 We suffer and rejoice together.

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26



*The different parts of a body all need each other, just as individual Christians need one another. This point is well made by the African proverb, 'The left hand washes the right and the right hand washes the left'.*

*– Dachollom Datiri, President,  
Church of Christ in Nations*

The body needs all its members.

12:12-26

God builds the church out of a variety of people who  
have a variety of spiritual gifts.  
All of them are needed.

God gives the members differing gifts.

12:27-31

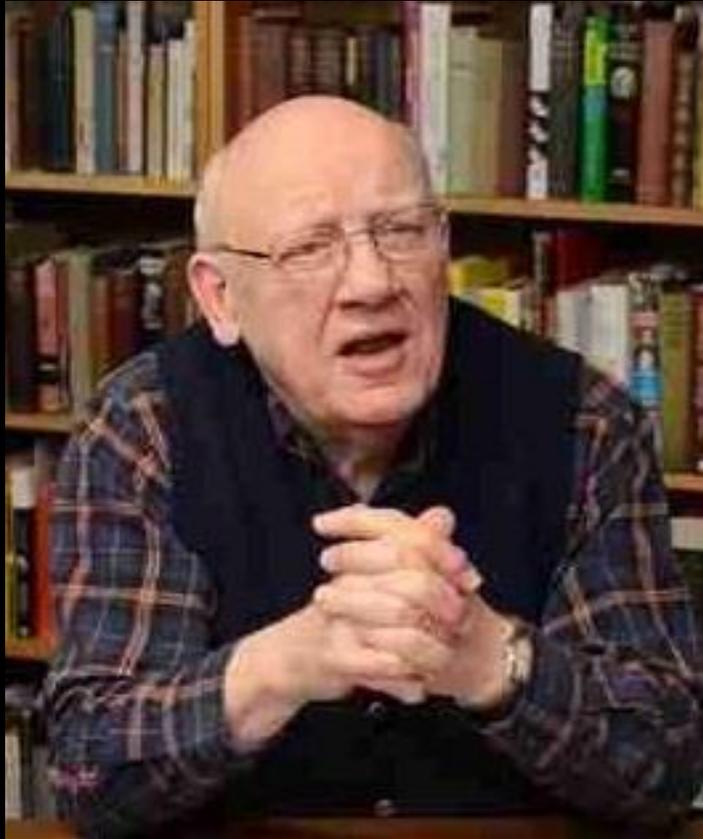
God gives the members differing gifts.

12:27-31

- Here again are some sample gifts.
- Paul's point is that we don't all have the same gifts.
- But the differing gifts are all needed within the larger picture of the church.
- See also **Romans 12** and **Ephesians 4**.

God gives the members differing gifts.

12:27-31

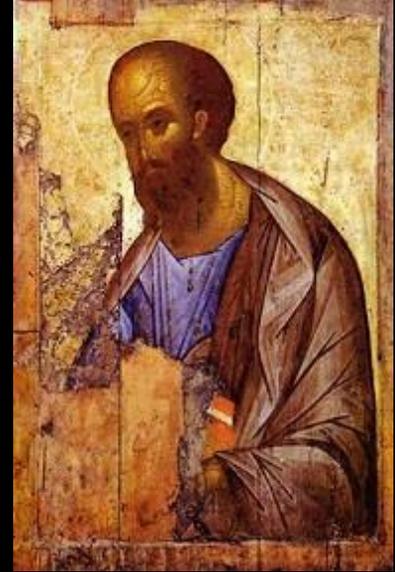


*It is important that we realize our relationship to one another in the church ... There can be unity where there is not uniformity. Christ never prayed for uniformity in His church, but for the same spiritual unity that exists between Him and His Father.*

*– Warren Wiersbe*

Many Members

Conclusions



# Many Members      Conclusions

## Three important points:

1. The Spirit distributes the gifts.
2. The body needs all its members.
3. God gives the members differing gifts.

Many Members

Conclusions

Two types of teams:

1. A Bowling Team

2. A Football Team

- The church is more like the latter.

# Many Members      Conclusions

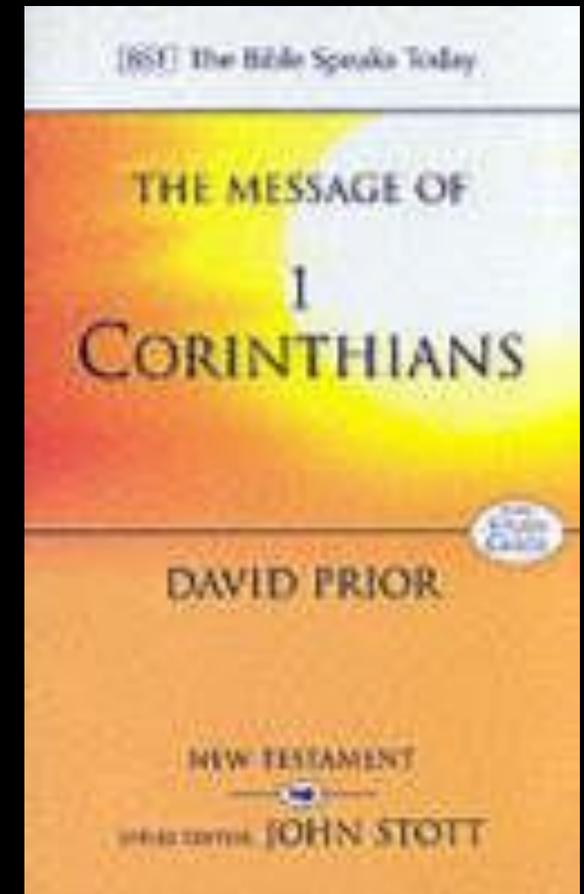
## Two Big Deceptions:

1. The “I don’t fit in” deception.
2. The “You don’t fit in” deception.

# Many Members      Conclusions

*The competitiveness of the Christians at Corinth is often repeated today. ... Those who have certain gifts develop a proud attitude to those who do not; those who want these gifts become depressed because they do not seem able to receive them ...*

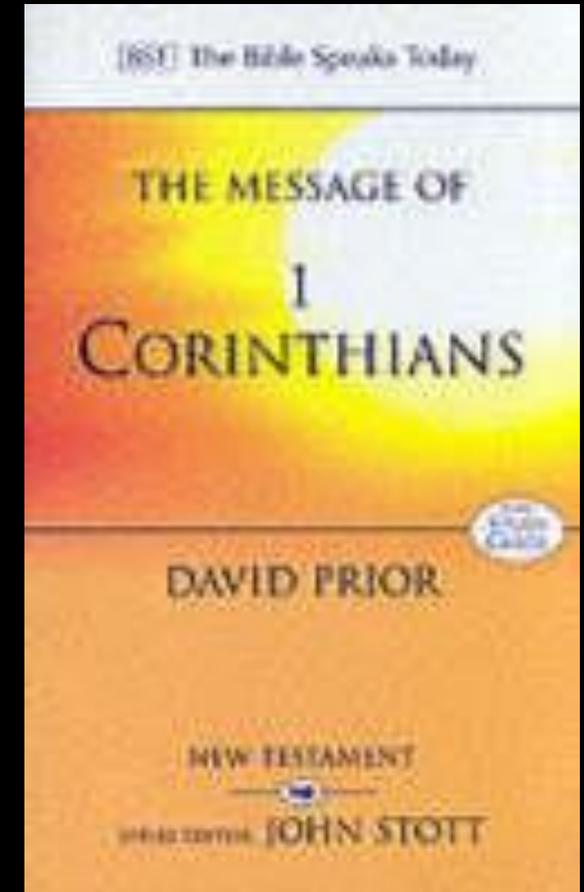
*– David Prior, former director,  
The Centre for Marketplace Theology,  
London.*



# Many Members      Conclusions

*If, on the other hand, it is love which controls and prevails in a church, then every member will be freed to bring his particular gift and to ask God for more gifts, not for his own sake, but for the benefit of all. Such is the desire of those controlled by the love of God.*

*– David Prior, former director,  
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London.*



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- Final Passage: **1 Corinthians 13.**