

**Page 9-1****Disciplemaking 1
Abiding in His Word****IN THE BODY**

"We are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Ephesians 4:15-16

Our spiritual birth delivered us into the family of God ... into the Body of Christ. Tremendous and wonderful things happened when we believed in Jesus Christ. Before that we were dead ... and then we became alive. We were enemies of God ... and afterwards we became His friends. We were in darkness ... and then we came into the light. However, our new life has much more significance than just the personal, individual changes. We also became part of His Body. We became equal and important parts in the Body with other believers.

Our life in the Body with other believers has particular privileges and responsibilities. The Bible gives us several illustrations to help us understand what it means to be in the Body. We are part of the Body of Christ ... the family of God ... the bride of Christ ... the house of God ... the temple ... the light ... a nation ... the vine ... and a flock. Understanding the implications of these helps us function properly as members of the Body.

The Bible gives us clear directives on how to function in the Body. In obedience to God's Word, we should follow our spiritual birth with water baptism as an outward sign of our identification with His death, burial, and resurrection. Moreover, we need to be together ... sharing our resources ... being taught ... worshipping ... praying ... and remembering His death through communion. We are also commanded to love one another, to preserve unity, to be pure, and to put love into action.

God has given us the resources that we need to function properly in the Body. He has given four kinds of specialized people, leaders, to equip us. In addition, He has given special abilities, spiritual gifts, to believers ... empowering us to do our part in the Body of Christ. Our proper use of these resources, as we fit into our proper place in His Body, causes the whole Body to grow up in all aspects to bring honor to Christ.

NINE ILLUSTRATIONS OF LIFE WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

These illustrations give understanding about our position, privileges, and responsibilities in the Body of Christ. Think about the implications of each of these illustrations that apply to our relationship with God ... with other believers ... and with lost people.

1. Body of Christ. Jesus is the Head of the Body, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18. No other member is the Head ... only Jesus is. Each believer is an important part of the Body, Romans 12:4-5, Ephesians 5:30, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. There are many different parts of the body. All parts are not identical... each part must do its own job. There is no place for individualism or favoritism. Our goal is growth in love until the Body reaches full stature matching the Head, Ephesians 4:11-16.

2. Family of God. God is our father, Matthew 6:9, 23:9, 2 Corinthians 6:18. We are His children, Galatians 3:26, 1 John 3:1-2. Jesus is our first-born brother, Hebrews 1:6, 2:17. First-born is a position of authority in the family ... it does not imply that Jesus did not exist before Bethlehem. He was born there as the God-man. He was born as our first-born brother. However, He always existed. In addition, we are fellow-heirs with Him, Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:7. We have fellowship with the Father, Jesus, and each other, 1 John 1:3, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Matthew 23:8. We are part of the wonderful family of God.

3. Bride of Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom, John 3:29, Matthew 25:1-13, Luke 5:34. We are the bride, betrothed to Christ, being prepared for the wedding, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-33. This illustration is one of anticipation. We are waiting for our Bridegroom's return ... anticipating the marriage supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7-9.

4. House of God. We are being built to be His dwelling place. God is the builder of His house, Hebrews 3:2-6. Christ is the cornerstone ... and the apostles and prophets are the foundation, Ephesians 2:19-22. We are the living stones used to build His house, 1 Peter 2:4-5. The house of God is not made of bricks and sticks ... it is being built of flesh and blood. *"You also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:22. *"But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house, whose house we are."* Hebrews 3:6.

5. Temple of God. Israel had a temple. We are a temple. Jesus is our High Priest, Hebrews 3:1, 4:14-15, 5:5-6, 9:11-12. We are individual priests representing ourselves directly to God. As priests in His Temple, we should offer six sacrifices. **Sacrifice #1** is *our bodies as living sacrifices* ... holy and acceptable to God, Romans 12:1. **Sacrifice #2** is *our praise* ... our grateful acknowledgement of God for who He is, Hebrews 13:15.

NINE ILLUSTRATIONS (continued)

5. Temple of God ... continued. **Sacrifice #3** is *our good works* ... as our response to salvation, Hebrews 13:16. **Sacrifice #4** is *our koinonia* ... a Greek word meaning our full participation in shared resources and in fellowship with other believers, Hebrews 13:16. **Sacrifice #5** is *our broken and contrite hearts* ... lowly, bruised, and crushed, Psalm 51:17. And **Sacrifice #6** is our new believers ... those that we help come to faith in Christ, Romans 15:16.

6. Light. God is light ... and in Him there is no darkness, 1 John 1:5, Revelation 21:23. We are sons of light, 1 Thessalonians 5:5. John stated that Jesus was the true light, John 1:4-5, 9. Jesus described Himself as the light of the world, John 8:12, 12:46. He said, "*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" John 9:5. At His ascension, we became the light of the world. Jesus said, "*You are the light of the world.*" Matthew 5:14. We must walk in the light, Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7. We are lights shining to a world living in darkness, Matthew 5:14-16, Philippians 2:15.

7. Nation. Israel is a special nation to God ... she is the apple of His eye, Zechariah 2:8. The Church is also referred to as a holy nation, 1 Peter 2:9. That does not mean that Israel and the Church are the same ... they are not. As believers, our citizenship is in heaven, Philippians 3:20. We, as Christians, are fellow-citizens with the saints, Ephesians 2:19. Moreover, we are aliens and strangers in this world. We are in the world ... but not of the world, John 17:14-16. We are on assignment in this foreign land as ambassadors of the King, 2 Corinthians 5:20. As ambassadors, we have both the ministry and message of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

8. Vine. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, John 15:1,5. This illustrates our dependency on Him. It also points to our responsibility to bear fruit, John 15:1-16. We glorify the Father by bearing more fruit, John 15:2 ... much fruit, John 15:8 ... and fruit that remains, John 15:16. Our Father is the vinedresser, John 15:1. He prunes us to bear more fruit, John 15:1-2. Bearing fruit enhances our prayers, John 15:16.

9. Flock. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4, Hebrews 13:20. He is the Good Shepherd, John 10:14-16. He is the door of the sheep, John 10:7. We are His sheep ... following His voice, John 10:3-4, 27-28. The Shepherd protects His sheep. He gave His life to protect us from the eternal danger of sin, John 10:11. God's wonderful care for His sheep is explained in Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34:1-31, and John 10:1-30. God said, "*As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God.*" Ezekiel 34:31. God is our shepherd ... that is a great comfort. One day we will become one flock with Israel, John 10:6.

LIFE IN THE BODY

Birth. Our starting point is spiritual birth. Jesus told Nicodemus, "*You must be born again.*" John 3:7. No one is part of the Body until he or she is personally born again. We are born into the Body of Christ. Paul described this as a spiritual baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "*By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*". From that beginning point, each believer needs to grow to become a properly functioning part of the Body ... fitting in ... serving and being served.

Baptism. The outer demonstration of our inner spiritual baptism is water baptism. Jesus was baptized, Matthew 3:13-17. Every believer should be baptized. The Great Commission includes the commandment for "*baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*" Matthew 28:19. Water baptism is a statement of our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, Romans 6:1-7. A simple application of this Biblical commandment is baptism by immersion after spiritual rebirth.

Early Church Examples. The early church gave good examples to us ... examples of what our collective lives should include.

- Gathering together, Acts 2:1.
- Being taught, Acts 2:41.
- Fellowship, Acts 2:41.
- Breaking bread (the Lord's Supper), Acts 2:41.
- Praying together, Acts 2:41.
- Sharing their material resources, Acts 2:44-45.
- Eating meals together, Acts 2:46.
- Praising God, Acts 2:47.
- Growing in numbers, Acts 2:47.

Worship. Worship should be an integral part of our individual and collective lives as believers. The men and women of the Old and New Testaments worshipped God in many different places and situations. Worship can be in spoken word or song. Jesus said, "*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" John 4:24.

Communion. The example and teaching of Christ at the Last Supper, and Paul's explanation of them, established communion as a special time of remembrance for Christians when we gather together. When we eat the bread and drink the cup at communion, we look back at Christ's sacrifice of His body and at the shedding His blood for us. We commemorate the great price He paid for us. In communion, we also should look inside ourselves in self-examination ... and we should look forward to the day when we will share this meal with Jesus in His kingdom, Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:14-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

LIFE IN THE BODY (continued)

Four Commandments. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments."* John 14:15. These four commandments are very important for the Body to function properly. These commandments are both individual and collective. The Body functions properly if each part is individually working properly, Ephesians 4:16. We are commanded to love one another ... to preserve unity ... to be pure ... and to put love into action.

Commandment #1 ... Love one another. Jesus said, *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."* John 15:12. This commandment is the basis of the other three. Love should be our individual and collective attitude. It should be the motivation for all of our actions toward our fellow-believers. God loved us ... therefore, we should love each other, 1 John 4:11. We should love each other fervently from the heart, 1 Peter 1:22. As Christ laid down His life for us, we should lay down our lives for each other, 1 John 3:16. The world will know that we are His disciples because of our love for one another, John 13:34-35. Loving each other begins with an attitude change. *"With humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself."* Philippians 2:3. We are commanded to put that love into action ... *"Through love serve one another."* Galatians 5:13.

Commandment #2 ... Preserve unity. We are not commanded to create unity. Unity comes from the Spirit ... not from us. Individually and collectively, we must be *"diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Ephesians 4:3. Jesus prayed that we would be one, John 17:11,21-23. His prayer in verse 23 was literally that we would be perfected into a unit ... so that the world would believe that He came from the Father. We are to be of one heart and one soul, Acts 4:32, Romans 15:5. We are to be of one mind, 1 Corinthians 1:10. Preserving unity is not easy. Preserving unity takes continuous action.

"Pursue the things which make for peace". Romans 14:19.

Show *"forbearance to one another in love".* Ephesians 4:2.

"Accept one another". Romans 15:7.

"Let us not judge one another". Romans 14:13.

Do not put *"a stumbling block in a brother's way."* Romans 14:13.

Don't let liberty be *"a stumbling block to the weak."* 1 Corinthians 8:9.

"Let no one act as your judge". Colossians 2:16-17.

Don't show *"personal favoritism".* James 2:1-9.

"Do not speak against one another". James 4:11.

"Do not complain ... against one another". James 5:9.

Do not *"bite and devour one another".* Galatians 5:15.

Be *"subject to one another in the fear of Christ."* Ephesians 5:21.

LIFE IN THE BODY (continued)

Commandment #3 ... Be pure. *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?"* 1 Corinthians 5:6. This rhetorical question stresses the effect of an individual's sin on the group. Love does not mean overlooking sin and the damage it causes. Unity is not unity if it requires the sacrifice of purity. We must love one another and preserve unity ... in part by dealing effectively with the sin in our midst. Three types of sin must be purged from the Body ... our personal sin ... each other's sins ... and the sin of a divisive or unrepentant man.

First ... we must purge our **personal sin**. One person's sin can devastate the group as in Joshua 7 ... where one man's greed brought defeat to the entire army of Israel. The Body can be hurt by lying to one another ... and by immorality, impurity, greed, filthiness, silly talk and coarse jesting, Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 5:3-4. In addition, the one who commits sexual immorality transgresses and defrauds his brother, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6. There is a cure for our personal sin ... God will forgive and cleanse us if we confess our sins, 1 John 1:9.

Second ... we must purge **each other's sins**. In doing this we need to *"put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other."* Colossians 3:12-13. Sometimes someone must be rebuked. *"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."* Luke 17:3. There is a three-step Biblical process for rebuking a brother, Matthew 18:15-17. First ... go to him individually. If he repents, forgive him ... and it is finished. This is private. It is not public in any way. If this attempt fails then go on to step two. Confront the brother again ... but this time with one or two witnesses. These are more than witnesses of the confrontation. They must be witnesses of the sin of the brother. If the brother repents, forgive him ... and it is finished. This is also a private event. Finally, if the problem is still unresolved, *"tell it to the church"*. If the brother repents, forgive him. *"If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and tax-gatherer."* ... that is as an outsider, Matthew 18:17. The goal of each of these steps is to *"restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness."* Galatians 6:1. In every step of this process keep verses like Ephesians 4:26,32 and 1 Peter 4:8 in your mind and heart.

Third ... we must purge the **sin of a divisive or unrepentant man**. An unrepentant, immoral, or a factious man cannot be tolerated. We are instructed to *"reject a factious man after a first and second warning."* Titus 3:9-11. Then we are to *"turn away from them."* Romans 16:17. We are instructed to *"keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life."* 2 Thessalonians 3:6. We must *"remove the wicked man from among yourselves."* 1 Corinthians 5:11-13.

LIFE IN THE BODY (continued)

Commandment #4 ... Put love into action. *"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth."* 1 John 3:18. Love without action is not love at all. Real love is more than words. Real love results in real action. Jesus was the ultimate expression and example of love. He laid down His life for us, 1 John 3:16. To be like Jesus, we should give our lives away in serving one another. To serve one another in love we need to be with one another. We should gather together with other believers. Do not try to live the Christian life alone. We must not be *"forsaking our own assembling together."* Hebrews 10:25. This means much more than attending religious meetings. We should *"pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."* 2 Timothy 2:22. Jesus said, *"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."* Matthew 18:20. He is with us when we are gathered together in any place or in any location ... not just when we meet in a religious building. Gather together with other believer ... and put love into action. The following are ways to put love into action:

Admonish one another, Romans 15:14.

Be hospitable, Romans 12:13.

Build up one another, Romans 14:19.

Comfort one another with words of His return, 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

Do good to each other, Galatians 6:10.

Encourage one another, 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

Meet each other's material needs, Romans 12:13.

Rejoice and weep together, Romans 12:15.

Sing together, Colossians 3:16.

Stimulate one another to love and good deeds, Hebrews 10:24.

Suffer with one another, 1 Corinthians 12:26.

Support teachers and workers, Galatians 6:6, 1 Corinthians 9:11,14.

Support widows, 1 Timothy 5:8-12.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God has provided two kinds of gifts to His Body. Jesus gives specialized people, four types of leaders, "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of service.*" Ephesians 4:12. In addition, the Spirit gives special abilities for service ... in varied combinations to each believer. What we know about both categories of gifts we know from the Bible. We cannot allow our experience or that of others to determine what we believe about spiritual gifts.

Specialized people ... given by Jesus ... to equip the body. These are specialized people ... the leaders described in Ephesians 4:11-16. Not every believer is one of these four. These are not positions or offices to which people are elected. Only some believers are these specialized people. They are given by Jesus to the Body to equip believers. They are not hired guns to do the ministry for us. They are given to train us ... to equip us for the work of service. The four types of leaders are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. *Apostles* are those that are sent out to be foundational in beginning a new ministry. *Prophets* declare God's Word to the Body. *Evangelists* declare His Word to the lost. *Pastor-teachers* watch over and feed God's people. To understand a leader's role in the Body, consider the evangelist. The evangelist should do the work of evangelism ... and he should equip believers to do evangelism.

Special abilities ... given by the Holy Spirit ... to empower the body. These special abilities, given by the Holy Spirit, empower believers ... enabling them to do the work of service. These gifts are not to be confused with natural or learned abilities and talents. For example ... some believers may have a God-given talent of singing. They may have learned much about music. They may have trained and exercised their voices. However, those believers do not have the spiritual gift of singing ... there is no such gift. Certain basic facts are true about spiritual gifts.

Every believer is given at least one spiritual gift.
1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10.

The gifts are given at the Spirit's desire rather than our own desire.
1 Corinthians 12:11

They are for the common good rather than individual benefit.
1 Corinthians 12:7, Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

There is a possibility that they may be lost. Matthew 25:14-29
Note: Romans 11:29 deals with Israel, not the Body

The spiritual gift (or gifts) that you have is (or are) determined by the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:4. The ministries in which you use them are determined by Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:5. Effectiveness is the Father's work, 1 Corinthians 12:6. Your responsibility is obedience.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS (continued)

Determining which gift(s) you have takes time and experience. You can discover your gift(s) by learning what the gifts are ... by being involved in ministry ... and by evaluating what God is doing through you. Make an educated spiritual guess as to which gift may be yours ... get involved in that type of ministry ... give it some time ... and then evaluate what God has done. Your gift(s) will become obvious as you minister.

Spiritual gifts are described in the Bible in two major references, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. Knowing our natural tendency for divisiveness, the Holy Spirit put the great chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, in the middle of His teaching on gifts. Let the Bible define spiritual gifts. Pray and study the Bible to form your beliefs about gifts. Don't decide by osmosis ... absorbing your beliefs from your spiritual environment. Let the Bible invade your experience. Don't let your experience invade the Bible. Each believer has been given one or more spiritual gifts. These special abilities are listed below in general alphabetical order ... not in any order of significance. Each believer does not have all of the gifts. However, all believers have responsibilities in each of these areas.

1. Discerning of Spirits. Some have a special ability to distinguish between good and evil ... between that which is of God or of the world, the flesh, and the devil. All believers should be discerning, Hebrews 5:14, 1 John 4:1.

2. Exhortation. This is a special ability to incite, urge, or encourage others. It could be called the gift of encouragement. Some have this gift ... but all believers should encourage one another, Hebrews 3:13, 10:25.

3. Faith. This is an extra ability to trust God steadfastly for the humanly improbable or impossible. It might be seen when someone holds on when others let go ... or lets go when others hold on. This faith is not forming an image of something in your mind that obligates God to give it to you. This faith is not *naming* something that obligates God to give it to you because you have spoken. This faith is whole-hearted trust in Him to do what He chooses. Some have this gift ... but all should have faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

4. Giving. This is the special ability to give back to God, through others, what He has given to us. This is a special ability to know what to give ... to whom to give it ... and when to give. It has more to do with the quality of the giving than it does with the quantity of the gift. Sometimes God combines the gift of giving with extra material resources ... an awesome opportunity and responsibility for the person with the gift. Some have this gift ... but all should give, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS (continued)

5. Healing. This is the special ability to be used by God in the physical, emotional, or spiritual healing. Do not expect all to be physically healed. Paul was not healed, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Trophimus was not healed, 2 Timothy 4:20. In addition, we have never seen the great men and women of faith healed of the diseases of old age ... all eventually die. Sometimes God heals some people through those with the gift of healing. All do not have this gift ... but all can seek healing, James 5:14-16.

6. Knowledge. This is a special ability to understand God's Word. If it were knowledge directly given by God, it would be uncompromisingly consistent with the written Word. If it is inaccurate, or if it contradicts the Bible in any way, then the knowledge is not from God. Paul wrote that this gift would be done away with at some time, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. Some may have this gift ... but all should pursue greater knowledge of God's Word, 2 Timothy 2:15, Colossians 1:9-10.

7. Leadership. This is the special ability to lead others in accomplishing God's work. Look behind you. Is anyone following? Are you effectively leading others to accomplish God's will? Leadership ability in the world is not the same as the gift of leadership. Being an elected, or appointed, leader in the church does not necessarily mean that one has the gift of leadership. This gift is given to some believers ... but all have leadership influence on the people around them, Proverbs 12:26.

8. Mercy. This is a special ability to perform deeds of love. Mercy is active compassion directed to the undeserving ... whether or not they are unlovely, destitute, or humanly distressed. Only some believers have this gift ... but all believers should be merciful, Jude 1:2-23.

9. Miracles. This is the special ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to perform humanly impossible acts of power. The power for miracles can come from other sources, Exodus 7:10-13, Matthew 7:21-23. All believers don't have this gift ... but we all do have power, John 14:12, Acts 1:8.

10. Prophecy. This is a special ability given to some to declare God's Word. Prophecy may be an authoritative declaration with the force of *thus saith the Lord* ... as it was with the New Testament authors. In addition, prophecy may be the divine prediction of future events. Foretelling the future in the name of God is dangerous, Deuteronomy 18:22. It seems to be limited, Revelation 22:18-19. Paul wrote that this gift would be done away with at some time, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. Prophecy may simply be the forth telling, or declaring of God's Word ... similar to preaching or public declaration. All believers should do some of that, Psalm 145:4-12.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS (continued)

11. Serving. This is a special ability for helping and assisting others. It is not limited to helping those in ministry ... but it is certainly needed in that context. This kind of ministry can be a way to get involved... and from it grow into other areas as their gifts become apparent. Philip did this when he helped serve food to the widows ... and in doing so took a burden off the leaders which gave them time for prayer and the Word, Acts 6:1-6. A short time after that Phillip was an evangelist giving the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch ... and then to the people along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea from Azotus to Caesarea. Some have a special gift of serving ... but we should all serve one another, Galatians 5:13.

12. Teaching. This gift is the ability to help others learn and apply God's Word. Biblical teaching is more than the public declaration of facts ... it is making disciples. Mentoring, tutoring, and apprenticing can be part of this process. Teaching can be to large groups, to small groups, or to one person at a time. Numbers and popularity are not the measure of good teaching, 2 Timothy 4:3. The true measure of good teaching is in changed lives. Some have the gift of teaching ... but every believer should teach someone, Matthew 28:18-20.

13. Tongues. The spiritual gift of tongues is the ability to speak in a real language, which is unknown to the speaker. Tongues are not messages from God to man ... but are prayers addressed to God, 1 Corinthians 14:2,14. Tongues is a sign for non-believers, 1 Corinthians 14:22. It does not edify the Body ... but does benefit the speaker, 1 Corinthians 14:4. Tongues are limited to two or at most three in one meeting ... spoken one at a time ... and spoken only with interpretation, 1 Corinthians 14:27-28. Use of the spiritual gift of tongues should not be frenzied or chaotic ... but should be used properly and in order, 1 Corinthians 14:40. Paul wrote that this gift would cease at some time, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10. All believers do not have the spiritual gift of tongues, 1 Corinthians 12:30 ... but all should control the tongue they do have, James 1:26, 3:5-6.

14. Interpretation. This is the Spirit given ability to translate someone else's gift of tongues into the language of the hearers. It is not clear Biblically if the interpreter knows either or both languages. Tongues should never be used without interpretation, 1 Corinthians 14:27-28. At the time that tongues cease, interpretation will also cease.

15. Wisdom. This is a special ability to apply knowledge of God's Word to the complexities of life. Some have this gift ... but we all should conduct ourselves with wisdom, Colossians 4:5 ... and if we lack wisdom we should pray for it, James 1:5.

Questions and Answers Addendum

Note: This addendum is not necessarily part of the regular teaching of the lesson. It is provided to answer some frequently asked questions.

Answers to questions about gifts and signs. There is confusion, misunderstanding, and disagreement among Christians about signs, wonders, miracles and the gifts of the Spirit. God used these things in the early church to confirm His message, Hebrews 2:2-4. Since that time, the church has given them varying emphasis ... from ignoring them to overuse and misuse. Use the Bible as the basis for what you believe about these things. Several questions are answered in this section to help you discover the truth. Don't adopt these answers as your beliefs simply because they are written here. Moreover, don't reject any of these answers simply because they contradict your experience or that of your friends. Form your own beliefs through much prayer and much Bible study. Do not be involved in any experience that is inconsistent with or contradicts Biblical truth. Be very careful about any experiences that are not in the Bible ... certainly do not emphasize those.

1. *If I don't have the gift of evangelism should I witness anyway?* Yes, you should witness. You are commanded to witness. Moreover, you don't have the gift of evangelism. No one has that gift because there is no gift of evangelism. There are evangelists, given by Jesus to equip believers, Ephesians 4:11-13. However, the Bible never mentions a Spirit given gift of evangelism. Evangelism is a responsibility ... not a gift.

2. *Are gifts of the Spirit available today?* Some Christians believe that the gifts were given only to the first century church. They use Hebrews 2:2-4 to include signs, wonders, miracles and gifts in the founding of the church. Then they extend their interpretation of those verses to exclude these things from all following generations. They point to a pattern of miraculous events concentrated at times of change ... the Exodus, the prophets, the life of Jesus, and the formation of the church. However, there is no convincing Biblical evidence that these things were only for the first generation of the church. Moreover, if we are in the *end times*, then this too is a period of change.

3. *Are all the gifts available today?* Christians disagree about the availability of prophecy, knowledge, tongues, and interpretation ... coming from two interpretations of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Those verses state that these gifts would end when the "*perfect*" comes. One opinion is that the *perfect* was the completion of the New Testament, noting Revelation 22:18-19 as the close of prophesy, and therefore these four gifts are no longer available. The other opinion is that the *perfect* is the return of Christ, and therefore these gifts will be available to believers until He returns. The Bible is not clear on what the "*perfect*" is ... or when it has or will come. Therefore, there is some doubt about the availability of these four gifts. It isn't clearly defined. Therefore, it is best to base our obedience and experience on a simple and full application of the Bible's rules and limitations. If a gift is available today, and is from Him, then all of His directives for that gift will be met. If they aren't met, the gift isn't of Him.

Questions and Answers Addendum (continued)

4. Are all signs, wonders, and miracles of God? No! Satan's agents can do the miraculous. Pharaoh's magicians could duplicate Moses' miracle, Exodus 7:10-12. Simon, an unsaved man, astonished people with his magic arts in Samaria, Acts 8:9-13. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light and his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, 1 Corinthians 11:13-15. These and other false apostles and deceitful workers can perform signs and wonders, Matthew 7:22-23. Many false religions and cults include signs, wonders, and even tongues as enticements to attract people away from the true God.

5. What do people mean when they justify their experiences with the phrase "God is not the author of confusion"? Their experience may or may not be of God. However, their use of that phrase to defend some experience is illogical. It is true that God is never the author of confusion, 1 Corinthians 14:33. However, there are other authors. There are deceitful spirits and doctrines of devils, 1 Timothy 4:1-3. There are false teachers, 2 Peter 2:1. The Bible should be the basis of experience. Experience, even in the name of Christianity, is not self-authenticating.

6. Is being slain in the Spirit of God? Being *slain in the Spirit* refers to someone falling over at the touch of a leader. *Falling down in the Spirit* is a similar experience ... without a leader's touch. Nonbelievers falling to the ground, John 18:6, and the Spirit snatching Philip away from the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:39, are not examples of being *slain in the Spirit*. There are no Biblical examples of, and no Biblical teaching about, this phenomenon. Being *slain in the Spirit* is extra-Biblical ... seen in experience but not found in the Bible.

7. Is the phenomenon of church group laughing a manifestation of the Spirit? In addition, what about those who roar like lions in church services ... is that of the Spirit? Hopefully, these have been nothing more than passing fads in the history of strange experiences in some churches. No such unusual experiences are found in the Bible's teaching or in its record of early church experiences. Such happenings are extra-Biblical. Paul's exhortation may apply, "*But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.*" 1 Corinthians 14:40. This verse should not exclude fervor and emotion ... but it should exclude chaos and disorder.

8. Shouldn't tongues be as popular today as it was in the book of Acts? About 30 years of church history is recorded in Acts ... with more than 50 geographical locations mentioned ... and with missionary travels covering more than 7,500 miles (12,000 km). However, in all of that, tongues are mentioned only three times ... at Pentecost in Jerusalem, Acts 2 ... and when the Gospel came to Gentiles, Acts 10:43-48 ... and in Ephesus when some of John the Baptist's disciples believed in Jesus, Acts 19:1-7. Tongues are not prevalent in the book of Acts.

Questions and Answers Addendum (continued)

9. *Are tongues a real language ... or can they be any kind of verbal utterances?*

There is nothing in the Bible that indicates that tongues would be anything but a real language. The word *unknown* was used in conjunction with the word *tongue* several times in the King James translation of 1 Corinthians 14. However, there is no Greek word for *unknown* in those verses (2,4,13,14,19, and 27). The language of tongues was unknown to the one speaking ... but probably not unknown in the history of mankind. Some say it might be in the language of angels, 1 Corinthians 13:1 ... but there is no indication that angels speak in some disorganized babbling. Angels speak coherently, Luke 2:8-14, Revelation 5:11-12. The word used for *tongue* in Greek means either the physical organ in one's mouth ... or it means language as used in Revelation 5:9, 13:7 and 17:15.

10. *How do I know if a manifestation of the gift of tongues is real?* The source of tongues is important. Real language tongues may come from the Holy Spirit or from Satan. Chaotic, babbling-type tongues may be from the emotional side of the flesh or from Satan. Tongues from the Holy Spirit will be consistent with all the Biblical rules.

Tongues are prayers addressed to God, 1 Corinthians 14:2,14.

Tongues are a sign for non-believers, 1 Corinthians 14:22.

There are three tongues maximum per meeting, 1 Corinthians 14:27.

Tongues are spoken one at a time, 1 Corinthians 14:27.

Tongues are spoken only with interpretation, 1 Corinthians 14:27-28.

Tongues should be used properly and in order, 1 Corinthians 14:40.

And tongues from the Spirit will be consistent demonstrations of the fruit of the Spirit ... *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."* Galatians 5:22-23.

11. *Should I seek the gift of tongues?* All believers are not given the gift of tongues, 1 Corinthians 12:30. All the gifts are given at the Spirit's desire rather than our desire, 1 Corinthians 12:11. Paul listed several gifts ... putting tongues at the end of the list. He then wrote *"but earnestly desire the greater gifts."* 1 Corinthians 12:28-31. Paul put love above tongues, 1 Corinthians 13:1. He preferred prophecy to tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:5. He also wrote that he would prefer to speak five words with his mind than 10,000 words in a tongue. Paul acknowledged the gift of tongues in the lives of others and in his own life. However, he often warned of the misuse of this gift. Paul wrote, *"Do not forbid to speak in tongues."* 1 Corinthians 14:39. A good approach to tongues is this ... seek not and forbid not.

12. *What about private prayer tongues?* Some Christians experience a mysterious language when they pray alone. Romans 8:26 teaches that the Holy Spirit prays for us ... not through us. Jude 1:20 teaches that we should pray in the Spirit ... but we should do all things in the Spirit. Justifying private tongues from these verses is an interpretive stretch. Paul wished that all spoke in tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:5. However, all cannot speak in tongues.

Questions and Answers Addendum (continued)

12. What about private prayer tongues? ... continued. Tongues are limited to two or at the most three in a meeting ... spoken in turn ... and spoken only if someone interprets, 1 Corinthians 14:27-28. From verse 28, *"if there is no interpreter, let him speak to himself and to God."* That refers to the two or three people with a public tongue who are silenced by the absence of an interpreter. In that situation, those specific people are told to pray privately rather than publicly. This falls significantly short of teaching private prayer tongues for all believers. Some say that private prayer tongues were so popular in the early church that there was no need to document them in the Bible ... however, that cannot be substantiated.

13. Why is there so much disunity about signs, wonders, and gifts of the Spirit?

Paul put the great verses on love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, in the middle of his teaching about gifts. Lack of love rather than lack of truth causes much disunity. Some have gained their opinions on these subjects by osmosis from other Christians rather than from unprejudiced study of the Word ... promoting disunity from lack of Biblical knowledge. In addition, some Christians have adopted the opinions of their leaders or favorite authors ... rather than forming their own opinions through prayer and study of the Word. Persuasive shepherds can divide the flock ... promoting disunity because of their personal opinions.

14. Why do the gifts exist? The Holy Spirit has given us special abilities to empower us. In addition, Jesus has given us specialized people to equip us. The gifts of the Spirit and the gifts of Jesus make it possible for us to live successfully in the Body of Christ so that we can *"grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."* Ephesians 4:15-16.