

EXEGETICAL GUIDE

# 1 CORINTHIANS

## 12

THE WORKING OF UNITY



BE UNITED  
IN CHRIST

# BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

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ISBN 978-1-944971-02-1

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# Be United in Christ

## Exegetical Guide

### 1 Corinthians 12

#### The Working of Unity

Every day we work and play because of the amazing interaction of our body's numerous different parts. More than 200 kinds of cells create four types of tissue that form five vital organs as well as the 650 muscles, 206 bones, and 100 billion nerves that work together in ten different systems to allow us to think, breathe, circulate blood, digest food, and reproduce. God assigns each part a particular role to bless and serve the unified whole. Without this diverse unity there would be no life or health.

The same is true of the body of Christ. God assigns every Christian a distinct function in Christ's church, and the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts so that each believer can perform his or her role to benefit the church as a whole. There is unity, for all share the same Spirit, who enabled them to profess "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3). There is also diversity, for the Spirit designates various gifts for different believers to fulfill their particular function. And this diverse unity produces spiritual life and health. Therefore it is critical for Christians to be united in Christ.

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## HOW TO USE A BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

An exegetical guide is a comprehensive analysis of a particular Bible passage that also models how to carefully study and faithfully preach any portion of Scripture.

The Introduction provides the context, while **Connection to Be United in Christ** highlights the text's importance for Christian unity. The **Passage** presents the text being studied.

We begin by **Studying the Passage** because God's messengers must convey God's words accurately. The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek or Hebrew alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts. The Structural Layout divides the passage into its component parts, because to understand what God said we must understand how He said it. It is an essential step in Bible study, but do not be discouraged if this section seems unfamiliar or daunting. The Narrative Flow explains the Biblical author's flow of thought through the passage. The Passage Overview then presents a simple outline that will form the foundation of subsequent outlines and the sermon manuscript itself. The Passage Focus distills the text into a statement that will be the main idea of the sermon. We then identify several Resources to further your study.

Having studied the passage, we are ready to begin **Preparing the Sermon**. Good preaching feeds God's people on God's Word, so our messages must be both healthful and appetizing.

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This is why this section begins by laying out several Sermon Ingredients that will be used to prepare a nutritious and appealing message. We must present God's Word accurately and clearly so that God's people will understand it with their minds, embrace it in their hearts, and apply it to their lives. The Passage Outline presents the structure and flow, while the Passage Details provide the grammatical, historical, and theological information needed to understand and teach the passage. The message is then fortified with Applications and seasoned with Illustrations. These ingredients are combined to prepare a spiritual meal to feed God's children. The Sermon Outline rephrases the Passage Outline to make it more understandable to an audience. The Sermon Manuscript for Your Use then offers an example of how the passage might be preached. Then we identify several Sermon Examples that model good preaching on the text.

The third part of the exegetical guide is called **Exploring the Classics**. In this section we provide writings by G. Campbell Morgan, John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, and other notable Christian ministers so that the eloquent wisdom of the past can bear fresh fruit in the church today.

We conclude with two **Addendums**. The first surveys the role of the Holy Spirit in promoting Christian unity in the early church and today so that we can cooperate with Him in promoting harmony between believers. The second discusses how we put our spiritual gifts to work serving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

May God use this guide to promote love for Him, fidelity to His Word, and unity in His church.

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## INTRODUCTION

Corinth was a bustling port city of eighty thousand to one hundred thousand people located on the narrow land bridge between northern and southern Greece. Trade ships and travelers came to cross the isthmus. Pilgrims visited the temples of Aphrodite, Apollo, Poseidon, and many other gods. Tourists attended the Isthmian games and other athletic events. This thriving, recently rebuilt city “was at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world.”<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul moved to Corinth from Athens at the end of his second missionary journey sometime around AD 50–51. There he made tents, preached the gospel, taught God’s Word, and established the church (Acts 18:1–18; 1 Corinthians 3:6; 4:15). After eighteen months Paul returned to Antioch but still corresponded with the Corinthian Christians. Two of his letters are preserved in the Bible, and they allude to a previous letter (1 Corinthians 5:9) and an intervening “sorrowful letter” (2 Corinthians 7:8) sent by Paul, as well as a letter from the Corinthians seeking his counsel on several matters (1 Corinthians 7:1).

This last letter reached Paul in Ephesus around AD 54–55 on his third missionary journey. About that same time he had received a report from “Chloe’s people” that the church in Corinth was not well (1 Corinthians 1:11). They were factious, fleshly, and proud (1:10–4:21). There was incest, lawsuits, and immorality (chs. 5–6). Weaker believers were being harmed, poorer members were being mistreated, and the worship services were chaotic (chs. 8–14). Some were even questioning Jesus’ resurrection (ch. 15).

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 3.



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# STUDYING THE PASSAGE

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**1 Corinthians 12**

**The Working of Unity**

## PASSAGE COMPARISON

### 1 Corinthians 12

The Passage Comparison presents the original Greek text alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts.

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
<sup>1</sup> Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.	<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.	<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.	<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren, I would not have you ignorant.
<sup>2</sup> Οἴδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε πρὸς τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι.	<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, <i>you were</i> led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.	<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.	<sup>2</sup> Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.
<sup>3</sup> διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει· Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν· Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.	<sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.	<sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.	<sup>3</sup> Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and <i>that</i> no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.
<sup>4</sup> Διαιρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα·	<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.	<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;	<sup>4</sup> Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:	<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.	<sup>1</sup> Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.	<sup>1</sup> Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this.
<sup>2</sup> You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.	<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.	<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.	<sup>2</sup> You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols.
<sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.	<sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.	<sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to know 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.	<sup>3</sup> So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.
<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.	<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;	<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.	<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.



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## STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

The Structural Layout shows how the passage fits together. The left column contains the Biblical text divided into its structural elements. Main clauses are aligned left and related elements are highlighted in color. The right column explains how the various elements function in context.

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,  
I do not want you to be **unaware**.

This sentence introduces a new section (chapters 12–14), which concerns spiritual gifts.

<sup>2</sup> You **know**  
that when you were pagans,  
you were led astray to the mute idols,  
however you were led.

This sentence states what the Corinthians already know about their pre-conversion state as the reason for what Paul shares in v. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore I **make known** to you  
that no one speaking **by the Spirit of God** says,  
“Jesus is accursed”;  
and no one can say,  
“Jesus is Lord,” except **by the Holy Spirit**.

This sentence asserts that the Corinthians were mislead because they were pagans (v. 2). Paul now reveals both what can never be said and what can only be said by the Holy Spirit regarding Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> Now there are **varieties of gifts**,  
but **the same Spirit**.

Verses 4–6 reveal the triune unity underlying the various gifts, ministries, and effects working in all the believers within the church.

<sup>5</sup> And there are **varieties of ministries**,  
and **the same Lord**.

<sup>6</sup> There are **varieties of effects**,  
but **the same God**  
**who** works **all things** in all persons.

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# PREPARING THE SERMON

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**1 Corinthians 12**

**The Working of Unity**



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## PASSAGE DETAILS

### 1 Corinthians 12:1

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware**

“Now concerning” marks a change in topics as Paul addresses another of the Corinthians’ questions (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).

“Spiritual gifts.” The original Greek text simply says “spirituals,” which broadly means “spiritual things.” Most commentators agree, however, that in the context of 1 Corinthians 12–14 it refers to “spiritual gifts.” This interpretation is reflected in the NASB translation. Its form can be either masculine (“spiritual people”; 2:15; 3:1; 14:37) or neuter (“spiritual things”; 9:11; 14:1; 15:46). The latter is more likely here in light of its usage in 14:1 and its treatment in chapter 12. Both the term and the context suggest a close connection between “spirituals” and the Holy Spirit.

“Brethren” implies a family relationship. Paul uses this intimate, endearing term thirty-nine times in this epistle.

“Unaware.” Paul addresses ignorance often (Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

### 1 Corinthians 12:2

**You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led**

“When you were pagans.” Paul reminds the Corinthians of their preconversion condition (compare Ephesians 2:1–3, 11–12).

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“Led astray.” The passive may imply that Satan misled them in their pagan days before the Spirit began leading them after conversion (see 1 Corinthians 7:15; 2 Corinthians 2:11).<sup>3</sup>

“Mute idols.” The Old Testament contrasted speechless, dead idols with the speaking, living God of Israel (1 Kings 18:26, 29; Psalm 115:4–8; Isaiah 46:7; Jeremiah 10:5; Habakkuk 2:18–19).

### 1 Corinthians 12:3

**Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit**

“Therefore.” This probably picks up on verse 1 rather than verse 2: “I do not want you to be unaware.... Therefore I make known to you.”<sup>4</sup>

“I make known to you.” This is the third reference to knowledge in the first three verses: “unaware” (v. 1), “know” (v. 2), “make known” (v. 3). For “make known” see also 1 Corinthians 15:1.

“Jesus is accursed.” “Accursed” translates the Greek *anathema* (see Romans 9:3; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:8–9), which in these three contexts means “cut off from God.” There are at least a dozen different

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy A. Brookins and Bruce W. Longenecker, *1 Corinthians 10–16: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 63–64.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 26.

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# SERMON MANUSCRIPT FOR YOUR USE

## INTRODUCTION

One of the great joys of parenting is giving gifts to your kids, but one of the great griefs of parenting is watching them fight over what you give them. “Give me a turn!” “You’re not doing it right!” “It’s mine!” “You broke it!” It’s incredibly discouraging to hear our children argue over our blessings.

How tragic, then, when Christians argue over God’s gifts and quarrel over our heavenly Father’s blessings. God gave us the Lord’s Supper, and we divide over how to celebrate and interpret it. God has given us the hope of Heaven, and we splinter over end-time details. God gives us music to praise Him harmoniously, and we wage worship wars between generations and denominations. Perhaps most tragically of all, we debate and divide over the spiritual gifts God gives for the express purpose of uniting Christians. God gives spiritual gifts to unify and edify His Son’s body, yet our strife makes it seem as though the body of Christ has an autoimmune disorder—attacking, afflicting, and tearing itself down. These things should not be.

When Christians strive, the Spirit grieves. As Paul admonished the Ephesians (4:30–5:2),

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.



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Kindness, unity, love—these are the Spirit’s priorities for Christians. So disagreements over spiritual gifts, or any other non-gospel issue, must not be allowed to separate true believers.

This morning we’re going to examine a chapter of Scripture that addresses the gifts of the Spirit from the perspective of Christian unity and love. The church at Corinth had questions about spiritual gifts, especially speaking in tongues. Paul couched his response in the context of their confession of Jesus as Lord, their diverse unity based on God’s gifting, and their mutual dependence on one another as members of the body of Christ.

Thus 1 Corinthians 12 has three main sections:

I. AN INSPIRED CONFESSION (12:1–3)

II. A DIVERSE UNITY (12:4–11)

III. A UNITED BODY (12:12–31)

Paul’s three-part message to the Corinthians is just as vital today:

1. The true test for the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person is not tongues or any other spiritual gift or experience but rather a genuine confession of Jesus as Lord, which the Spirit must inspire.
2. The various spiritual gifts come from the same divine source and are distributed to individual believers by the Spirit for the common good of the Christian community.
3. Every member of Christ’s body is essential and dependent on the church’s other members, so esteeming, serving, and loving one another are more important than any gift.

To sum up the chapter in a sentence: all who profess Jesus as Lord have the Holy Spirit and must use their diverse spiritual

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# EXPLORING THE CLASSICS

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**1 Corinthians 12**

**The Working of Unity**

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## INTRODUCTION

Christians have a proud heritage. Many of history's noblest souls, brightest minds, and most eloquent tongues devoted their great gifts to Christ and left a rich legacy to His church. Reading Scripture through their eyes offers fresh perspectives only visible from outside the vantage point of our own age. Hearing their voices produces fewer echoes than listening only to modern messages and often reveals missed notes and forgotten melodies. The selections in this section represent more than 1,500 years of reflection on 1 Corinthians 12 and can help us learn, apply, and share its crucial truths today.

First is a compilation of insights gleaned from fifteen centuries of classic commentaries and sermons on this text. The authors range from John Chrysostom, the premier expositor of the early church, to Charles Spurgeon, the most prominent preacher of the nineteenth century. They include Arminian scholars (Adam Clarke), Calvinist theologians (Charles Hodge), Oxford professors (H. L. Goudge), Protestant Reformers (John Calvin), Presbyterian ministers (Matthew Henry), Anglican rectors (William Burkitt), and Swiss pastors (Frédéric Godet)—who are all united by their shared commitment to faithfully communicate God's Word.

The second reading is by G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945), a famed preacher and prolific author who twice pastored the prestigious Westminster Chapel in London (1904–1919; 1933–1943) before turning the pulpit over to his successor, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones. From 1 Corinthians 12:1–13 Morgan explains the Holy Spirit's roles as defender of the church's faith, the inspiration for its service, and the bond of its unity.

The third contribution is a delightful description of the scope

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and goal of the spiritual gifts by Alexander MacLaren (1826–1910), a well-known Baptist minister in Manchester, England. His lively exposition of 1 Corinthians 12:7 explains both the universality (“to each one”) and the purpose (“for the profit of all”) of “the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.”

Fourth is an earnest warning from John Wesley (1703–1791) “that there should be no schism” (1 Corinthians 12:25). Known as the Father of Methodism, Wesley never actually broke from the Church of England but urged love and unity from all Christians. His passion for unity is evident in his Biblical examination of the nature and evil of schism.

The closing word comes from Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892), the “Prince of Preachers.” His 1881 sermon “Love’s Labors” stresses that Christian love must bear, believe, hope, and endure all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). Following the example of the apostle Paul, it seemed important to end this presentation of 1 Corinthians 12 by emphasizing the “more excellent way” of love (12:31).

The saints of old have much to say to believers today, but because they come from other times and places, they are sometimes hard to understand. So to make their wisdom more accessible, these selections have been made more readable by inserting paragraph breaks, shortening and rearranging long, awkwardly-worded sentences, modernizing grammar, adding Scripture references, updating word choices, and offering occasional explanatory remarks.<sup>52</sup> Care has been taken to ensure that the authors’ intent was preserved, and the original versions are available online for those who want to read them.

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<sup>52</sup> Scripture quotations in this section are taken from the New King James Version.



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## CLASSIC COMMENTARIES AND EXPOSITIONS

### *The Context of 1 Corinthians 12–14*

The link that connects this passage (chapters 12–14) with the two preceding ones (11:2–16; 11:17–34) is certainly the common idea of public worship. This comes out particularly in chapter 14, where the apostle treats the exercise of spiritual gifts during the public assemblies of the church. ~ Godet

### *The Occasion for 1 Corinthians 12–14*

The distinctiveness of the new age of the Spirit following Pentecost consisted in two things:

- (1) The general *distributions* of the spiritual gifts. They were not confined to any one class of people but extended to all: male and female, young and old (Acts 2:17–18; compare Joel 2:28–29).
- (2) The wonderful *diversity* of these supernatural endowments.

Under circumstances so extraordinary, it was unavoidable that many disorders should arise. Some men would claim to be the instruments of the Spirit who actually were deluded or impostors. Some would be dissatisfied with the gifts which they had received and envy those whom they regarded as more highly favored. Others would be puffed up with pride and make a pretentious display of their extraordinary powers. And when the church gathered as a whole, it might be expected that the greatest confusion would arise from so

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many persons desiring to exercise their gifts at the same time. To correct these evils, all of which had manifested themselves in the church of Corinth, the apostle devotes this and the two following chapters (1 Corinthians 12–14). ~ Hodge

Failing to recognize the unity of the church and the divine purpose of mutual service, the more highly gifted among the Corinthians made their gifts an occasion of pride, while the less gifted were discouraged and depressed. Moreover, the more showy gifts were considered the more valuable gifts, and those who possessed them were eager to display them in a way inconsistent with the good order of the church. Love was lacking, and so the gifts of God were failing in their purpose. Thus St. Paul had three things to do:

- (1) show the purpose for which, and the principle upon which, the gifts were bestowed (chapter 12);
- (2) insist upon the supremacy of love (chapter 13);
- (3) give practical directions for the right employment of the gifts in question (chapter 14). ~ Goudge

### *How to Approach 1 Corinthians 12–14*

Dear friend, now that you have become a member of a Christian church, you should say to yourself, “What can I do for it? I have not come here merely to confess that I am saved and there let the matter end. I have enlisted in an army so that I may be a comrade with other soldiers and be drilled, trained, and equipped, so that I may know how to march and go forth to the battle. I have come into the church to be a member of a body. What is my office? Every member has its own special office in the body; it is not there merely for its own comfort but to be a help to the

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## JOHN WESLEY

### “On Schism”<sup>63</sup>

**“That there should be no schism in the body”**

**~ 1 Corinthians 12:25**

If there is any word in the English language as ambiguous and uncertain as the word *church*, it is one that is closely associated with it—the word *schism*. It has been the subject of countless disputes for several hundred years, and innumerable books have been written on it in every part of the Christian world. A very large share of these has been published in England, particularly during the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. And persons of the strongest understanding and the most complete learning have exhausted all their strength upon the question, both in conversation and in writing.

This has appeared to be more necessary than ever since the major separation of the Protestant reformers from the Roman Catholic Church. Schism is a charge that the members of that church never fail to bring against all who separate from it, and which, consequently, has employed the thoughts and pens of the most able debaters on both sides. And those on both sides have generally, when they entered into the field, been confident of victory, supposing that the strength of their arguments was so great that it was impossible for reasonable men to resist them.

But it is evident that very little good has been done by all these controversies. Very few of the most passionate and skillful

<sup>63</sup> Sermon number 75, preached March 30, 1786. John Wesley, “On Schism,” in *Sermons on Several Occasions: The First Series Concluded*, The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, vol. 6 (London, England: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 401–410.

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debaters have been able to convince their opponents. After all that could be said, the Catholics are still Catholics, and the Protestants are Protestants still. And the same lack of success has awaited those who have so strongly disputed about separating from the Church of England. Those who separated from it were angrily charged with schism; they denied the charge just as sharply; and scarcely any were able to convince their opponents, either on one side or the other.

One main reason why this controversy has been so unprofitable, why so few on either side have been convinced, is this: they seldom agreed on the meaning of the word *schism* that they disputed. And if they did not define the term before they began arguing about it, they might continue the dispute to the end of their lives without taking one step forward, without coming one inch nearer to each other than when they first set out.

Yet schism must be a point of considerable importance, or Paul would not have spoken so seriously of it. It is, therefore, very necessary that we should consider the following:

- I. The nature of schism, and
- II. The evil of schism.



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## I. The Nature of Schism

It is necessary to do this because among the innumerable books that have been written on the subject, both by the Catholics and Protestants, it is difficult to find any that define *schism* in a Scriptural manner. The whole body of Roman Catholics defines it as a separation from the church of Rome, and almost all our own writers define it as a separation from the Church of England. Thus both the one and the other set out wrongly and stumble at the very threshold. This will easily appear to any who calmly consider the several texts where the word “schism” occurs. From these it is clear that schism is not a separation *from* any church (whether general or particular, whether the Catholic or any national church) but a separation *within* a church.

Let us begin with the first verse in which St. Paul makes use of the word *schism*, 1 Corinthians 1:10. “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no *divisions* [*schismata*] among you.” Can anything be more plain than that the schisms mentioned here were not separations *from* but divisions *within* the church of Corinth? Accordingly verse 10 continues: “but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” You see here that a union in mind and judgment was the direct opposite to the Corinthian schism. This, consequently, was not a separation *from* the church or Christian society at Corinth but a separation *in* the church: a disunion in mind and judgment (perhaps also a lack of love) among those who, notwithstanding this, continued outwardly united as before.

The nature of this schism at Corinth is still more clearly decided (if anything could be more clear) by the words that

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# THE SPIRIT OF UNITY

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**1 Corinthians 12**

**The Working of Unity**

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Christian unity is vitally important to God, so the three persons of the Trinity work together to reconcile sinners and restore what we've ruined. Unity is important to God the Father, who sent His Son to die on the cross to reconcile sinners to Himself and to one another (Ephesians 2:13–16). It is important to God the Son, who—the night before He died—commanded His disciples to love one another and prayed that they would all be one (John 13:34; 15:12, 17; 17:11, 20–21). And it is important to God the Holy Spirit, whom the Father and Son sent to establish, promote, and maintain Christian unity. The Spirit who established, protected, and preserved love-based unity in the early church still actively sanctifies and equips believers and consolidates communities to unify the church today.

## THE UNIFYING SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH

After Jesus commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), He ordered them “by the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:2)<sup>77</sup> to stay in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49; see also Acts 1:4–5). In fact, His parting words to the apostles were “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The apostles had lived and ministered with Jesus for years and had performed miracles in His name, yet even they were powerless to complete the Great Commission on their own. It is the Spirit who empowers, sanctifies, and

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<sup>77</sup> Scripture quotations in this section and the following are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

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unites Christ's followers to accomplish their Lord's mission.

As the disciples waited for the Holy Spirit, they "all with one mind" were "devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). Their thoughts and prayers were unified because they looked to Scripture to understand what was happening and how to respond. "The Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David" that Judas would betray Jesus and would need to be replaced (Acts 1:16; see also Psalm 41:9; 69:25; 109:8). So they all accepted this without hesitation and acted accordingly (Acts 1:16–26).

God's Spirit unites God's people around God's Word. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant, authoritative basis for what Christians must believe and do. Heeding it enables believers to be single-minded and same-purposed. Revealing God's truth and will is a critical way the Spirit established, protected, and preserved unity in the early church.

## **Establishing Unity**

Fifty days after Passover, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' expectant disciples, just as He had promised.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from Heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:1–4)

This momentous event is rich with symbolism. The day of Pentecost was the day of first fruits, which celebrated the barley harvest that was commanded by God in Numbers 28:26, and



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# SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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**1 Corinthians 12**

**The Working of Unity**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware (1 Corinthians 12:1).**

**Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you (1 Timothy 4:14).**

God makes every person purposefully. He decides when to create a new life. Having created us, He endows us with aptitudes and abilities to know and play our parts within the communities where He places us. God intends each of us to use the talents He grants us to enjoy the desires He gives us to fulfill the roles He assigns us for the benefit of those around us. Individuals thrive and societies prosper when we use our gifts to serve our communities according to God's will.

God is equally purposeful when He saves sinners and makes them new creations in Christ. He decides when to create new life in dead souls and endows Christians with spiritual aptitudes and abilities to know and play our parts within the communities where He places us. God intends His children to use the spiritual gifts He grants us to enjoy the desires He gives us to fulfill the roles He assigns us for the benefit of believers around us. Christians thrive and churches prosper when we use our spiritual gifts to serve our spiritual families.

Lest anyone disobey God by being unaware of spiritual gifts or neglecting the spiritual gift within them, this concluding section will define spiritual gifts, illustrate them, and then suggest how to identify and use them as God intends.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> For a complete yet concise treatment, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018).

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## DEFINING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are divine inclinations and abilities bestowed on Christians to serve the church in love.

They are *divine*, for they are given, assigned, and empowered by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (1 Corinthians 12:4–6)

The various spiritual gifts come from the same Spirit to equip believers to minister on behalf of the same Lord as the same God works in and through them to accomplish His purposes (Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:21). They are distinct from the tendencies and talents God gives everyone, though spiritual and natural gifts sometimes overlap in believers.

Spiritual gifts are *inclinations and abilities*, for they direct and enable Christians to fulfill their roles in the body of Christ. They are *bestowed* by God, not acquired or selected by believers. And they are reserved for *Christians*—for every Christian and only to Christians. Everyone is born with God-given likes and skills, but only those who have been born-again have spiritual gifts, for only they have the Holy Spirit.

God gives Christians spiritual gifts to *serve the church*. Their intended beneficiaries are not their possessors or unbelievers but the Christian community. “To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good*” (1 Corinthians 12:7, emphasis added), so we must use them for “the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

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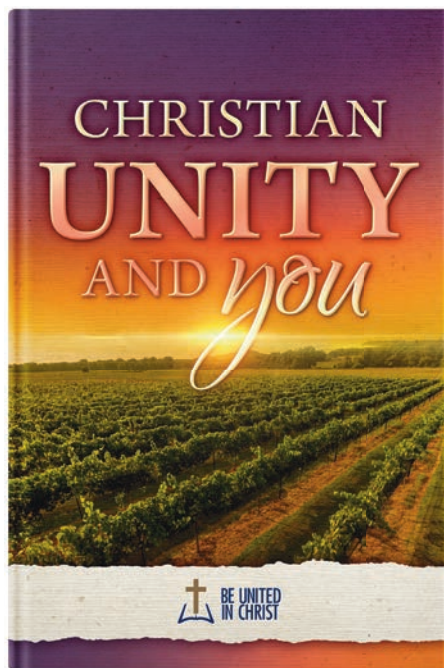


# **INSPIRING BIBLE-BASED RESOURCES**

# YOU CAN LOVE LIKE JESUS.

Imagine how the world could be transformed if Christians loved each other the way Jesus asked them to. Jesus' life is the greatest example of love that the world has ever seen. He told His disciples to love one another as He loved them. When believers live in visible love and unity as Christ lived—unity based on Biblical truth—we will begin to experience a taste of what Heaven will be like.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at [www.beunitedinchrist.com](http://www.beunitedinchrist.com).



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# A **THIRD** GREAT LOVE COMMANDMENT.

Within every human heart is the desire to be loved and to show love. It is the mark of God on our lives—a God who embodies love, who IS love, according to the Bible. In His Word, God gives us three great commandments, rules for operating in love with Him, with others, and with our Christian family. These commands should provide the foundation for everything we say and do.

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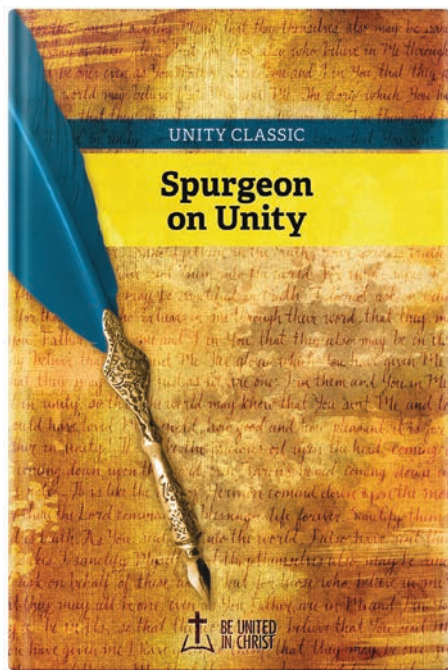
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# ENJOY THE LIFE CHRIST INTENDS FOR YOU.

The most prominent preacher of the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon pastored the world's largest mega-church and spoke to millions. Considered one of the greatest preachers in church history, his messages are as inspiring today as when they were first preached. *Spurgeon on Unity* lets you slip into the pew of this “Prince of Preachers” as he applies God’s Word to one of your greatest needs.

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# FEEL THE **PASSION** OF CHRIST FOR UNITY.

In John 17:20–23, Jesus prayed for His disciples to be **one** ... united with Him and each other. In His prayer, we hear the passion of Jesus Christ for the union of His people to God and to one another. *One: The Passion and Prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ* was written to help God's people understand the nature of this unity as well as how it is to be accomplished in the body of Christ.

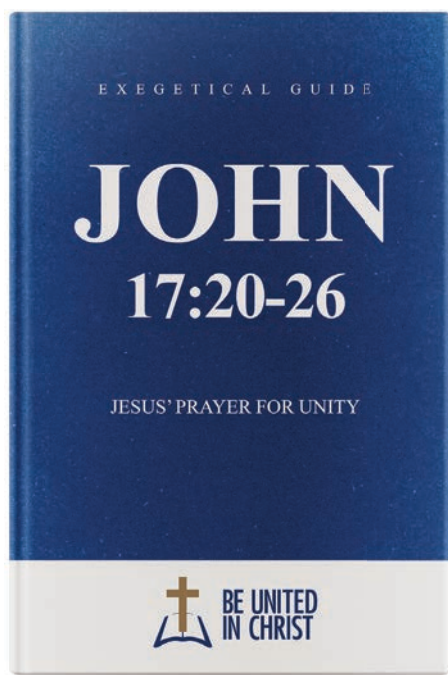
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# LEARN WHAT JESUS PRAYED FOR YOU.

In the hours just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for you. But what did He pray? And why does it matter? With the *John 17:20–26* Exegetical Guide, you will see through Jesus' eyes and be moved by what He prayed for you at this critical time. You will find where you belong. And your desire to draw closer to God and to other believers will grow as you read this inspiring guide.

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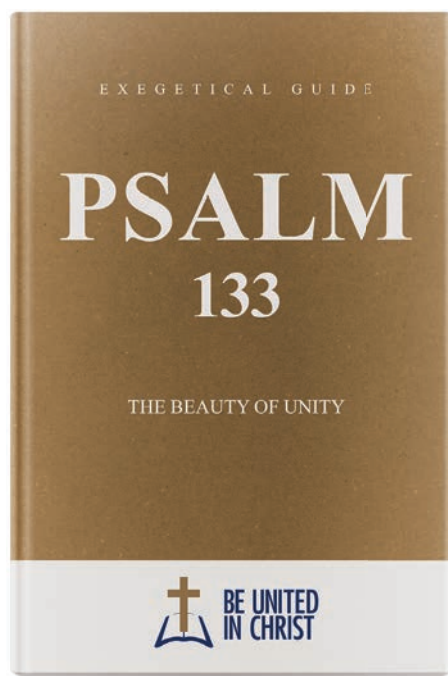




# DEVELOP A RICH CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

Blessing. Peace. Eternal life. How can you experience them for yourself? Explore *Psalm 133* and learn King David's song of the goodness and pleasantness of God's children living in harmony. You will discover that unity is not only God's desire but also His design to lead you into the satisfying life He desires for you to experience.

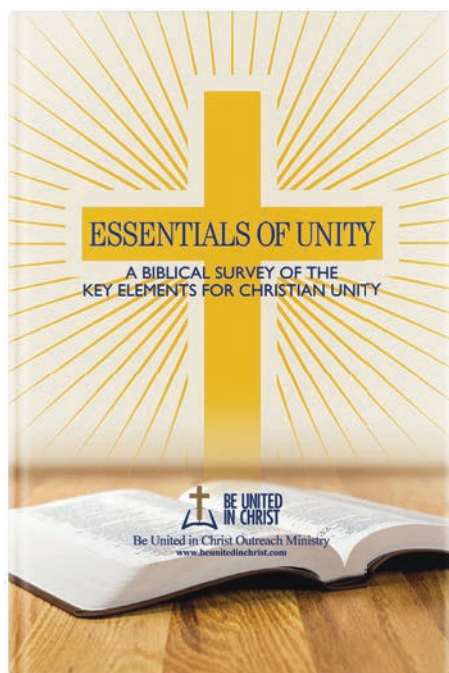
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# UNITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

The Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry has written *Essentials of Unity* from a great sense of conviction ... to better understand God's will for the unity of His people, how He achieves it, and what He asks of each of us in preserving it. *Essentials of Unity* explains significant Biblical themes for understanding Christian unity and how these Biblical themes connect to one another in the storyline of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.

The Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry is committed to teaching and promoting Bible-based Christian unity worldwide in order to bring about real change in the body of Christ.

As finances are available, we also help support Christ-centered ministries around the world including Christian orphanages, Christian drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, Bible colleges, Christian K-12 schools, after-school programs for at-risk children, the preaching of the gospel, and humanitarian efforts.

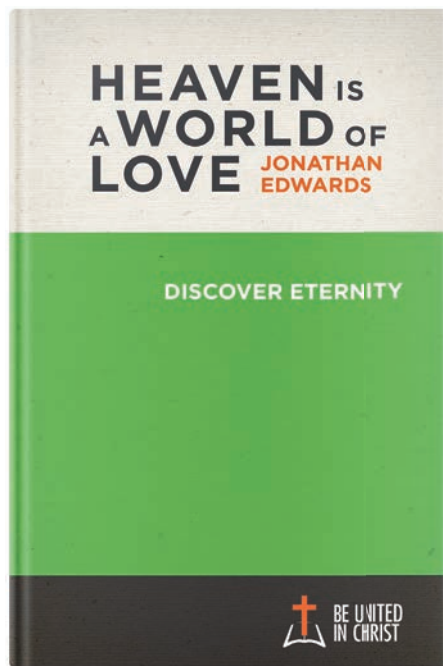
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In the history of Christianity, no one has written as vividly on the subjects of Heaven and Hell as Jonathan Edwards. *Heaven Is a World of Love* combines Edwards' most powerful sermons and presents them in modern-day language. Be encouraged with the hope of Heaven, sobered by the horrors of Hell, and assured that you can spend eternity enjoying God's love.

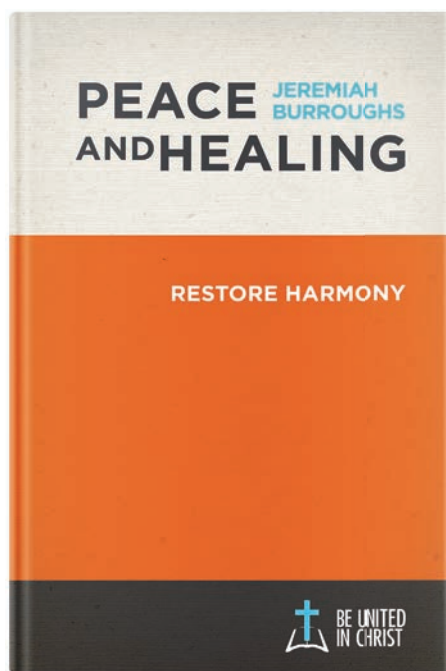
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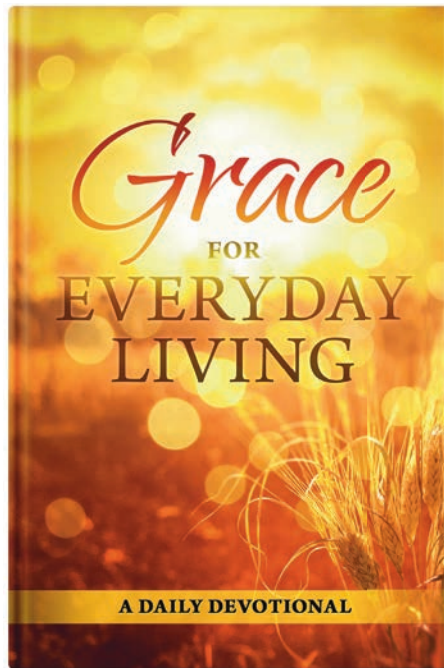
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# WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH GOD'S GRACE?

God sees you. He loves you. And He wants you to experience a full and blessed life. In the 365-day devotional, *Grace for Everyday Living*, some of Christianity's most respected voices cast light on topics such as how to maintain a peaceful spirit, love others, and freely enjoy God's grace and mercy. Your life will be transformed as you discover the excitement of pleasing God and obeying His Word.

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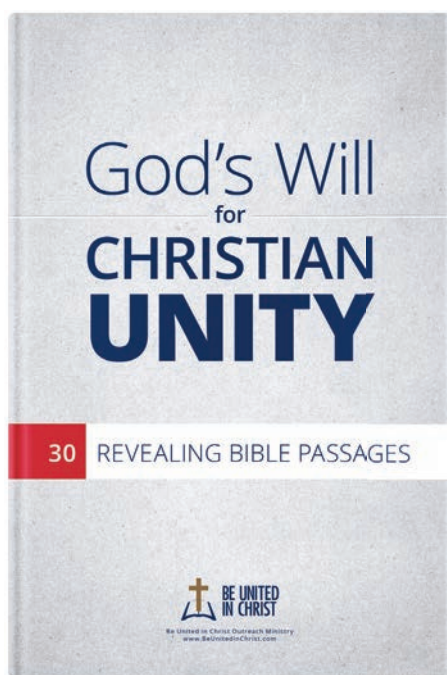




# BELIEVE IN GOD? READY TO **DO** HIS WILL?

The theme of Christian unity is found throughout the Bible. *God's Will for Christian Unity* clearly reveals, in thirty Bible passages, our Lord's passion and instruction on the meaning, importance, and manifestation of Christian unity. Understanding this collection of Bible passages will help you to know how you should think, feel, and act in relation to other believers in accordance with God's will.

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

The mission of the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry is to teach and promote Christian unity in accordance with God's Word. Our goal is to bring about real change in the body of Christ by helping believers to better understand our Lord's will for His people to "Be United in Christ."

We thank our brothers and sisters in Christ who support this world-wide outreach ministry in three ways.

First, we thank you for purchasing our Bible-based resources. Your purchase provides our ministry with financial support to continue to produce Bible-based resources to be distributed around the globe.

Second, we thank you for making tax-deductible donations to our ministry on **BeUnitedinChrist.com** to help us promote a loving union between believers that draws people to the truth of the gospel.

Third, we thank all of our faithful family of believers who regularly pray for our continued impact around the world as we await the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.**



**[www.beunitedinchrist.com](http://www.beunitedinchrist.com)**

All of us want to belong, to feel connected, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. For Christians, these healthy desires find their fulfillment in Christ and in the life He wants us to lead as His body.

In our *1 Corinthians 12* exegetical guide, you will discover how God intends to fulfill your deep need for belonging. Every Christian is a part of the body of Christ, the church. You have a distinct place, and you have a vital role. As you read this guide, you will learn how you fit into your community of believers.

You are unique and important. You are connected and supported. Come read what Scripture reveals about you and realize the rewarding life that Jesus died to provide you.

**Editor's Note:** This exegetical guide includes a rich "Exploring the Classics" section that brings fresh insights from great Christian minds of the past to help you apply this transforming passage to your life.

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The Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry's mission is to teach and promote Christian unity in accordance with God's Word. Visit [BeUnitedinChrist.com](http://BeUnitedinChrist.com) to learn more!

