

## THE BODY and MINISTRY

1 Cor. 12:12-13

***The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.***

Our understanding of the Body affects our approach to ministry, evangelism, salvation, how we handle spiritual gifts, prayer, and worship – every aspect of the Christian life.

Our understanding of “ministry” flows from our understanding of the Body. We use the word “ministry” to refer only to the pastors the Lord raises within the Body. All the members serve the Lord in various ways, of course (offering hospitality to the brethren, evangelism, church music, teaching Sunday School, etc.) – but we refer to these as ways of “serving the Lord” rather than as “ministries.” When our members do serve the Lord in these various ways, it is always in connection with the Body, not in isolation.

In our churches, the ministries (that is, the pastors) are part of the Body, both on the local church level and the worldwide level. We usually do not hire professional pastors, and we never select pastors based on their educational criteria or public-speaking abilities. Instead, our pastors come from within the Body – men who are contributing to the spiritual health and progress of the church on a daily basis. In addition, the Holy Spirit must reveal such a calling within the Body to the other members. We do not ordain anyone unless the Lord has revealed it clearly within the Body through the gifts of the Spirit. Of course, ministries in the Body must also meet the standards or criteria laid out in the Bible. Thus, our teaching on the Body affects the way we select men for ordination to the ministry – we do not ordain a person unless he is completely integrated into the Body and has an exemplary life of spirituality and service to the local church. These things are more important to us than theological training or public-speaking skills.

On the local church level, the pastor is part of the local Body. The pastors depend on the prayers of the church members, and together with the church members they seek the Lord for direction about the activities of the church. Our pastors are involved in the lives of the members, caring for them and praying for them. Each ministry is concerned with developing the life of the Body in every aspect of the local church life. Pastors are attentive to new members and visitors to help them become part of the Body there. We avoid having ministries draw attention to themselves, promote themselves, or use the church for their own personal agenda.

Globally, all of our ministries are united together under the government of the Holy Spirit in the Body. Ephesians 4:11-13 describes five different types of ministries – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – but then states that these offices are gifts Jesus gives to the *church*, not just an individual. We believe all five of these ministries are present today (although it is never necessary to identify which person has which type of ministry) and exist for the benefit of the Lord’s Body collectively.

Our pastors meet regularly with the other pastors from our churches in their region, and attend the regional or international seminars frequently to stay connected with what the Spirit is doing and teaching in the rest of the Body. Our pastors help each other, correct each other, and depend on each other. The ministry is a part of the Body.