

iii) Together

in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each' *Rms 12:5,6*

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ *Ephesians 5:21*

'you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house' *1 Peter 2:5*

'from under the threshold of the temple ...a river that no one could cross' *Ezek 47*

'Each member belongs to all the others'. You are not your own, you were brought at a price (*1 Corinthians 6:19,20*), you belong to God now and to all the others.

There are no lone rangers in the Body of Christ, no one can operate a spiritual gift under their own steam. We are called to submit to God and to one another.

We're called to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' *Ephesians 4:3*, to 'be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves' *Romans 12:10*.

It's only in this upside down, self denying world of life giving love and foot washing service that God can build living stones together to make His Church.

And then the prize, the purpose, is that as the glory of God fills His Church the Spirit will flow out to the nations so that 'where the river flows everything will live'.

The price Jesus paid at the Cross was so high, but this was the purpose.

Will you take your part? 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus'.

Pause for Personal Prayer



Take time to pray: 'in Christ we, though many, form one body, each member belongs to all the others' *Romans 12:5*

Discuss



- Look at the cost in *Romans 12:5 and Ephesians 5:21* – Discuss.
- Look at the prize *Ezekiel 47:1-12*. Is it worth it?
- What do you need to do now to play your part?

Taking it Further

- How will you continue to grow in knowing the Holy Spirit?
- Have you found your place and are you playing it? Ask God and others.
- What help or support do you need and how will you find it?



3: Pentecost

God has a divine plan to reach His world but He needs to use us, His Church.

On the first Pentecost God poured out His Holy Spirit to equip the Church to preach the good news of the Gospel to all nations.

Before the Spirit came the disciples were cowering together in a room afraid of the world (*John 20:19*), but when the Spirit was out-poured they became those who turned the world upside down (*Acts 17:6*).

God's plan is still to us His Church, He has no plan 'B'. But He needs men, women and children who will learn to be equipped by His Holy Spirit.

People who will learn to know and be led by His Spirit so that they can take their place within His Church and allow Him to do His work.

'You are my servant, Israel (Church), in whom I will display my splendour' *Is 49:3*.

God will use us mightily but only as we give Him space to do His own work in and through us.

"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty' *Zechariah 4:6*

Are you ready to take your part? Let's pray as we read.

A suggested outline for the session

Open with worship and prayer

Divide your time between the 3 sections

In each of the 3 sections ...

. Ask someone to read the scripture & reflection

. Pause for a few minutes of personal prayer

. Then discuss the questions given

. At the end allow 10mins for personal prayer

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i) All people

'this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy ... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Acts 2:16-18, 21



'I will pour out my Spirit on all people' – that means you!

This is not an event for the future it's now. Peter declared to the crowd 2000 years ago, 'this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel ...'.

On that first Pentecost the Church received the Holy Spirit, given to all people – men, women, slave, free, old, young – 'all'.

Until then the Spirit had only come to the 'spiritually chosen', the Kings, prophets like Elijah, David ... but now the Spirit is given to all people.

Our sons and daughters will prophesy, our young men will see visions and our old men will dream dreams.

All means all. That means you have your place in this.

As soon as a person commits their life to Christ they can ask the Spirit to fill them and He comes, God gives the Spirit without limit (*John 3:34*).

The only one who limits the Spirit's life and work in us, is us – not God!

'All' means 'All', know that you have your place in this.

And then 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'.

Pause for Personal Prayer



'I will pour out my Spirit on all people' - believe that this means you

Discuss



- Discuss the enormity of God's plan, - 'All' means 'All'.
- What does it mean for God to pour His Spirit on us today? Discuss.
- How do we hinder God? Are you ready to take your place?

ii) To Each



'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. **Now to each** one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. *1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11*

'to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.' *Eph 4:7*

'Now to each' v7 means 'to each'. That means that you have your part in this.

There are no spare parts in the Body of Christ, just as there are no spare parts in your physical body (!), each of us has a gift and a part to play.

The Spirit decides the gift or gifts to give each person and they're given to us to use 'for the common good' v7, each is the work of 'one and the same Spirit' v11.

To believe that we're too small to use is false humility and an avoidance of our responsibility - 'to each' means 'to each'. We need to know and use our gift.

But to try to push ourselves forward or to act independently is false pride. It is God who apportions grace and gives various places in the Body (*Eph 4:11*). He is the Head and we each are called to play our part under Him (*Col 1:18*).

Ours calling is to earnestly desire the higher gifts (*1 Cor 12:31*) and to make ourselves ready, prepared for any good work (*2 Tim 2:20-21*).

As we (or others) begin to sense what God's gift in us is, then offer that sense to the leadership for discernment. We can be wrong, let others discern as well.

When a part of the body tries to function in another's place there is chaos, but where a part of the body doesn't take its place the whole body is disabled.

Christ needs His Body to work both in 'church settings' and in the wider community and in our workplaces. Wherever it is, you have your part.

Pause for Personal Prayer



'to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good'

Discuss



- Do you have a sense of the part which God has called you to?
- Have you offered that sense for discernment by others?
- If so, are you now playing that part or is there more to be discerned?