

GUIDE BOOK

# The Body of Christ

1 CORINTHIANS 11-14

# The Body of Christ

Welcome back to Growth Groups for term 3! We're going to be digging into a series on 1 Corinthians 11-14, which is part of an ongoing look at 1 Corinthians that we've been doing over the past couple of years.

Before we get stuck in, it's useful to revise something of the context of 1 Corinthians. Here, Paul addresses several concerns and questions from this conflicted and divided church.

*For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. **1 Corinthians 11:18***

Furthermore, when the church community does come together to worship, it seems there is chaos as some go ahead to eat the Lord's supper before others, there is chaos as they seek to display their spiritual gifts rather than to serve each other and there is chaos as they speak in tongues, leaving every one clueless as to what is actually being said in church. As Paul says,

*For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. **1 Corinthians 14:33***

So what does it mean then to truly live as the body of Christ, as they come together to worship? That is the topic of our term's study.



In addition to the 1 Corinthians studies, we'll also be preparing for the Big Questions mission together.

# STUDY 1

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## TRAINING

15 Mins

### *Watch the intro video*

Over the next month or so we as a Church are going to be asking the community what their biggest question for God is. We hope that it will then open up the doors for us to meet a whole bunch of new people, but perhaps more importantly open up new conversations with the people we already know. We will then take the top 2 responses from this survey and use turn them into a 2 week Series in September (1st & 8th), which will give us a chance to invite back our friends and also ensure that we engage in questions that the north edge of Brisbane are caring about.

Take a moment to think through your different spheres for who we know that doesn't yet trust in Jesus. List as many names as you can, or perhaps you might not even know their name (lady in coffee shop, man who gets the same train as me, my neighbour who I see mowing the lawn but forget his name).

This isn't a competition- God has placed everyone uniquely in a different stage of life and networks. Some of us will have lots of blank space, others will need more paper that's ok.

### *People I know who aren't trusting Jesus*

Neighbours .....

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Family .....

Colleagues (current or past) .....

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Sport/Community Activities (including kids) .....

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School/Uni/Tafe (current or former) .....

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People you do business with (barristas, tradies, hairdressers, shopkeepers...)

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Other family friends .....

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Other.....

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Now of all those names, choose 3 people that you could perhaps ask this question over the next month.

**1.** .....

**2.** .....

**3.** .....

### *In pairs pray for those 3 people*

Discuss as a group how that exercise was- what do we learn about how we spend our time relating to others?

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This term all growth groups will be doing a social specifically to invite these people to. To “merge universes”. If you haven't already locked in a person to organize this..

What are you going to do?

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When are you going to do it?

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*The Body  
of Christ*

*Men & Women*

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16**

We begin our journey through these chapters of 1 Corinthians with one of the most confusing and difficult passages in the New Testament. It also happens to introduce ideas that are controversial in our culture! So let's tread carefully as we look at this passage today.

What do these symbols represent in our culture today?

**a.** A wedding ring .....

**b.** A shaved head for charity .....

Symbols change over time and work differently in different cultures. We're going to step back in time and look at a particular conflict over head coverings in ancient Corinth and how that relates to the body of Christ.

## *Exploring Together*

In our Growth Groups, we've been using what's known as the 'Swedish Method'. It's a way of giving us time to process what's there in the passage and to get discussion going on what we've observed. Follow the directions below and note down some of your own observations and thoughts. Then we'll discuss what you've found!

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**Arrow.** Note down any reflections on things you found challenging or applicable to you. The bible addresses our heads, hearts and hands, or if you like, our thoughts, attitudes and actions so reflect on whether the passage addresses any of these.

**Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16** and take some time to fill out this table and discuss it together:



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## *Digging deeper*

Paul has much to say about how men and women are to present themselves when meeting together as church. But before we get to the presenting issue, let's think about the underlying principles before we consider the practice.

**1.** What are the underlying principles behind the argument about head coverings? Are there universal principles at play?

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**2.** What do you think was going on in Corinth? What do the symbols of hair and head coverings represented in ancient Corinth?

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From what we know of the chaos surrounding this church in Corinth, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that there is also confusion about gender roles in church!

The practice is certainly weird and foreign to us today but the basic principles seem relatively clear: our gender is a God given gift that is modelled on the Trinity itself. Have a read of the box below for more on how those things relate.



## *Men, Women and the Trinity*

God organized the family to model his nature and about the church he would redeem. In the Trinity, all three persons are perfectly equal in power and glory, yet there's an orderliness in the Trinity.

- The Father sent the Son to redeem his people.
- The Son accomplished the redeeming work of the Father.
- Both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to apply the redemptive work to individuals.

There is subordination that is totally without inferiority or superiority. The Three are equals who carry out different work as sent by another person of the Trinity.

Male headship in the home is to represent Christ's headship of the church. Therefore he's not to abuse his wife, or demand to get his own way, or to be dictatorial. His role is to lead in a way that lovingly gives himself for his wife's benefit and enrichment. His headship is to reflect Christ's care of his church.

There's no superiority implied in male headship. The wife's subjection is not inferiority. Christ is equal with God the Father in substance and glory. Yet he was sent to carry out the painful work of redeeming his Father's children. So also men and woman are equal in substance and worth. Yet the male is responsible for guiding the family, providing for it, and protecting it. He's to help his wife and family grow in Christ so they enjoy God's blessing to the fullest.



**3.** Return to your questions box from earlier and do your best to address some of those questions together as a group! Note that not all your questions can be easily answered (even by scholars!).

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**4.** On Sunday, we looked at some biblical interpretation principles. How might they apply here as we consider a tricky passage like this one?

**a.** As much as is possible, set aside our own cultural biases and assumptions to allow God's word to speak – even if it makes us feel uncomfortable.

**b.** Let the clearer parts of Scripture help us understand the less clearer parts.

**c.** Historical background can help us illuminate what's going on (but it won't determine everything about the meaning of the passage).

**d.** Don't make hard and fast rules from grey parts of Scripture.

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**5.** What are some of the difficulties we face in understanding the concept of biblical headship

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**6.** How might we go about applying the underlying principles of men and women in the church?

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## *Prayer*

Pray that Christ Central would be a church where we encourage each other in our God given gifts as men and women.

A poster for a domestic abuse awareness event. The background is a dark, rainy window with water droplets and streaks. A bright sun is visible through the rain in the upper right. The text is centered and uses a mix of white, yellow, and blue colors.

**Domestic Abuse**  
Shining the Light & Showing Christ's Love

Sunday 21 July 730pm | The Hub

A poster for a weekend away event. The background is a vibrant sunset sky with orange, red, and blue clouds. The text is centered and uses white, blue, and red colors.

*Christ Central*

**WEEKEND**  
**AWAY**

20 19

*Plan to be There!*

CAMP SOMERSET

13 - 15 SEPTEMBER

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## STUDY 2



### TRAINING

15 Mins

### *Watch the video*

In pairs, think about 1 person that you could ask this question this week. Describe that person very briefly to your partner and role play how you would approach asking this question. Pull out your phone and go to [christcentral.org.au/survey](http://christcentral.org.au/survey). Ask a follow up question like "can I ask why you chose that question?" Remember the goal is not to preach at them just to start a conversation and listen to them.

Write down when and where you would like to ask that person this week

When? .....

Where? .....

In pairs share how you are feeling about asking this person(s) and pray for each other for boldness and the opportunity that you would be able to ask this question this week.

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Obviously ask as many as possible, but again we are all at different places! for some of us we might be daunted at the idea of asking 1 whereas others will ask 5 people without batting an eye lid. In the next couple of weeks we will be sharing how we went asking people

# The <sup>of</sup> Body Christ

## And the Lord's Supper

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

What are some different ways you've seen the Lord's Supper served out in different churches?

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There have been many debates about the nature of the Lord's Supper over the history of the church. But one area that is often missed, is the heart attitude that we bring when we take the Lord's Supper together. In today's passage, we see a church in trouble for bringing a selfish attitude when taking the Lord's Supper together! Let's see what we can learn about our hearts through this passage.

### *Exploring Together*

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# Digging deeper

1. What do you think would be a worthy manner of taking the Lord's supper?

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2. What might that look like as you prepare to meet with church on a Sunday?

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3. The body of Christ is one of the main themes in this part of 1 Corinthians. Why might the exclusion of some at the Lord's supper be a problem for the body of Christ? (clue: take a look at 1 Cor. 12:12-14 for a clearer description of what it means to live as the body of Christ)

*<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. **1 Corinthians 12:12-14***

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4. In Ancient Corinth, it was culturally normal for more well-off patrons to be seated in their own special room while the less well off had to sit by and be served second, with inferior food and wine and it seems this attitude has spilled over into their church. In other times in the life of the church, racial lines divided the church. Who might we be tempted to put first/last in our modern context?

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5. What are some practical ways we might do to put others first in the activities of church?

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 *Prayer*

Pray that Christ Central would be a place of unity and sacrificial service!

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## STUDY 3

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### TRAINING

5 Mins

In pairs spend a couple of minutes sharing how you are going asking people the survey. Pray for each other boldness and opportunity to ask.

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*The Body  
of Christ*

*And Spiritual Gifts*

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11**

Why do you think we find it hard to talk about our gifts?

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In Chapter 11, Paul mainly spoke about how the Corinthian church had failed to live as the body of Christ. In Chapter 12, he now begins to outline what that body looks like and how it should function



# Exploring Together

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**Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11** and take some time to fill out this table and discuss it together:



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## *Digging deeper*

**1.** In v1-3, Paul's emphatic, 'Now' to begin Chapter 12 is almost a finger pointing at his listeners, for them to listen up. What does he want the Corinthians to really sit up and pay attention to?

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**2.** Paul wants to contrast the Corinthians 'Pagan' or 'Jewish' past with what should be their Spirit filled present. How does he do this?

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3. In v4-11 Paul really wants to drive home a point about the way 'spiritual gifts' are 'given'; what is that point? Why is it so important to Paul and to the Corinthians?

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4. Paul gives a 'list' of 'gifts' in these verses. Is there anything to the order that he gives in the list? Is there a relationship between any of the 'gifts'?

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**As we begin Chapter 12, it might be good to consider exactly what Paul is referring to when he mentions 'Spiritual gifts' and 'speaking in tongues.' More specifically, what does he mean in the context of this letter. These phrases may come to us today with a whole range of meanings that may not necessarily have been what Paul meant when he wrote to the Church in Corinth.**

*Firstly* **spiritual gifts.** In Paul's writing they are gifts given, specifically by the Holy Spirit to equip the church to carry on its ministry until Christ returns and a foretaste of the age to come. How many gifts are there? Well there are at least 21 mentioned in Paul's letters. Nowhere though does Paul say that his lists are definitive or exhaustive. He does say that the gifts may vary in strength. We will also see as we work our way through these later chapters of First Corinthians that gifts have a very particular purpose and will ultimately be of no further use when Christ returns. A note here too, prophecy as Paul sees it here is perhaps more properly described as the declaration of God's will to His people. The more modern debate as to whether all the gifts, perhaps particularly those of speaking in tongues, healing and foretelling the future, continue into our time, are not Paul's primary concern. We will see what is of utmost concern for Paul when considering spiritual gifts as we explore further.

**Secondly speaking in tongues.** As Paul addresses the Corinthian church and their issues concerning the speaking of tongues, what he has in mind, and what is dividing that church may be different from conceptions we may have. Speaking in tongues, or perhaps more literally, speaking in languages, in the context of Corinthians is most probably: prayer or praise spoken in syllables (perhaps a 'heavenly language') not understood by the speaker. We would note that it is directed toward God. It is seen as prayer in and through the Spirit, not the mind. It is not ecstatic but self-controlled, and, most importantly for Paul, as we will see, it is to be understood and for the benefit of all in the church.

**5.** When Paul declares that there are "different kinds of gifts" in verse four, do we start to consider what are our 'gifts'?

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**6.** Some people seem very 'confident' in declaring their 'gifting' in certain areas, others less so. Is it more 'right' to be one way or another?

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**7.** Are there 'gifts' that the 'church' perhaps needs more of?

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Pray God would give us gifts to use in his service!

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## STUDY 4

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### TRAINING

15 Mins

In the same pairs share how you have gone asking the question. Share with the rest of the group how the conversations have been going and also how you have found it personally. Was it hard to find people to ask, to start the conversation, or once they had answered to follow up the conversation?

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*The Body  
of Christ*

*One Body, Many Members*

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-30**

What are some of the joys of being part of a diverse mix of people at Christ Central? What are some of the challenges?

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# Exploring Together

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## *Digging deeper*

**1.** Paul is not on Apollo 13 telling Houston, 'We have a problem', however, here in chapter 12 he is telling the Corinthians they have a problem. From these verses what can we infer about the problem?

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**2.** Paul gives an extended comparison/metaphor/story about the body and its various 'parts'. What is he really trying to do?

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**3.** Diversity and interdependence have been used to describe Paul's statements here. Does that really fit? Why or how?

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**4.** Paul tells the Corinthians there really is a strict criteria for judging the usefulness of gifts, what is it?

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**5.** 'Unity through diversity' might sound like a politically correct catch cry or advertising for a bank or a telephone company, but for Paul it means something more concrete and real. What does it mean for us?

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**6.** Diversity is not only necessary for the body to function: it is the will of God? Is that really what Paul is saying? Without getting stuck in the muddy ground of current social or political debates, how does that statement strike us in the light of these verses?

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**7.** In reflecting on these verses, the statement has been made that a sense of superiority can lead to notions of self-sufficiency. Are there areas where for us, collectively or individually, that might be true?

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Pray that we would use our gifts in a way that is encouraging and edifying for the whole body at Christ Central.



# Welcome Back

We'll be finishing off our series on the Body of Christ. What have you been challenged by personally or collectively about the kind of church community we ought to be?

As you know by now, we're also getting ready for Big Questions by surveying our community about the kinds of questions they'd like answered. To get a feel for what the next few weeks look like, here's a Growth Group calendar for the rest of the term.

And don't forget, the Christ Central Weekend Away is fast approaching so don't put off registering for that! Registration closes at the end of August.

## *Term 3 Growth Group Calendar*

<b>WEEK COMMENCING</b>	<b>STUDY MATERIAL</b>
11 August	1 Corinthians 13-14:5 – How to love the body
18 August	1 Corinthians 14:6-25 – Speaking in tongues and church
25 August	1 Corinthians 14:26-40 – Orderly, spirit-filled worship
1 September	Merge Week! No Study
8 September	Prayer & thanksgiving
13-15 September	Christ Central Weekend Away at Somerset Dam
15 September	End of term social

# The Body of Christ

## Love & the Body of Christ

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-14:5

What are some ways our spirituality might actually be a cover for pride or bragging rights?

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**Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-14:5** and take some time to fill out these sections and discuss it together:



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# Digging deeper

In this section, Paul begins and ends by describing the spiritual gifts that will be of most importance in the gathering of God's people.

**1.** What are the 'higher gifts' and why are they to be desired?

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**2.** 1 Corinthians 13 is a beautiful passage about love and one commonly seen at weddings! What does love have to do with spiritual gifts?

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**3.** What do you think is the spiritual gift of tongues, according to the information you have in this passage? (Note: We will return to the topic of tongues next week!)

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**4.** What is of enduring importance and why?

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**5.** When you are at church, how might you use your speech in a way that has eternal importance?

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**6.** Do we need to examine our own hearts behind our ministry from time to time?

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**7.** Are there things we need to be aware of in our own hearts in the relationships we have with others at Christ Central? What relationships might you need to exercise more love in?

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***Special challenge:*** This year, we've been putting up morning tea discussion questions that flow from the Sunday bible talk. If you haven't been doing this already, try those questions out so that our conversation might consider the great truths of God's word before we turn to the conversation of the everyday.



Pray that love would characterise us personally and Christ Central as a whole.

## STUDY 6

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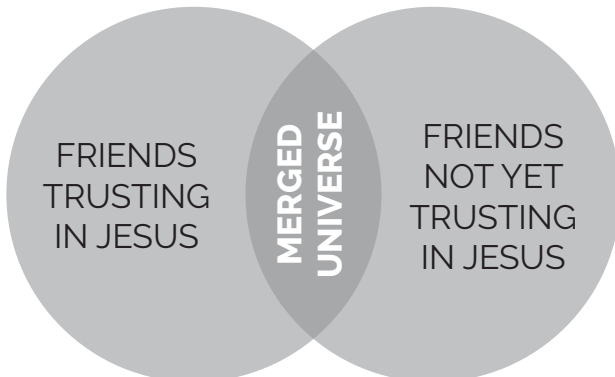
## MERGE WEEK

### *Watch the video*

*"Missions exists because worship doesn't."*

*Dr John Piper*

The reason why we do mission primarily is not for our sake, it's not even for other people's sake (though these are true and good things). The main reason we do mission is so that more people would worship God. Over the next 2 studies we will be looking at what Paul says about worship, which is for those who have already put their trust in Jesus. But in 2 weeks time we won't be having a growth group study, so that we can go out and do mission. We are calling it Merge Week because we are as a church creating opportunities to merge universes, between our friends that trust Jesus and those who do not yet trust Jesus.



This doesn't necessarily mean that we do a social as a growth group and everyone brings a friend. If that works for your group, awesome, do that! But we want to be more realistic. Think about your friends for a moment... what things are they in to? What life stage are they in? Who else at church shares those passions? Or better yet who else at church have they already connected with, or might they connect with?

Maybe you could go for a walk with one Christian and non Christian friend? Maybe you could invite someone to a bigger barbecue with lots of people, so they don't stand out. Is there something that you do regularly that you could invite someone along eg sport, music, kids activities, play dates, cosplay, gaming, board games shopping, craft, or just eating a meal! Or maybe you just go along to something else, so that you can get to know someone else's friend, and be part of their universe.

**1.** Spend a moment in pairs, think about what you could do in Merge Week to be merging universes.

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**2.** Share back with the group what you discussed (you can steal ideas or even join other people!)

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If you have an idea that you want to run with, maybe text that person now (could be someone from Christ Central first, or perhaps your unbelieving friend).

Next week we will share what our plans are for merge week.



# The <sup>of</sup> Body Christ

## Speaking in Tongues & church

1 CORINTHIANS 14:6-25

Think of a time when language was a barrier - when you were travelling or meeting someone from a different culture. How did you feel not being able to communicate as freely as you normally would?

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**Read 1 Corinthians 14:6-25** and take some time to fill out these sections and discuss it together:



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# Digging deeper

1. Explain the comparison between instruments and speaking in tongues.

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2. According to this passage, what do you learn about what speaking in tongues is?

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3. What light does this passage shed on the reasons why we come together when we gather for church?

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4. What is the comparison between the quote from the Law in v21?

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5. How might we make things at church decipherable yet convicting for the non-Christian in our midst?

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6. Do you yearn for a church that sees hearts convicted by the gospel? How can we work together in this?

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## *Prayer*

That we would be a church that desires to see hearts convicted by the gospel over spiritual pride.

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For more information and to register visit:  
**[christcentral.org.au/event-items/weekend-away-2](http://christcentral.org.au/event-items/weekend-away-2)**

## STUDY 3

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### DISCUSSION

5 Mins

Last week we talked about **Merge Week**, where we will be breaking from growth groups **next week** to give us more time and headspace to be able to be part of Merge Week. Spend a couple of minutes sharing what our plans are for next week and who we are hoping to invite. Our goal is not that everyone brings a friend to something (though that would be great!), but that everyone at least hangs socially merging universes between those trusting and not yet trusting in Jesus. So even if you don't have a friend to invite, or your friend said no, hopefully you can at least hang out with others friends!

Spend a couple of minutes sharing, what your plans are for merge weeks. If you don't have plans yet, maybe you could join in on someone else's.

Have 2 people pray for next week, including praying for specific people that have been/will be invited.

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# The <sup>of</sup> Body Christ

## Orderly, spirit-filled worship

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26-40

What would you do if you thought something taught at church was blatantly wrong?

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### Exploring Together

In our Growth Groups, we've been using what's known as the 'Swedish Method'. It's a way of giving us time to process what's there in the passage and to get discussion going on what we've observed. Follow the directions below and note down some of your own observations and thoughts. Then we'll discuss what you've found!

**Light Bulb.** Write down any interesting observations you get from the passage. This includes things that stand out, repeated ideas/words or something you found unusual.

**Question Mark.** Any questions from the text or an issue or point that doesn't make sense from the passage. Questions are great! They encourage us to think a bit harder about the passage and its implications. They also give us a chance to help each other understand Scripture better.

**Arrow.** Note down any reflections on things you found challenging or applicable to you. The bible addresses our heads, hearts and hands, or if you like, our thoughts, attitudes and actions so reflect on whether the passage addresses any of these.

**Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40** and take some time to fill out these sections and discuss it together:



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# Digging deeper

1. What should characterise our meetings when Christians gather?

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2. What might it look like to 'weigh carefully what is said'?

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1 Cor. 14:34-35 comes across to us as a controversial verse to our contemporary ears because of the way it seems to demean the place of women in church. However, let's remember that this is not a command to complete silence, since Paul himself assumes that women will even prophesy in church (1 Cor. 11:5)! Furthermore, many others ought to be 'silent' – the person speaking in a tongue without an interpreter, for example. Instead, the context places this in the realm of assuming authority over the testing and interpretation of prophecy, since that would be assuming a very high authority indeed.

3. Why might you not want everyone weighing in when a teaching or prophecy is being examined?

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**4.** What might chaos and self-serving worship look like in a modern day church?

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**5.** How might you be tempted towards self-serving motivations behind your ministry?

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**6.** How might your approach to church change if you knew the expectation was to bring a word to share or a word to encourage others?

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 *Prayer*

That we would approach church with an attitude of service and encouragement.

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# Thanksgiving week

**This is a week to praise God and give thanks for the term together. But first, let's reflect on our attempts to 'merge universes' with those friends and family who don't yet know Christ.**

**1.** How did we go last week at Merge week? Were there any encouraging stories or challenges?

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**2.** Spend some time praying for specific people. Pray for those people that came, for the people that we invited that didn't come and the people that we wanted to invite but didn't. Pray that they would put their trust in Jesus and that we would love them as Jesus has loved us.

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Now here's a chance to reflect on the series on the Body of Christ. We've covered a variety of topics:|

**Men & women in the body of Christ**

**Taking the Lord's Supper together in a unified way**

**The Spirit empowered gifts, service & activities for the common good**

**The unity, diversity and dependence of each member of the body**

**How to love the body**

**The use of spiritual gifts to build & edify**

**Spirit-filled, yet orderly worship**

3. Write down one or two things you have learnt afresh or been struck by in this series:

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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4. Write down one or two things you have been challenged to do as a result of this series:

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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**5.** On a heart level, how has this series affected how you feel towards God or His church, the body of Christ?

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Give thanks for the journey the group has been on together this term. Then spend some time giving thanks to God for things happening in each other's personal lives.

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