

# Contending For Oneness: Discerning the Lord's Body

Michael Barrett – February 22, 2026

## I. A Present Word: Contend for the Oneness

### 1. A Word in This Season

- “In recent months, I have been carrying a word on *oneness*.”
- Not theoretical oneness, or even theological oneness, but **experienced oneness in the Body of Christ**.
- Word: In this season we must contend for the oneness

### 2. Discerning the Lord's Body

- Discussion at John & Eunice Gerth's on 12-13-25:
  - Discerning of spirits (*pneuma* - 1 Corinthians 12:10).
  - Discerning the Lord (Holy Spirit - *pneuma*) *in one another*.
  - And discerning the operation of demonic spirits (*pneuma*).
- To discern the Lord's Body is to:
  - See Christ in *yourself*
  - See Christ in *others*
  - See Christ in the *arrangement* of the Body
  - Discerning accurately is seeing from a heavenly point of view—seeing what God sees the way He sees it (2 Corinthians 5:16 NIV – don't see from a worldly vantage

### 3. Imperfect Members—Real Grace

- The Body indeed is one, but contains human imperfection—including immaturity.
- 1 Corinthians 12:20-31 - the divine arrangement of the Body
  - Realistically includes weakness
  - Intrinsically includes immaturity

- The members that “seem to be” more feeble; Those who “we think to be less honorable”; Our “uncomely” parts are, in fact, necessary (vs 22). Also, see Romans 15:1.
- Oneness does not require perfection. **It requires me/you to see correctly and discern accurately; AND to be willing to submit to the Lord’s sovereign ways and arrangement for His Body.**
- As we commit to discerning the Lord’s Body, we enter **new levels of shared life and effectiveness.**
- What is the standard—the rod of iron—the expectation of the Lord that governs the interaction of the members of the Body of Christ? ONENESS!

## II. The Nature of “One”

### 1. One: Ephesians 4:4 is a “governed unity”

- There is one Body (*heis* 271 times NT; 229 translated “one”)
- Strong’s Concordance: *heis* - g1520. εἷς *heis* (masculine); μία *mia* (feminine see 3391); ἓν *hen*(neuter); a primary numeral: one (cardinal), and first (ordinal). Translated as: one; first; a(-n, -ny, certain), + abundantly, man, one (another), only, other, some.
- It is both:
  - “Cardinal” - emphasizes *one, unity, singleness, indivisibility, and...*
  - “Ordinal” — emphasizing *first, foremost, primary in rank*

### 2. Cardinal: One as indivisible unity - *What the Body IS*

- Cardinal speaks of:
  - Singleness
  - Wholeness
  - Indivisibility

- Cardinal: MW definition: both adjective and noun trace back to the Latin adjective *cardinalis*, meaning “serving as a hinge,” and further to the noun *cardo*, meaning “hinge.”
- The Body of Christ is not an aggregate—it is a single *whole*.
  - Aggregate: formed by the collection of units or particles into a body, mass, or amount
  - Whole: each of us is a member of Christ AND a member of one another
    - i. Romans 12:5 members one of another
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 6:15; 12:12; 12:27 members of Christ
    - iii. Ephesians 4:25 members one of another
- The One Body of Christ IS: The Corporate Christ
- You cannot divide the Body without violating its nature.
- Separation is not neutral; it contradicts what the Body *IS*.
- Discerning the Body requires seeing every individual as part of the whole
- To discern rightly, we must see:
  - Christ as one
  - His Body as one
  - Ourselves as inseparably joined to/in the Body

### 3. Ordinal: One as First and Governing

- Ordinal speaks of:
  - Arrangement
  - Rank
  - Priority
  - That which governs what follows
  - Ordinal: MW: a specified order or rank in a series

#### 4. Oneness is apostolic

- “One” is not only *unity*—it is *preeminence*.
- Oneness is first, not optional
- Oneness is not something added after gifting, calling, or function—it is first and everything else flows from it.
- Oneness as a governing principle.
- If oneness is first:
  - Gifts must serve unity
  - Leadership must preserve unity
  - Function must not violate unity
- Individuality causing division is not diversity—it is dysfunction.

#### 5. Who are you one with? Who am I one with?

- Who is my brother/sister—who is your brother/sister?
- Mark 12:48-50 “Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Those who do the will of my Father”
  - Were you not my brother/sister when you did not do the will of the Father?
  - And what of the young and immature believers? What of those trapped in bondage who are actually born again—are they not brethren (brothers/sisters)?
- Only the one/ones who have proceeded out of the same womb!
  - Brother/brethren: g0080. ἀδελφός adelphos; from 1 (as a connective particle) and δελφύς delphus (the womb); a brother (literally or figuratively) near or remote (much like 1): — brother. g0079. ἀδελφή adelphē; fem of 80; a sister (naturally or ecclesiastically): — sister.
  - Adelphe and Adelphe occur 343 times in the NT
  - From (or out of) the same womb – this ultimately defines the relationship between me/you and others in the Body

### III. Declaration and Charge

- The Body is one house - many households; one Body - many members
- “We are one in Christ.” “We must deliberately contend for the oneness in this season beloved”
- Romans 12:4–5 – “Though many, we are one body in Christ...”
- Ephesians 4:1–3 – “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit...”
- 1 Corinthians 1:10 – “That you all speak the same thing...”
- **Cardinal: The Body is *one* — indivisible**
- **Ordinal: Oneness is *first* — governing - apostolic**
- **Hinge: Everything God releases through the Body depends on it**

*Oneness is not merely something we have; it is something by which we are ordered and through which we move.*

### IV. Exhortation

1. **Be Patient With the Work of God**
  - Be patient with the Word
  - Be patient with the process
  - Be patient with one another
2. **Give the Grace Time to Work**
3. **Contend Deliberately for Oneness**
  - Unity must be protected.
  - Oneness must be pursued.
4. **One House, One Body**
  - Many households.
  - Many members.
  - One Body of Christ.

## V. Divisions and Schisms

### 1. Divisions

- 1 Corinthians 3:3 – divisions - g1370. διχοστασία dichostasia; from a derivative of 1364 and 4714; disunion, i.e. (figuratively) dissension: — division, sedition.
- Caused by the carnal (fleshly) thinking and acting of the nēpios (babes: non speaking infant) believers in Corinth
- Galatians 5:20 – seditions (g1370) is a part of a list called “the works of the flesh” in vss 19-21. BTW, this list includes adultery, fornication, idolatry, witchcraft, and other deviant behaviors. And this list is contrasted to another list beginning in Galatians 5:22 – the fruit of the Spirit! We should all review these two lists.
- Romans 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
  - Mark them: g4648. σκοπέω skopeō; from 4649; to take aim at (spy), i.e. (figuratively) regard: — consider, take heed, look at
  - Avoid them: g1578. ἐκκλίνω ekklinō; from 1537 and 2827; to deviate, i.e. (absolutely) to shun (literally or figuratively), or (relatively) to decline (from piety): — avoid, eschew, go out of the way.
  - Watch it now!! How will you possibly know who to mark and who to avoid WITHOUT HOLY SPIRIT revelation/discerning and HIS leading? In this you will need to be willing to give up your agenda and take up HIS.

### 2. Schisms – Must not be...

- Schism: g4978. σχίσμα schisma; from 4977; a split or gap (“schism”), literally or figuratively: — division, rent, schism.
- Rent: Matthew 9:16 and Mark 2:21
  - This parable was comparing the old and the new

- Old wine and new wine; old wineskins and new wineskins
- Old garment and new cloth; a tear in need of repair; a warning about repairing the old with the new
- Divisions: John 7:43; 9:16; John 10:19; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 11:18
- Schism: 1 Corinthians 12:25 “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”<sup>26</sup> And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

### 3. Heresies – Must be...

- 1 Corinthians 11:17-19
- vs 17 NIV: “Your meetings do more harm than good”
- vs 19 – “There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”
  - there MUST BE heresies
  - Heresies: g0139. αἵρεσις haireisis; from g138; properly, a choice, i.e. (specially) a party or (abstractly) disunion: — heresy (which is the Greek word itself), sect.
  - Why MUST there be choice, parties, and disunion among us?
    1. To create the opportunity for those who hold to the true standard of oneness to be “made manifest”
    2. In this revealing, God publicly approves of the ones that hold to HIS standard—which is always LOVE
    3. Also in this revealing, those who do not hold to this standard are made manifest.
    4. Whose side will you take? Your own, the enemy’s, or the Lord’s?