

Externally Focused
Becoming Christ's Body to the World
A 6 Week Lenten Study

Welcome to the Externally Focused Running Partners track. Jesus never called the world to go to church but the church to go to the world. We are called to be people of blessing and hope. A huge calling but we don't do it alone or unequipped. This track strengthens our ability to be partners with God and to be more aware of the spiritual gifts he gives for the building up of the body of Christ and the blessing of the world.

The recommended books for this track are:

Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, A Heart For Mission

By: Tim Dearborn

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/188798304X/ref=ord_cart_shr/102-9348870-6087309?%5Fencoding=UTF8&v=glance

Discover Your Spiritual Gifts the Network Way

By: Bruce Bugbee

http://www.amazon.com/Discover-Your-Spiritual-Gifts-Network/dp/0310257468/ref=pd_sim_b_1/102-9348870-6087309

The recommended movies for this track are:

Babette's Feast (1988)

- Reflection: How do the gifts of the cook impact and surprise the world?

Chariots of Fire (1981)

- Reflection: How does this un-churchlike gift of running impact the world?

The recommended activities for this track are:

- Discerning where your heart is stirred for a person, place or issue in the world.
- Devising a plan of how you and your running partner can serve together with your individual gifts (and then doing it!)

First Run

The Call of Jesus

Warm up

Once you have found each other at your pre-arranged place take 15 minutes each to give each other a little background. You can do this by giving each other:

- ❖ three or four “mile stone” markers in your life—places/events/decisions that have played a significant part in your story, or
- ❖ a handful of things you think would be helpful for someone to know you, or
- ❖ a significant person, place and event in your life for each five year period, or
- ❖ any other way you come up with that tells something of your story.

Then: why did you choose to have a running partner? What are you concerned about? Looking forward to?

Run

Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God’s presence, Ask God’s Spirit to teach you. Listen.

Read the text either out loud or silently: **Matthew 3:13-4:11**

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 4 The Temptation of Jesus

1Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'¹

5Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'^{1"}

7Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

8Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

If you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to “get through it all.”

1. Why do you think John was uncomfortable baptizing Jesus? What was the expectation? How does Jesus turn that expectation around?
2. Consider the description of Jesus when he comes out of the water. He is called “the Beloved” (not Messiah, not Savior, not Rabbi). Why would God choose this description above all others? What do we learn about God through these words about Jesus?
3. Consider the first temptation. Satan tempts Jesus to control his situation. As humans, why do you think we have such a desire to control our environment?
4. The second temptation invites Jesus to test his relationship with God. The third invites him to doubt the trustworthiness of God. Do you think that Jesus draws on his title as “the Beloved” as he responds to these temptations? How much do you think this title impacts his time in the wilderness?
5. When we reflect on our own ministry calling, we must first remember that we too are God’s beloved. How does rooting our call in this title change us? How might it prepare us for the bumpy road ahead?

► *Before Jesus engaged in any ministry, he first received the title of “Beloved” in his baptism. In beginning to reflect on our own call and giftedness for ministry, why must we first understand ourselves as God’s beloved? How is this foundational to growing in our understanding of partnership with the Holy Spirit?*

Push/Challenge

What are one or two ways you can be praying for one another? If time and place allows pray together.

On your own this week write out a list of things for which you are thankful—expressions of God’s love for you. Then write a list of what might keep you from trusting God loves you more than you accept right now.

Cool Down

Decide when and where you want to meet next (you may want to set up the next five times now, too).

Decide whether you want to do the next study in advance and come talk about it or do it together. Make plans to get one of the recommended books (you do not need to choose the same one).

Second Run

The Call of the First Disciples

Warm up

Where did you go as a kid to be alone?

What is something that caught your attention or imagination in the book you selected for this track?

If you did not have enough time last time for both of your stories take time this week.

Run

Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God's presence, Ask God's Spirit to teach you. Listen.

Read the text either out loud or silently: **Matthew 4:12-25**

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

16 the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned."

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

The Calling of the First Disciples

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. 25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

If you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to "get through it all."

1. The first proclamation Jesus makes in his ministry is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." The word "repent" means to turn around. Why might this be the first proclamation of Jesus? Think about ways in your own life you've had to turn around to see the kingdom of heaven.

2. When Jesus calls Simon, Peter, and Andrew, how does he do it in a way that makes sense to them? What, do you think, compelled James and John to come?
3. Think of how Jesus uses language to connect the everyday lives of his disciples with their new calling. What might this teach us about how God calls us today? How are our everyday lives connected with our calling as disciples of Jesus?
4. Conversely, reflect on what these first disciples left in order to follow Jesus. What was the cost of their decision? Has there been a time in your life when there was a cost to following Jesus?
5. Consider the invitation that Jesus might have for you. What are ways that your life might be connected to your call? How is Jesus inviting you to “fish for people?” What, if anything, might you have to leave behind?

► *It is important to notice that when Jesus first called his disciples, on one level, he accepted them as they were. In putting the call to ministry in their own terms, Jesus respected their identity and their history.*

However, there were things that needed to be re-directed and transformed. The disciples had to “leave their nets.”

Reflect on this tension between affirming identity and calling for transformation. How might our gifts be rooted in our current identity? How might they call us towards transformation?

Push/Challenge

- What do you tend to find your worth and identity in other than being loved by God?
- Read through the newspaper or news on the web—where does your interest and heart tend to gravitate? Pray for this.
- What are two ways can you be praying for each other?

Cool Down

Decide whether you want to do the next study in advance and come talk about it or do it together. Take time this week to check out <http://www.globalrichlist.com/> and plug in a few numbers.

Third Run

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Warm up

What's been on your front burner this week (where does your mind and heart tend to track to)?

Check in on your prayer concerns from last week.

What is something that caught your attention or imagination in the book you selected for this track?

Run *Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God's presence, Ask God's Spirit to teach you. Listen.*

Read the text either out loud or silently: **Acts 2**

1When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."^l

14Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17" '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.

18Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

19I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

22"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25David said about him:

" 'I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

26Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will live in hope,

27because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

" 'The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand

35until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet." '

36"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Again, if you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to “get through it all.”

1. One of the first gifts of the Spirit was unity. Why do you think this might have been an important gift?
2. In the last study, we talked about how God uses our everyday lives as gifts. In this passage, talk about how God distinctly changes his disciples and equips them for the work of the gospel.
3. Look over John 18:15-18 and John 18:25-27. Does it seem possible that the same person that denied Jesus could then preach this sermon in Acts 2? Discuss how God changed Peter.
4. Verse 17 discusses how God’s Spirit will come. How do we see the promise of God’s Spirit bringing unity among all people? The gifts are individual and still brought to the group. Have you seen something like this happen in your own life?
5. Have you seen God make dramatic changes in you or someone else when he has called you (or that person) to something? How does the coming of the Holy Spirit give us hope for possibilities in the church today?

► *God not only calls us, but equips us with the gifts we need for the task we are called to. It appears that the call comes first and then the needed gifts. Peter was broken and weak, and God gave him the power he needed for the call he had. How hard is it to believe that God can and does work through US? The good news of this passage is that God not only can, but WANTS to work through us!*

Push/Challenge

1. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not limiting, but expansive. What is encouraging about being given spiritual gifts?
2. Looking back to that place your heart gravitated to that you identified during your second run commit to exploring more about it through the web, books, conversations, etc.
3. If you could not fail what would you do? How might God be working through that desire in you?

Cool Down

Make plans to watch one of the movies recommended for the track.

Consider finding a way to help out with Easter at Union and/or invite someone to come with you.

Fourth Run

The Call of Saul (Paul)

Warm Up

What's is something that has been an encouragement to you in the last couple of weeks?

Or, What is something you are thankful for that has occurred recently?

Check in on your prayer concerns from last week.

What is something that caught your attention or imagination in the book or movie you selected?

Run *Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God's presence, Ask God's Spirit to teach you. Listen.*

Acts 9:1-30

1Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. 20At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. 21All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't

he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" 22Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. 23After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, 24but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. 25But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

26When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. 28So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. 29He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. 30When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

As before, if you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to “get through it all.”

1. The call of Saul stops him in his tracks and immediately blinds him. Reflect on how this short-term blinding might have been important for Saul. How might it have prepared him for the next step?
2. What is the risk that Ananias takes as he goes to help Saul? Why do you think God wanted another person to heal Saul? Saul was blinded by God, why not have God “alone” restore his sight?
3. Consider the exchange between Ananias and Saul (verses 17-19). How do the words of Ananias bring healing and hope to Saul? Why do you think God calls these two opposites together in order to fill Saul with the Holy Spirit?
4. The change in Saul is dramatic (verses 20-25). What does this teach us about the power of the Holy Spirit? Why do you think God chose someone so unlikely to such a significant role in the development of the church?
5. Reflect on the struggle of the disciples. How hard is it for them to trust Saul? Has there been a time in your life when you were unwilling to give someone the benefit of the doubt? How did God change you or work through that situation?

Push/Challenge

•*The call of Saul demonstrates God’s dramatic power, but also shows us how God calls the unlikely person to our communities and us to the unlikely person. Who might be someone or a population (or a need in the city or world) that the Spirit of God is putting on your heart?*

•*Paul is a wonderful example here, but what can we learn from Ananias? What does he teach us about welcoming the outsider? How might the Holy Spirit be leading you outside of our comfort zone?*

Cool Down

- What are two ways can you be praying for each other? For Union?
- Decide on a movie to discuss next time

Fifth Run

The Context of Spiritual Gifts

Warm Up

What is one of your dreams for the next five years?

What is something that has been difficult since you last met?

What are some of your thoughts and feelings about the movie you saw?

Run

Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God's presence, Ask God's Spirit to teach you. Listen.

Read the text either out loud or silently: **Romans 12**

1Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. 4Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

9Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Again, if you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to “get through it all.”

1. Paul appeals to us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. How does this appeal call us into the world and not out of it?

2. We are “one body of Christ” and also “members of one another.” Talk about this relationship. As we become more connected to Christ, how do we grow in membership with one another? How does participation in the Body of Christ push us into the church and into the world?
3. Paul lists a group of gifts, but he places the gifts between two ideas: 1. transformation (v.2) and 2. loving one another (v.9-10). Why do you think it might be important to understand individual spiritual gifts in this context?
4. How do the gifts that he mentioned in v.7-8 work in conjunction with the larger passage? Where are the places that Paul is specifically calling believers as gifted people into the world (see verses 13 and 16)?
5. As you’ve been reflecting on your own gifts, how do you think these gifts might be used in the church? How might they be needed in the world?

► *This passage reminds us that individual gifts are always placed in a larger context. What is the danger of using them in isolation? What is the benefit of using them in a larger context?*

Push/Challenge

Often times our gifts are so much a part of us we are blind to them. Drawing upon what you have heard and seen in one another over the course of these five runs what would you say the gift(s) of your partner are? Feel free to take some time in quiet prayer or reflection.

What is a step you can take toward responding to the call that God may be putting on your that you mentioned last week?

Cool Down

How can you pray for one another this week?

Agree on things to pray about for the Union community.

Sixth Run Many Gifts, One Spirit

Warm Up

What has been good about these six weeks? What has been challenging?
What's a hope you have for the Union community?

Run

Quiet yourself, Open yourself to God's presence, Ask God's Spirit to teach you. Listen.

Read the text either out loud or silently: **1 Corinthians 12**

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3Therefore I tell you 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.

4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

12The 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. 13For 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.

14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

Again, if you are doing the study together do not feel like you have to “get through it all.”

1. Reflect on verse 6. Throughout this study, how have we seen God activate gifts in his followers? How have we seen the wide range of possibilities given through the Holy Spirit?
2. In verse 4-11 Paul talks about differing gifts but the same Spirit. Why do you think he emphasizes the words “one Spirit” and the “same Spirit” over and over again?
3. Consider the variety of members within the body. Why is it important that we recognize such great variety? Reflect on verse 13. Paul is talking about different kinds of gifts, but also different kinds of people. How do we struggle with truly living as one Body?
4. As you reflect on your own gifts, consider how they fit into the larger body. What would we be missing without the variety of gifts? See verse 26.
5. Being a member of Christ’s body creates a tension. We are individuals, but we are members. What is the gift, what is the struggle? How might a healthy body (working as individuals but members) be able to impact the world?

► *This passage reminds us that the idea of relationship provides the indispensable context for individual gifts.*

Push or Challenge

1. How might we be able to use our gifts in a relational way that builds up the body and therefore, impacts the world?
2. What is something that you have discovered in these six runs that you want to keep before you—what is a way to do that?

Cool Down

- Drawing upon what you have seen in your time “bless” your running partner. It may be a word of thanks, encouragement, affirmation of a gift or talent you see in them.
- Consider asking someone who has not had a running partner to join you on another track.
- Go to the Running Partners blog on the Union web page and share some of your thoughts about your last six weeks of training.