

# ***Spirit Filled Worship*      **Playing Your Part****

## **1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**

This week we are going to explore Paul's use of the image of 'the body' to say some things about the church and our place in it.

### **Introduction**

The word 'body' has many meanings and uses, both literal and figurative. Make a list of all the uses that come to mind. E.g. 'governing body' ... 'body of evidence' ... 'body of water' ...

### **The passage**

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

- The members of a church congregation are not simply a body. They are 'the body of Christ' (1 Cor 12:27). What important truths are conveyed in this phrase?
- Why did Paul write about feet, hands, eyes and ears in vv 14-21?
- 'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it' (12:26) Give some examples of how this happens from your own experience of suffering. (E.g. loss of eyesight affects more than just your eyes) How does this translate into church life? Do we notice when one member is suffering? Does it affect the rest? In what ways?
- What do you think Paul means when he says in v 24 that God has "given greater honour to the parts that lacked it"?

### **Research**

- The image of the body is not the only word-picture the Bible uses to describe the church. What other word-pictures are used? See Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-8; John 15:1-5; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 3:9.  
What is each trying to convey and which do you find most helpful?

People today use many other words, e.g. 'family', 'team', 'tree', 'army'. Can you think of any hymns or songs that speak of the church in these or other ways?

### **Issues** (*Leaders to select from the following*)

- "We were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.." (1 Cor 12:13). Some Christians say that we receive the Holy Spirit when we first become a follower of Jesus. Others, especially Pentecostal Churches, say that 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' comes later, and you are not fully a Christian until you have had that 'second blessing', as it is sometimes called. What do you think?
- We say these words sometimes in church at The Peace:  
"We are the body of Christ \ In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.  
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace / And builds up our common life."  
How can we put this into practice?
- At the Last Supper Jesus said: "This is my body". And when we break the bread, we say: "We break this bread to share in the body of Christ / Though we are many we are one body because we all share in one bread". How does Holy Communion make us into one body?

- The Greek philosopher, Plato, taught that the body is evil and mortal, but the soul is good and immortal. His ideas have crept into Christianity and many Christians believe that the body is basically bad and that only the soul matters. The Bible makes no such distinction. Bodies and souls are of equal importance, as God created both, and we believe in the resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul. Jesus was incarnated in a human body, and He was raised bodily, not as a disembodied soul!  
By using 'the body' as a picture of the church, Paul affirms the human body.  
What does this say to us about our bodies?

## Reflection

Study this painting by Guercino called "The Incredulity of St Thomas", 1621, National Gallery, London.

Christ longs for the unity of the church. Here, there is sadness in His face because the disciples were not fully united yet. Thomas had broken fellowship by doubting Christ's bodily resurrection. The apostle Peter, behind Jesus, seems astonished that Thomas could have doubted. There is disunity among Jesus' closest followers.

The Church is the Body of Christ. Disunity grieves our Lord. What can we do to foster unity in our church and between different churches?

